Mobile shopping convenience behaviour: the quest for a conceptual framework

Mohd Adzwin Faris Niasin*
Faculty of Business Management,
Universiti Teknologi MARA,
Sabah Branch,
Kota Kinabalu Campus,
Locked Bag 71, 88997,
Kota Kinabalu, Sabah, Malaysia
Email: adzwin_faris@hotmail.com
Email: konayaro_sugoi@yahoo.com
*Corresponding author

Zakariya Belkhamza
Department of Computer Information Systems,
Ahmed bin Mohammed Military College,
Doha, Qatar
Email: zbelkhamza@abmmc.edu.qa

Abstract: The continuous surge in mobile shopping activities among customers related to these emerging shopping channels, empirical research that tests the effect of the multi-dimensional construct of convenience towards the customers’ mobile shopping behavioural intention are lacking within the literature. The main goal of this paper is to conceptualise a framework that explains the intention of customers to shop using their mobile devices. The paper focuses on the multi-dimensional nature of convenience in mobile shopping setting. Derived from the concept of utilitarian values, convenience has been reported to be one of the foremost drivers for utilitarian online shopping behavioural intention. Past literature has only conceptualised convenience for mobile-based online shopping as a unidimensional construct, despite the evidence for it to occur as a multi-dimensional construct. Arguments are also made for the construct to exist as a second-order formative which would better visualise the purchasing process of the customer in mobile shopping.

Keywords: mobile shopping; multi-dimensional convenience; utilitarian values.

Reference to this paper should be made as follows: Niasin, M.A.F. and Belkhamza, Z. (2021) ‘Mobile shopping convenience behaviour: the quest for a conceptual framework’, Int. J. Services Technology and Management, Vol. 27, Nos. 1/2, pp.143–159.

Biographical notes: Mohd Adzwin Faris Niasin is a Senior Lecturer at the Universiti Teknologi MARA under the Faculty of Business Management. He obtained his Master’s and PhD in Marketing from the Universiti Malaysia Sabah. He has prior experience working in the financial service industry for the sales and marketing department of top Malaysian banks such as RHB Bank and...
1 Introduction

Studies on online shopping have increased considerably with the implementation of mobile-based internet technology, with the facet of mobile commerce (m-commerce) affecting businesses as well as industries (Chong et al., 2012; Lee and Wong, 2016). The reason for this was the growing capability of mobile device users to access online platforms anywhere and anytime (Yang and Kim, 2012; Wang et al., 2015). The growth keeps increasing with the advancement of mobile technology, and the availability of businesses in new different channels and platforms in order to reach customers (Chong et al., 2012; Gao et al., 2011; Yang and Forney, 2013).

While mobile shopping activities continue to increase among customers related to these emerging shopping channels, with the number of mobile shoppers surging, most customers still prefer to shop by using the traditional methods or using their personal computers. According to recent statistics, 79% of users owning smartphones have made at least a purchase online using their mobile devices (Mulpuru, 2015). However, statistics also showed that traditional online shoppers converted at a rate of 3.91%, while shoppers via smartphone converted at a rate of 1.61%, less than half that (OuterBox, 2020).

The new mobile shopping activities are proliferating, by which it permits retailers to reach more potential customers; this is achieved by continuously improving their mobile shopping platform to deliver convenient online shopping experience (Chong et al., 2012; Okazaki and Mendez, 2013; Yang and Forney, 2013). For this reason, the aspect of convenience presented by mobile devices is reported to be one of the main drivers for customers to choose the mobile channel as their preferred mode of online shopping.
Mobile shopping convenience behaviour

(Faulds et al., 2018). Furthermore, the increasing number of customers who own mobile devices with internet-capable functionality and choose mobile devices as their primary channel of online shopping was also another essential driver (Chong et al., 2012; Huang and Zhou, 2018).

The perception of convenience associated with mobile shopping is mainly concerned with the flexibility of mobile devices to access online shopping platforms regardless of time and place (Okazaki and Mendez, 2013). Based on the utilitarian shopping motivation, the aspect of convenience is often attributed to the decision-making process of utilitarian-based customers to choose a shopping channel over another (Bridges and Florsheim, 2008; Overby and Lee, 2006). Customers seeking convenience in their shopping behaviour are concerned with the ability of a shopping channel that offers time-saving when performing transactions (Seiders et al., 2007).

