

Signing Before the Inspection or After the Inspection: The Empirical Study of Factors Affecting Consumers' Online Shopping Goods Receiving Way

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Abstract

With the popularity of the Internet, e-commerce has been rapid development in recent years, but some problems still exist in the process of development of online shopping, for example disputes often appear in the logistics service — whether to allow consumers to sign after the inspection. Logistics service as a bond connecting network sellers and consumers is very important, so the problem existing in the logistics service needs urgently to solve. In order to solve this problem well, this paper from the perspective of online stores (seller reputation, electronic word-of-mouth, seller commitment) and consumers (subjective norm, perceived value of goods) and logistics companies (trust in logistics companies) unearths the six variables affecting consumers' goods receiving way, uses the questionnaire and SPSS for data analysis to study the six variables' effects on consumers' willingness of signing before the inspection. Results show that all the six variables have significant effects on consumers' willingness of signing before the inspection. This paper's research conclusions will give online stores and logistics companies inspiration and guidance, then improve customers' satisfaction and promote the further development of online shopping.

Keywords: seller reputation; electronic word-of-mouth; seller commitment; subjective norm; perceived value of goods; trust in logistics companies

INTRODUCTION

Signing before the inspection or after the inspection? This is an issue that every online shopping consumer will encounter in the receipt of goods. Logistics companies and consumers often argue with each other about this issue and produce contradictions. When online shopping goods are sent to consumers, they generally want to inspect the goods whether there is any problem and then sign to confirm receipt. But this standard procedure for protecting the interests of consumers is rejected by some logistics companies. When consumers request to inspect whether the goods are consistent with the seller's description or not broken and then sign, couriers often say: "In the absence of signing, the recipient can not open the package for inspection." The manifestations of couriers weaken most online shopping consumers' enthusiasm especially when they buy the valuables and are scaring them away. Therefore, the current existing problem that some logistics companies do not allow consumers to sign after the inspection has seriously hindered the development of network transactions.

Logistics has always been the focus of many scholars; they have done a lot of research in the fields of logistics service quality, constituent dimensions of logistics service quality are also studied deeply. Mentzer, Gomes and Krapfel (1989) stated that logistics service quality is composed of the reliability

of goods, time and flexibility of delivery dimension. Mentzer, Flint and Hult (2001) put forward that logistics service quality model including goods accuracy, personnel communication quality, goods quality, goods intact degree, ordering process, order release quality, time, error handling, information quality and studied correlations between each other, improving the research results before them. Stank, Goldsby and Vickery (2003) stated that logistics service quality is composed of reliability, tangibility, responsiveness, assurance, empathy and cost dimension. The above research about constituent dimensions of logistics service quality proposed reliability, assurance, empathy, goods accuracy, goods quality, goods intact degree and so on. An overview of the total refers to goods without frictions or scratch traces, goods without crush, goods without lost pieces or small pieces and so on, so as to ensure the accuracy of goods quantity and the safety of goods quality. Thus the security of consumers' ordered goods is the most basic requirement of logistics service. A series of above existing research results can be seen that goods receiving way of signing after the inspection is very important to consumers, because consumers can inspect goods quantity and quality before signing. But there have been no articles studying consumers' goods receiving way, so this paper will explore consumers' goods receiving way as a research variable in depth.

Through the above practical and theoretical discussion, in order to alleviate the current logistics service's disputes about signing before the inspection or after the inspection, this paper will study consumers' willingness of signing before the inspection and then promote the further development of online shopping through providing a strong theoretical support and practical guidance for e-commerce companies and logistics companies.

LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESIS DEVELOPMENT

Based on a large amount of literature of e-commerce and logistics, sorting out above relevant literature and interviewing friends and classmates about their idea of signing before the inspection, this paper finally summarizes the factors affecting consumers' willingness of signing before the inspection from many aspects. This paper proposes three influent factors of seller reputation, electronic word-of-mouth and seller commitment from online store angle and two influent factors of subjective norm, perceived value of goods from consumer angle and trust in logistics companies from logistics company angle. This paper constructs theoretical framework and hypotheses through the above six factors.

Seller Reputation

Shrum & Wuthnow (1988) pointed out that reputation is a kind of social memory, composed of enterprise's experience in the past, the products in the past and enterprise management performance. Social memory composed of these factors causes good or bad reputation. Seller reputation refers to the degree to which consumers believe that the seller is honest and cares about them (Doney & Cannon, 1997) or the long-term overall evaluation of consumers for the seller (Gotsi & Wilson, 2001). Seller reputation directly influences consumers' trust in the seller. Reputation is the most valuable intangible assets of a seller. A good reputation is accumulated bit by bit by providing quality products and services, it is not easy. It is the result of efforts and hard work for a long time. Sellers will not damage the long-term interests because of the immediate short-term interests, which also make consumers believe that sellers will continue to provide good products and services. Many studies showed that seller reputation plays an important role in reducing risks under the e-commerce environment. Reputable sellers' primary task is to minimize risks and protect the interests of consumers. McKnight et al. (2002) considered that seller reputation can let buyers produce an initial trust under the high-risk e-commerce environment. Lee et al. (2001) also pointed out that seller reputation affects the degree of consumers' trust in the seller. And Koufaris and Hampton-Sosa (2004)'s study showed that seller reputation is the leading factor of consumers' network trust. Seller reputation affects network trust. Network transaction environment

because of its virtual and anonymous nature makes the transactions have great uncertainties and risks. Consumers can not inspect the authenticity of goods face to face to confirm whether they are consistent with the description of sellers. So when seller reputation is good, consumers will trust sellers in a certain extent and believe that sellers will be in the interests of consumers first and will provide quality products and services, then consumers' willingness of signing before the inspection will be enhanced.

