

Editorial for the Special Section on Research on consumer evaluation of mobile applications: Does interactivity matter?

Amit Shankar

Indian Institute of Management Visakhapatnam, India
ashankar@iimv.ac.in

Charles Jebarajakirthy

Griffith Business School, Griffith University, Australia

Pooja Kumari

Indian Institute of Management Jammu, India

1 Background

Information technology advancement, internet revolution and mobile phone penetration have enabled organisations to revolutionize their service delivery patterns (Shankar and Jebarajakirthy, 2019; Shankar et al., 2020). Organisations are using a variety of innovative electronic channels to enhance the consumer reachability and achieve competitive advantages in a cost-effective manner (Islam et al., 2021). Among all electronic service delivery channels, mobile applications are one of the most promising channels with a great degree of ubiquity and localization (Koenig-Lewis et al., 2010; Shankar, 2021). Mobile applications are beneficial for both service providers and consumers. They enable consumers to avail customized services anytime from anywhere and allow organisations to provide cost-effective and time-efficient services to consumers (Shankar and Jain, 2021).

Due to the absence of face-to-face interaction, the success of mobile commerce heavily depends on the interactivity of the mobile applications (Jebarajakirthy and Shankar, 2021). In the context of mobile commerce applications, interactivity refers to the layout of applications and contents that affect consumers' experience while they interact with a mobile application (Coursaris and Sung, 2012; Lee et al., 2015; Islam et al., 2021). Interactivity may be conceptualized as a multidimensional construct consisting of two major elements, namely feature orientation and perception orientation (Gao et al., 2009). Feature-oriented elements refer to some functional characteristics of a mobile application including, layout, navigation, content, and customer support that impact application interactivity (Coursaris and Sung, 2012). Perception-oriented elements include playfulness, perceived hedonic benefits, user control, technology frustration, consumer passion and responsiveness that are concerned with how consumers perceive interactivity (Cyr et al., 2009). Bad design of the mobile applications leads to technology frustration which negatively impacts the consumer evaluation of the offered services (Shankar et al., 2021). Hence, marketers are keen to know how they can enhance feature-oriented interactivity and perception-oriented interactivity to reduce technology frustration and enhance consumer experience during the consumer journey on mobile application platforms.

This special section explores how marketers can enhance the consumer-brand relationship quality by enhancing mobile application interactivity (Shankar and Yadav, 2020). Hence, the special section pursues the following objectives: It aims to

- explore different theoretical models to investigate feature-oriented interactivity and perception-oriented interactivity elements of mobile applications
- examine the impact of mobile application interactivity on consumer service evaluation
- challenge the existing frameworks of mobile application interactivity
- examine the impact of technology frustration and consumer passion on consumer experience, and finally,
- explore the impact of mobile application interactivity on consumer perceived value.

2 Articles in the Special Section

The following four articles have been selected for inclusion in the special section:

Article 1: What's behind a scratch card? Designing a mobile application using gamification to study customer loyalty: An experimental approach

In this study, the authors investigate how gamification elements in a mobile payment application affect hedonic and utilitarian motivations which in turn, lead to customer loyalty. The study also examines how the effects of motivations are moderated and mediated by different types of rewards (direct cash rewards vs indirect third party partnered rewards). A 2x2 experimental design with 385 respondents was conducted and the results indicate that direct cash rewards are more influential in a gamification scenario.

Article 2: Why have consumers opposed, postponed, and rejected innovations during a pandemic? A study of mobile payment innovations

Using Innovation Resistance Theory, the present study investigates consumer resistance towards mobile payment during the COVID-19 Pandemic. An artificial neural network analysis (ANN) of data collected from 406 non-users of m-payments in India confirmed that usage barriers, value barriers, risk barriers, traditional barriers, and image barriers are major antecedents of resistance towards mobile payment.

Article 3: Interactive app-based services: Recovery evaluations and the mediating role of satisfaction in the relationship between customer-brand engagement and electronic word of mouth

This study examines the differential impact of varying levels of customer participation in service recovery on recovery satisfaction, customer-brand engagement, and electronic-word of mouth by using co-creation theory and resource-based theory. The analysis of data collected from 495 customers of interactive food delivery apps in India showed that co-creation in recovery significantly influences customer-brand engagement and electronic-word of mouth and that recovery satisfaction mediated the relationship between customer-brand engagement and electronic-word of mouth.

Article 4: Does gamified interaction build a strong consumer-brand connection? A study of mobile applications

The study analyses the relationship between the constructs of flow, brand engagement, self-brand connection and brand usage intention among consumers of two gamified mobile applications in India. The research results suggest that flow formed by the five dimensions challenge, feedback, autonomy, immersion, and interaction positively associates with cognitive brand engagement and emotional brand engagement with both forms of engagement further strengthening consumers' brand connection and usage intention.

3 Conclusion

The focus of the articles in this special section is on investigating the effects of mobile application interactivity on consumers' behavioural intentions. The articles cover various aspects of interactivity such as, gamification, co-creation, and application design. The studies also examine how interactive features of mobile applications affect consumers' behavioural intentions and behaviours such as, usage intention, loyalty, brand engagement, and electronic word of mouth. The special section enriches the mobile application interactivity literature and provides several suggestions for mobile commerce marketers how to enhance consumer experience by using interactivity features.

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