The role of convenience influencing the behaviour of customers towards m-commerce activities such as mobile shopping and mobile banking was examined in the past (i.e., Holmes et al., 2014; Huang and Zhou, 2018; Thakur, 2016). These studies revealed that the customers’ perceived convenience of mobile devices does influence their mobile shopping behaviour. For example, Thakur (2016) noted that the perceived convenience of mobile shopping positively affected customers’ intention to continue their mobile shopping activities.

However, these studies suffer from the identical issue of their single-dimensional perception of convenience, where the construct is observed as nothing more than a blend of time and effort utilisation. To illustrate, Kim et al. (2010, p.314) suggested that within the context of mobile shopping, the convenience construct is “nothing but a combination of time and place utilities”, reflected by only four measurement items in the construct itself. This unidimensional view of convenience has long been challenged in the literature, especially within the service context, where convenience is viewed as a multi-dimensional construct (Beauchamp and Ponder, 2010; Seiders et al., 2007). The support for multi-dimensional convenience has criticised the unidimensional view of convenience because it is believed that the psychological attribute of customers in different types of purchasing situations is often ignored (Gehrt and Yale, 1993; Gupta and Sharma, 2014). As it has been proven, customers would experience convenience during the different stages of a shopping activity (Berry et al., 2002; Seiders et al., 2007).

This suggestion of a multi-dimensional convenience construct is reinforced in the context of the online shopping environment (Beauchamp and Ponder, 2010; Jiang et al., 2013). Jiang et al. (2013) investigated the unique characteristics of the underlying dimensions of convenience that exist within a general online shopping context. Nevertheless, the study by Jiang et al. (2013) did not particularly explore the context of mobile shopping convenience. It is rather crucial because mobile-based shopping is seen to be different from its PC-based shopping counterpart in terms of providing utilitarian values (Yang, 2010). Therefore, the investigation of the impact of multi-dimensional convenience construct on customers’ mobile shopping behaviour is necessary. It can be achieved by firstly incorporating the different stages of customers’ mobile shopping process (Hawkins and Mothersbaugh, 2010) with the dimensions of mobile shopping convenience that correspond to a specific shopping process. This process determines the extent to which customers intend to purchase the desired product (Chou, 2010). Such a process is also justified by the purchase behaviour of the customer, which explains the need to incorporate this process in the investigation of the customer’s behaviour (Reid
et al., 2016). For example, the access dimension of convenience represents the need identification stage of customers’ mobile shopping process, while the transaction dimension is a representation of the purchase and delivery stage. Second, after the validation of the multi-dimensional construct of the mobile shopping convenience, the nomological validity of the second-order construct can then be tested by investigating its effects on the outcome variable of utilitarian attitude and customers’ intention.

2 Utilitarian shopping value

Utilitarian value is a shopping value that customers exhibit when practicing shopping activities (Hirschman and Holbrook, 1982). Utilitarian value in multi-channel shopping behaviour has attracted much attention recently, as it is widely believed that adequate time and cost-saving are vital for successful shopping activities for utilitarian shoppers (Arnold and Reynolds, 2003; Kim, 2006; Kwon and Jain, 2009). Babin et al. (1994) define this the utilitarian value as a work-conscious, task-related, and rational in the shopper’s decision making. In search of utilitarian value, customers are so often enthused for efficiency and timeliness where completing shopping activity becomes the main target of the customer (Batra and Ahtola, 1991).

Utilitarian shoppers are considered rational problem-solving entities (Babin et al., 1994; Childers et al., 2001; Hirschman and Holbrook, 1982; Sarkar, 2011). Primarily, they view the activity of shopping as a problem, and the benefit gained depends on how efficient the problem is being solved (Babin et al., 1994; To et al., 2007). In other words, utilitarian shoppers would generally think along the line of “I hate wasting too much time when I am shopping” or “If I am able to finish shopping with the least amount of difficulty, I am satisfied.” Babin et al. (1994) characterised the utilitarian shopping value as something that reflects the work attitude of customers. It is plausible that making an actual purchase of a product or service may not be a pre-requisite to utilitarian shopping value. This is due to the belief that utilitarian value may be the result of the customer’s action of collecting information out of inevitability and necessity, rather than collecting it for gaining pleasure (Babin et al., 1994; Bloch and Richins, 1983). For example, a utilitarian customer may relay this statement “Even if I did not buy the product, I have gained some general ideas and information about the price of the product for comparison. It was not fully wasting my time.” Here, the customer did not complete a transaction, but gaining more information on a product’s price gave the customer some sort of functional value that will be useful in the next shopping experience (Babin et al., 1994). As such, the next shopping visit could be done in a faster manner because the customer has enough information for a better purchase decision making.

