

Feeling Guilty to Buy Online? Exploring Consumers' Perceived Negative Effects of E-Commerce on Society: An Abstract

Delphine Colin and Manfred Schwaiger

Abstract Scandals about e-retailers' unethical practices and reports about negative consequences of online shopping on society regularly hit the headlines in Germany. Although literature on e-commerce adoption and ethical consumption is vast, the nature and effects of consumers' concerns regarding these issues remain unexplored so far. However, these concerns may play a crucial role in the decision to shop online. In line with this claim, recent literature on ethical consumption and corporate social responsibility highlights that companies' social and environmental performance increasingly matters in consumers' purchasing decisions (Sudbury-Riley and Kohlbacher 2016). Besides, exploring the nature and role of these concerns is of great relevance for online retailers. Indeed, as the improvement of online shopping experiences and customer services did not suffice to convince European consumers to give up on physical shopping – 91% of goods are still purchased offline in 2016 (Online Retailing Research 2016) – there is a renewed need for cross-disciplinary research on the hurdles to e-commerce adoption (Ingham et al. 2014).

To the best of our knowledge, the present study is the first to explore the role of consumers' societal concerns in their decision to shop online. It determines the nature of these concerns and assesses their impact on consumers' attitude and choice to purchase online versus offline. Based on a thorough literature review, seven focus group discussions, and ten in-depth interviews, an analytical model to measure consumers' perceived negative effects of e-commerce on society (PNEES) is developed. The validity of the construct is assessed by means of a quantitative study measuring its impact on consumers' affective and cognitive attitudinal as well as behavioral responses. PLS-SEM results highlight the validity and reliability of the proposed measurement. The impact-performance map results of the driver analysis reveal that consumers' concerns regarding a potential reduction of the product offer, the degrading attractiveness of their cities, and the decreasing wealth of their fellow citizen are three aspects of importance to understand their behavioral

D. Colin (✉) • M. Schwaiger
Ludwig-Maximilians-University, Munich, Germany
e-mail: colin@bwl.lmu.de; schwaiger@lmu.de

responses against online shopping. At a higher analytical level, this study also highlights a discrepancy between consumers' affective and cognitive attitudinal responses to these negative societal consequences of e-commerce. It shows the predominance of the affective construct to explain consumers' behavioral responses. These findings provide relevant implications for online and offline retailers, particularly regarding the content of their CSR strategies as well as the tone and topics of future communication campaigns.