

Chapter 54

Cross–Cultural Study of Online User Behavior in Fashion E–Commerce: A Comparison of Britain and China

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ABSTRACT

Adopting the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) – perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use (Davis, Bagozzi, & Waeshaw, 1989) and Customer Buying Decision Process (Engel, Kollat, & Blackwell, 1968), this research examines the role of culture in influencing online shopping use, comparing differences across two continents and countries: Britain and China. Qualitative data obtained through the semi-structured focus group interviews was analysed using content analysis, which involves examining the accumulated data for ideas and constructs that have been pre-determined. The TAM held for the U.K. This project also explores whether the relationships hold for the emerging Chinese market.

INTRODUCTION

Online apparel shopping developed rapidly, and the study of online shopping behavior is always evolving accordingly. The importance of user behavior study for technology adoption and buying decision has long been established (Engel, Kollat and Blackwell, 1968; Davis, 1989; Griffin et al., 2005; Smit, Van and Voorveld, 2014; Kharitonov, 2014). The current quantitative research focused on the application of cognitive and affective involvement as antecedents to technology acceptance model (TAM) (Smith,

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Deitz, Royne, Hansen, and Grunhagen, 2011). The objective presented in this chapter has been to link TAM with buying decision process for a cross-cultural study of online user behavior.

In recent years, the Chinese market is the fastest growing market. The top 10 countries, ranked by online retail sales (in billions of US dollars) worldwide 2015, are China (\$562.66), US (\$349.06), UK (\$93.89), Japan (\$79.33), Germany (\$73.46), France (\$42.62), South Korea (\$36.76), Canada (\$28.77), Russia (\$20.30) and Brazil (\$18.80) (eMarketer 2015). Furthermore, recent statistics by Forrester Research Inc, eMarketer, and The Centre for Retail Research predict that online retail revenue accounted for 5.9% of the total retail market worldwide in 2014, or \$1.316 trillion. By 2018, that share will increase significantly to 8.8%. More and more Chinese e-commerce sites attracted attention globally, such as Ali Express, Taobao and Tmall.

China and the US are by far the world's leading ecommerce markets, together worth more than 55% of global online retail sales in 2014. China's predicted growth over the next five years will widen the gap between the two countries, and China is expected to exceed \$1 trillion in retail ecommerce sales by 2018, accounting for more than 40% of the worldwide total. The US is expected to maintain its position as the second-largest retail ecommerce market in 2018, totalling nearly \$500 billion in sales, while it is predicted that the UK will account for about one-quarter of that figure, landing in a distant third place (eMarketer, 2015).

According to Retail Week Reports, the UK Fashion Retail Sector was valued at over £46 billion in 2014. The direct value of the UK fashion industry to the UK economy was £26 billion in 2014; up from £21 billion in 2009, showing an increase of 22% in nominal terms (British Fashion Council, 2014; Oxford Economics, 2014). UK online fashion sales in 2014 were estimated over £7.5 billion (Retail Week Report, 2015). The market for online fashion continues to see robust growth for the following reasons: consumers becoming more accustomed to shopping online; increased participation in shopping via smartphones and tablets, which has helped to bolster sales for apparel shopping anytime and anywhere; and a combination of different channels available to consumers to shop for clothes. Retailers have to ensure that shopping is truly seamless and that they give customers a consistent shopping experience whatever channel they choose to use (Intel, 2015; CIO, 2015).

By the end of 2015, Chinese e-commerce users reached 413 million, and m-commerce reached 340 million (Jiang, 2015). The top three B2C e-commerce platforms are Tmall, JD.com and VIP.com. Tmall is a part of Taobao, which holds 57.4% of the entire market shares (JD 23.4% and VIP 3.2%) (Mo, 2015). By the end of 2014, Taobao had nearly 500 million registered members, and daily active users are over 120 million, the number of online goods reached 1 billion, turnover of Tmall on 'Double 11 (Nov 11)' promotion activities in 24 hours in 2015 is \$13.7 billion (Tan, 2016). Net revenue of JD.com in 2015 is \$28 billion; cooperated sellers are 990 million (JD.com, 2015). Vip.com has over 100 million registered users in 2014, female users accounted for more than 70%, 92.5% of orders came from repeat purchases. Net revenue in 2015 reached \$6.21 billion, of which the mobile terminal sales accounted for as high as 66% (Yuan, 2016).

This chapter explores the application of Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) and a model of customer buying decision process in both Chinese and British e-commerce and m-commerce. The cross-cultural study combined with the application of technology acceptance model and customer buying decision process model, helped explain drives of cross-national differences in online shopping adoption and usage. Researchers analysed the primary data collected from focus group interviews for a comparison from a cross-cultural design perspective. The comparison includes variables in terms of ease of use and perceived usefulness to provide in-depth insights for cross-cultural study. Design thinking, a solution

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