Alternatively, the hedonic value is considered to be the emotional aspect of shoppers’ value. It consists of elements of entertainment, experience, and leisure (Hirschman and Holbrook, 1982). Shoppers with prominent hedonic values are more interested in their need to become emotionally satisfied (Babin et al., 1994; Hirschman and Holbrook, 1982). To this end, hedonic shoppers are usually tempted to have fun if shopping becomes as an outlet to

1. relief stress
2. hang out with friends/family
keep up with latest trends
attain a sense of adventure
seeking value for products through bargains/discounts
accomplish a role to shop on behalf of someone else (Arnold and Reynolds, 2003).

Maslow (1968) stated that the emotional needs of people often overlook utilitarian motivation in choosing products or services while shopping. Therefore, when compared to utilitarian shoppers, hedonic shoppers’ way of thinking should be along the lines of “I like to go shopping because I can hang out with friends and relieve my bad mood” or “I like to shop because I can find the best deals for my family and me.”

2.1 Online utilitarian shopping value

Generally, in both online and traditional shopping, shoppers would still seek utilitarian values that they deem vital in their shopping experience (Dholakia and Uusitalo, 2002; Bridges and Florsheim, 2008). Customers would usually acquire more than one utilitarian value, in which it enables them to shop more comfortably and faster (Childers et al., 2001). For example, information availability, convenience, and variety of product selection are essential to determine the utilitarian values of customers when they are shopping online (Bridges and Florsheim, 2008; Yang and Kim, 2012). The existence of new and fast online payment systems has contributed to easing the decision-making process to forego traditional shopping (Bauer et al., 2006; Liu et al., 2008). Given that mobile devices possess some form of limited functionalities compared to other devices such as PC, the utilitarian value that stems from convenience and time and cost-saving could provide enough motivation that customer may prefer it over other shopping channels (Okazaki and Mendez, 2013; Schierz et al., 2010; Wang et al., 2015).

2.2 Hedonic vs. utilitarian shopping values

Utilitarian shopping value, when compared to hedonic value, draws its difference between the act of ‘getting something’ as opposed to the act of ‘doing it because you love it’ (Babin et al., 1994; Triandis, 1977). This argument recounts back to the theory of needs satisfaction, where it is proposed that all customers’ consumption activities fulfill both low- and high-level functional needs (Jones et al., 2006). Utilitarian shopping value abides by the more physical and lower order characteristics of products or services, seen as ‘bivalent satisfiers’. In contrast, hedonic shopping value follows the much more intangible and higher-order attributes of products or services, seen as ‘monovalent satisfiers’ (Jones et al., 2006). Dhar and Wertenbroch (2000) asserted that utilitarian and hedonic motivations of customers have a different level of impact on their behaviour. Hedonic motivations seem to take less precedence over utilitarian motivation when customers are faced with the choice of forfeiting one of the two values. This notion is also confirmed by Overby and Lee (2006), where it is found that shoppers relate more strongly with utilitarian values than hedonic values. According to To et al. (2007), while both hedonic and utilitarian values have remarkable effects, the latter is seen to be the strongest predictor of customers’ intention to look for products’ information and purchase products online. They further stated that utilitarian motivation to shop in an online
environment is influenced by the aspects of cost-saving, information availability, and convenience (To et al., 2007). Furthermore, Bridges and Florsheim (2008) suggested that elements of utilitarian values that facilitate shopping may increase online purchasing involvement. In contrast, hedonic values are more associated with compulsive internet use such as web browsing.

