Smart Phones, Bad Calls?
In-Store Mobile Technology Use and Consumer Purchase Behavior

Abstract

In-store decision making, a common occurrence for many consumers, is a critical topic of interest to marketing scholars and practitioners (Inman and Winer 1998). One understudied factor impacting in-store decision making is the role of mobile technologies such as cell phones and smartphones. Mobile technologies have been praised for helping consumers make better decisions; however, prior research has identified unintended visual and cognitive impairments associated with these devices. Therefore, we investigate the impact of in-store mobile technology use on consumers’ purchase behavior. We demonstrate across two studies conducted in grocery stores and mass merchandisers that in-store mobile technology use is associated with a number of important consumer implications, including the purchase of more unplanned items, failing to purchase more planned items, and altering substitute purchases. Further, we find that shoppers are twice as likely to use their mobile devices in a mass merchandiser as in a grocery store. Finally, in an online experiment, we show that the intensity and duration of mobile device use negatively impacts shoppers’ ability to recall in-store stimuli and their shopping accuracy.