2.3 Convenience and utilitarian attitude as elements of online utilitarian shopping values

Convenience is a vital component of online utilitarian shopping value (Childers et al., 2001; Overby and Lee, 2006; Sarkar, 2011; To et al., 2007). Utilitarian customers tend to perceive more convenience when shopping online because it enables them to find and compare products and services to evaluate price and quality with a complete convenience (Grewal et al., 2003; Mathwick et al., 2001; Overby and Lee, 2006). However, To et al. (2007) noted that convenience within online shopping takes the most significant precedence and priority among utilitarian shoppers over cost-saving, availability of information, and greater freedom of products and services selection.

The attitude of customers is seen as a variable that reflects customers’ utilitarian shopping value and behaviour. The initial belief on customers’ attitudes towards consumption behaviour has revealed that the construct is measured on a single dimension (Osgood et al., 1957). However, this belief was challenged by Batra and Ahtola (1990), who suggested that customer attitude is intrinsically and inherently two-dimensional. This statement stems from the perception that customers mainly purchase products and perform consumption behaviour for two fundamental rationales. The first rational is to satisfy adequate consumption (hedonic motivations), which is obtained from customers’ sensory traits. The second rationale is instrumental reasoning through expectations gained from consequences (utilitarian motivations) that complement customers’ functional and non-sensory traits (Batra and Ahtola, 1990). Therefore, according to Batra and Ahtola (1990), customers’ attitudes can be divided into two underlying dimensions or variables: utilitarian attitude and hedonic attitude.

Moreover, Voss et al. (2003) noted that customers’ shopping attitudes comprise of both utilitarian attitude and hedonic attitude, which are distinctly different from one another. The utilitarian attitude is affected by customers’ cognitive involvement of purchasing decisions (i.e., the functionality of products and services), and the hedonic attitude is affected by customers’ affective involvement of purchasing decisions (i.e., the amount of fun a customer gain from using products or services).

2.3.1 Conceptualisation and measurement of utilitarian attitude

It should be noted that Batra and Ahtola (1990) conceptualised the dimensionality of attitude into two separate dimensions of utilitarian value and hedonic value. This is because of the argument that the assumption of unidimensional is only applicable to the overall attitude. In this case, multiple attributes of adequacy-importance (AI) is used where customer ratings of distinctive attributes are added to the ratings of the brand’s appropriateness on those attributes (Batra and Ahtola, 1990). Nevertheless, such analysis into the multi-attribute AI factors assist in comprehending a specific category of product and service or customer behaviour. However, broader insights into the evaluations of the dimensions are rarely available from such analysis (Batra and Ahtola, 1990). This had led
to the introduction of multi-item measurements for both utilitarian attitude and hedonic attitude (Batra and Ahtola, 1990). The analysis of the dimensionality of customers’ attitudes across different categories of products or services might be useful for several reasons. First, it assists in identifying the different types of attributes that correspond to different types of evaluations. This answers the question of “does the attitude of customers differs from one product or service to another?” Second, researching different attributes of customers (i.e., utilitarian attitude or hedonic attitude) could result in appropriate promotional tactics for particular brands or behaviours. For example, promotion for mobile-based shopping may require different approaches from PC-based shopping through the measurement of the utilitarian attitude of customers. Third, the behaviour of customers can be well predicted through their attitude using a multi-item attitude measurement compared to separated measurements for both dimensions. Millar and Tesser (1986) noted that attitude could predict behaviour much better when the basis for the evaluation of the attitude matches the purpose of the behaviour itself. For instance, a utilitarian attitude can better predict the behaviour of customers when the purpose of customers is to seek the most convenient way to perform mobile shopping.

The multi-item measurement scale of utilitarian attitude proposed by Batra and Ahtola (1990) were further validated and generalised by Voss et al. (2003). The measurement scale for utilitarian attitude also includes other attributes such as effectiveness, helpfulness, functionality, necessity, and practicality. Moreover, Voss et al. (2003) tested the nomological validity of both utilitarian and hedonic attitudes, which confirms that both types of attitudes have significant effects on the intention of customers (Figure 1). Thus, the inclusion of a utilitarian attitude to the nomological network testing of multi-dimensional mobile shopping convenience on customers’ behaviour in this research is warranted because it provides a better validation of the convenience measurement scale. This is also supported by the belief that the convenience construct, in general, requires a cognitive involvement from customers in assessing the utilitarian attribute of products/services (Childers et al., 2001; Seiders et al., 2007). In the case of mobile shopping, the cognitive involvement of customers is related to the utilitarian attribute of convenience, which exists in this shopping channel. Furthermore, the nomological validity of multi-dimensional mobile shopping convenience should use utilitarian attitude as an outcome variable, because the relationship between the two has been recognised in recent mobile shopping studies (Park et al., 2019; Souiden et al., 2019).

Figure 1  Nomological validity for dimensions of attitude

Source: Voss et al. (2003)
2.4 The multidimensionality of convenience

It should be noted that convenience is the main element that constitutes the utilitarian value of customers (Bridges and Florsheim, 2008; Childers et al., 2001; Overby and Lee, 2006). As such, convenience has always been an important factor in assisting customers’ decision making to purchase a product or a service (i.e., Berry et al., 2002; Seiders et al., 2007). In the field of marketing and consumer research, it was first introduced by Copeland (1923), who started with the categorisation of products that consist of the category of convenience goods; these are said to be goods that customers would purchase frequently and are easily accessible within stores because they are intensively and rigorously distributed by sellers (Beauchamp and Ponder, 2010; Berry et al., 2002; Jiang et al., 2013).

Multiple studies have considered convenience as a multi-dimensional construct (Beauchamp and Ponder, 2010; Berry et al., 2002; Colwell et al., 2008; Jiang et al., 2013; Farquhar and Rowley, 2009; Seiders et al., 2007). While there have been unidimensional views of convenience in different customer contexts (i.e., Kim et al., 2010; Lai and Chang, 2011; Okazaki and Mendez, 2013), the parsimonious concept of the convenience dimension has been criticised because it takes convenience as time and effort construct only. This view is considered premature because it is believed that the psychological aspect of customers is overlooked in different types of purchasing situations (Gehrt and Yale, 1993; Yale and Venkatesh, 1986). For this reason, several dimensions of convenience are found in the literature (Yale and Venkatesh, 1986; Gehrt and Yale, 1993; Seiders et al., 2000, 2007; Berry et al., 2002). Table 1 summarises some of these dimensions.

Table 1 Progression of convenience dimensions in chronological order

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Convenience’s context</th>
<th>Dimensions of convenience</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yale and Venkatesh (1986)</td>
<td>Classification of convenience goods and services</td>
<td>Time utilisation, portability, handiness, accessibility, avoidance of unpleasantness and appropriateness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brown (1990)</td>
<td>General convenience</td>
<td>Time, acquisition, place, execution and use</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gehrt and Yale (1993)</td>
<td>General convenience</td>
<td>Place, time and effort</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seiders et al. (2000)</td>
<td>Retail service convenience</td>
<td>Access, search, possession, and transaction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Berry et al. (2002) and Seiders et al. (2000, 2007)</td>
<td>Retail service convenience</td>
<td>Decision, access, transaction, benefit, post-benefit</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2.5 Dimensions of online shopping convenience

The evolvement of the concept of convenience through emerging technologies has changed the shopping behaviour of customers over time (Colwell et al., 2008; Seiders et al., 2000, 2007). The conformist view introduced it to be context-based, where the dimensions of convenience differ, and they adapt to the context in which customers are (Farquhar and Rowley, 2009).

Colwell et al. (2008) derived convenience dimensions from Berry et al. (2002) original scale, tested in both traditional and online retailing settings, to ensure its
generalisability. The dimensions of convenience were found to have a substantial impact on the overall satisfaction of customers. Table 2 illustrates these dimensions.

In addition, Beauchamp and Ponder (2010) investigated four dimensions of retail convenience (access, search, transaction, and possession) to identify the distinctions and priorities in both customers’ settings of online and in-store. Their findings show that customers tend to find online shopping to be more convenient through both the access and search dimensions of convenience compared to in-store shopping.

Jiang et al. (2013) introduced several convenience dimensions to suit the online shopping setting, a less investigated context (i.e., Lee and Lin, 2005; Parasuraman et al., 2005), which are:

1. access
2. search
3. evaluation
4. transaction
5. possession/post-purchase convenience.

Table 2 Dimensions of online service convenience

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reference</th>
<th>Convenience dimensions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Colwell et al. (2008)</td>
<td>Decision, access, transaction, benefit, post-benefit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beauchamp and Ponder (2010)</td>
<td>Access, search, transaction, and possession</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jiang et al. (2013)</td>
<td>Access, search, evaluation, transaction and possession/post-purchase</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2.6 Multi-dimensional convenience as a reflection of customer online purchasing process

Since the dimensions of convenience reflect a customer’s purchasing process (Berry et al., 2002; Seiders et al., 2007), it is assumed that the dimensions of convenience in online shopping would reflect the process of a customer’s purchasing activity in an online context. For this paper, a generic purchasing decision-making process model for the context of e-commerce by Hawkins and Mothersbaugh (2010) has been identified (Turban et al., 2015). The model consists of five main processes which are:

1. Need identification – The first stage is the need for the customer to recognise his or her need, which occurs when a gap between the customer’s current state and the desired state (i.e., a customer’s need for a smartphone with a better camera capability or bigger screen). At this stage, a marketer’s main objective is to convince the customer that his or her needs can be fulfilled by the seller in an effective and fast manner through the seller’s online platform.

2. Information search – The second stage focuses on the customer seeking information on how to feel the need. During this stage, the customer will gather the appropriate information regarding the product in question. For an online shopping platform, it is essential to ensure that customers find it easy to search for product information by providing useful tools such as search engines and comparison engines.
Evaluation of alternatives – The third stage occurs when the customer has chosen a few feasible alternatives to fulfil the desired state or need. The customer will evaluate the alternatives by comparing them by generating and ranking criteria to make a final decision or choice. In the context of online shopping, the evaluation may include price, specifications, and product description using both text and graphics.

Purchase and delivery – In the fourth stage, the customer has already decided on the exact product to purchase after making evaluations. The customer will arrange for payment, delivery, product warranties. For an online shopping platform, it needs to ensure that customers are provided with fast yet flexible payment systems and delivery options.

Post-purchase activities – The final stage occurs when the customer has received the product from the seller. At this stage, the customer will also evaluate whether the purchased product can fulfil the identified need in the first stage. Also, the customer will engage in customer service activities such as product return, repairs, and product review. The role of the online shopping platform is to ensure that the customer feels satisfied with the service provided, and repeat purchase will be a high possibility.

In hindsight, when comparing the dimensions of online shopping convenience by Jiang et al. (2013) with the online purchasing decision-making process by Hawkins and Mothersbaugh (2010), both bear a similar resemblance to one another as shown in Figure 2. This suggests that, in general, the dimensions of convenience do reflect the purchasing process of customers (Berry et al., 2002; Colwell et al., 2008).

Figure 2  Multi-dimensional convenience as a reflection of customer online purchasing process
2.7 Online shopping convenience as a second-order formative construct

Although this paper considers Jiang et al. (2013) online shopping convenience construct, several considerations should be noted. Firstly, Seiders et al. (2007) stated that convenience should be considered as a second-order formative construct instead of a second-order reflective construct. Jiang et al. (2013) conceptualised service convenience primarily as a second-order reflective overall online service convenience construct to explain the first-order dimensions. In this instance, giving deliberation to a construct as a second-order reflective as opposed to formative can have some significant implications on the conceptualisation of the construct (Becker et al., 2012).

Becker et al. (2012) suggest there are primarily four categories of a second-order hierarchical latent variable model, as presented in Figure 3. However, this paper focuses on only two categories of models, which are reflective-reflective type I and reflective-formative type II, because both are the basis for the conceptualisation of the convenience construct of Jiang et al. (2013) and Seiders et al. (2007) respectively.

Figure 3 The four type of hierarchical latent variable models

Lee and Cadogan (2013) stressed that reflective-reflective type I constructs should not exist, and the conceptualisation of a construct in such a manner could be ambiguous and somewhat meaningless. The argument that reflective measurement should be considered as unidimensional in nature and exchangeable in its conceptualisation may clash with the nomological perception of the underlying dimensions for a higher-order construct. Therefore, it does not make sense to conceptualise lower-order constructs separately because the logic of the reflective construct suggests that they should be parallel and exist
as a single dimension (Becker et al., 2012). Even if distinct dimensions for a construct do happen, these dimensions nevertheless should be conceptualised as reflective-formative hierarchical latent constructs to ensure that the dimensions remain different from one another without opposing the reflective logic (Lee and Cadogan, 2013). Therefore, in terms of online service convenience construct by Jiang et al. (2013), it should be considered as a second-order formative construct to confirm the dimensions to be distinct and non-interchangeable.

Furthermore, theorising the online shopping convenience proposed by Jiang et al. (2013) as a second-order formative construct would assist in retaining all the dimensions in the first-order construct to maintain the conceptual domain of convenience. Jarvis et al. (2003) suggested that dropping an indicator of a construct would lead the construct to lose its meaning and representation of a phenomenon or process. This is particularly true for formative type construct. For the convenience construct, the construct itself is well understood and reflects the customer decision-making process (Berry et al., 2002; Colwell et al., 2008). Thus, eliminating any of its dimensions would ultimately cause the convenience construct to lose its depiction of the customer decision-making process. Therefore, conceptualising the online shopping convenience of Jiang et al. (2013) as a second-order formative construct would be more appropriate.

2.8 Mobile shopping convenience

Within the context of mobile shopping, Okazaki and Mendez (2013) noted that the aspects of speed, accessibility, and simultaneous ability of mobile devices to access online shopping platforms have an impact on customers’ perceived convenience towards the mobile shopping channel. Li et al. (2012) argued that customers would gain more positive emotions such as pleasure when shopping online by using mobile devices; permitted that they are allowed to save more time and effort. The difference in the convenience offered by mobile devices compared to non-mobile devices is that the former allows customers to shop online from any location or time (i.e., mobility) (Ozok and Wei, 2010; Thakur, 2016).

Nevertheless, most of these studies suffer from the unidimensional view of convenience, which has been long contested. For example, Kim et al. (2010) simply refer to convenience as nothing more than a combination of time and place utilisation. This statement contradicts the notion of convenience being a representation of the customer decision-making process, which consists of several distinct stages implying multidimensionality (Berry et al., 2002). This leads to the realisation that the literature lacks the efforts to examine the multi-dimensional convenience construct in the mobile environment. Jih (2007) presented a multi-dimensional view of convenience for the mobile shopping context in which two dimensions of convenience exist, namely the operational convenience and transaction convenience. However, Jih’s (2007) investigation suffers from the lack of view for convenience as a formative second-order construct while at the same time, lacks the representation of the customer decision-making process.

In summary, convenience is an essential factor to influence the customers’ behavioural outcome in the online shopping environment. While Jiang et al. (2013) managed to propose a convenience construct for the global online environment, the construct itself should be tested for the specific mobile shopping context. This is due to
the persisting belief that mobile devices offer different types of experiences compared to non-mobile devices in online shopping activities (Wong et al., 2012; Yang, 2010). Moreover, it is also imperative to investigate the online shopping convenience construct for mobile devices as a second-order formative construct along with its impact on the attitude and intention customers have towards the channel itself. As a result, a proposed framework considering all the above loopholes as presented in Figure 4.

2.9 The proposed framework

Figure 4 presents the framework to assess the effect of mobile shopping convenience on the attitude and intention of customers. The mobile shopping convenience construct is suggested to exist as a type II reflective-formative construct, which consists of five first-order dimensions. In this framework, each dimension of mobile shopping convenience corresponds to each stage of the customers’ purchasing process, as illustrated in Figure 2 previously. For example, the access dimension is a representation of the need identification process in mobile shopping. In another instance, the access dimension reflects the ways to which a customer’s need to fulfil his or her desire to shop online can be achieved by using the mobile shopping platform.

Figure 4 The proposed framework

2.10 Conclusions

Figure 4 illustrated the framework that this paper proposed based on the above discussion and elaboration. While conceptually justified, future research may conduct empirical validation to confirm whether mobile shopping convenience does indeed exist as a multi-dimensional construct of type II reflective-formative nature. The method to analyse type II reflective-formative constructs by Becker et al. (2012) may be used as a guideline to assess the mobile shopping convenience construct. Furthermore, confirmatory tetrad analysis (CTA-PLS) (Gudergan et al., 2008) may also be applied to further confirm the existence of mobile shopping convenience as a second-order formative construct (Hair et al., 2018). This is essential for investigating whether the five proposed dimensions of mobile shopping convenience do represent customers’ purchasing decision-making process).
References