Hypothesis 1: Seller reputation associates with consumers' goods receiving way. When seller reputation is good, consumers' willingness of signing before the inspection will be enhanced. Otherwise it will be weakened.

Electronic Word-of-Mouth

Word-of-mouth plays an important role in consumers' shopping process; it is one of the criteria which consumers will consider to determine whether to take buying behavior. For sellers, an effective means of marketing strategy is to establish a good public praise. Word-of-mouth in the traditional sense follows Arndt (1967)'s definition, which is defined as: an informal information communication behavior of an information-aware non-commercial communicator and recipient about a product, brand, organization or service, it is a kind of no commercial purpose behavior face to face. With the surge in the number of internet users and the development of social economy, e-commerce has been rapid development, and then scholars become interested in electronic word-of-mouth. Combining the traditional concept of word-of-mouth, scholars generally defines electronic word-of-mouth as real comments which consumers publish online about the use effect of goods, goods attribute or sellers' positive or negative information. In view of the virtual feature of network transactions, consumers can not face to face contact sellers and goods, therefore network buyers pay more attention to electronic word-of-mouth relative to the traditional entity transactions. Electronic word-of-mouth plays an important role in consumer decision-making and affects consumer behavior. Many scholars have confirmed that electronic word-of-mouth has a significant impact on consumer buying behavior, electronic word-of-mouth influences consumer trust (Liu, 2006; Davis et al., 2008 etc.). So when network seller's electronic word-of-mouth is good that buyers praise that the selected logistics service provider has good service attitude and high level of service quality that the goods have no damage, buyers will trust the selected logistics service provider, consumers' willingness of signing before the inspection will be enhanced.

Hypothesis 2: Electronic word-of-mouth associates with consumers' goods receiving way. When electronic word-of-mouth is good, consumers'

willingness of signing before the inspection will be enhanced. Otherwise it will be weakened.

Subjective Norm

Subjective norm refers to social pressure that the individual perceives in the decision whether to perform a specific behavior; it reflects the important impact of significant others or groups on the individual's decision-making behavior. Fishbein and Ajzen two scholars proposed Theory of Reasoned Action in 1975, which contains subjective norm. The core element of Theory of Reasoned Action is behavioral intention. Behavioral intention refers to the tendency of individuals to perform a specific behavior, is a prerequisite variable for the behavior, at the same time it is influenced by behavioral attitude and subjective norm. Subjective norm mainly refers to the influence of social environment on individual behavior, refers to perceived social pressure of the individual to take or not take certain behaviors. Subjective norm affects the individual consciously or unconsciously to obey some kind of group norms or the opinions of the majority. Sociality is human nature, so the surrounding environment has a great influence on people's decisions. Theory of Reasoned Action points out that consumer behavior is directly influenced by social group environment. The thoughts and behavior of friends, colleagues and others affect consumer behavior. So we can infer that when most friends or colleagues receive goods to take the approach of signing before the inspection, consumer's willingness of signing before the inspection will be enhanced.

Hypothesis 3: Subjective norm associates with consumers' goods receiving way. When most people around take the approach of signing before the inspection, consumers' willingness of signing before the inspection will be enhanced. Otherwise it will be weakened.

Seller Commitment

Service commitment refers to promise that customers can get what kind of services from the enterprise (Hart, 1992). When we are shopping online, we often see Taobao sellers publish a note about the receipt of goods on the web page. For example, (1) please check out of the box in front of the courier when receiving goods, make sure that the quantity of the goods is correct and the goods are in good condition. If there is no exception, then you can sign. Once you sign, then we will think that the goods are intact. (2) Please open and inspect the goods in front of the courier, confirm the goods complete, appearance without damage and no traces of deformation and apart, then you can sign. If there is any problem found during inspection, please let the courier testify aside and contact us in front of the courier, we can deal with it as soon as possible. If you find the packing is opened or goods are lost or seriously

damaged and so on, you can immediately reject receipt and contact us. After we confirm it, you can return the goods. Seller commitment above as a marketing tool, it passes a silent signal of service quality to customers. When you receive the goods which have problems, you can return the goods after the seller's confirmation. Many network sellers have similar declaration of signing after the inspection. If consumers take the approach of signing before the inspection, it will fall into disputes after the goods have problems, because sellers claim that signing is regarded as the goods in good condition, they will not admit that there is a problem. Then it will be difficult to protect consumers' own rights. Therefore, in order to avoid the above situation, buyers will obey what sellers say and their willingness of signing before the inspection will be weakened.

Hypothesis 4: Seller commitment associates with consumers' goods receiving way. When sellers promise that consumers can sign after the inspection, consumers' willingness of signing before the inspection will be weakened. Otherwise it will be enhanced.

Perceived Value of Goods

With the improvement of people's living standard and the popularity of the internet, online shopping mode has been gradually recognized by people, but the attendant disadvantages of online shopping are gradually revealed. Because online shopping platform usually has very low entry conditions and the supervision of information is relatively difficult, which lead to lack of the basis of goods quality online, the deluge of false information and the insecurity of seller qualification. At the same time, consumers buying goods online also need to consider the safety problem of goods' transportation process. In particular, the current rumors and pictures about third party logistics companies' barbaric transportation on the internet greatly exacerbated the worries of consumers, these reports directly lead to consumers' concerns about logistics services. Compared with traditional trading mode, the risks of network transactions are greater to consumers (Morgan & Hunt, 1994; Doney & Cannon, 1997; Buchholz & Rosenthal, 2002). On the other hand, according to perceived risk theory (Chernatony, 1989), the price of goods paid by consumers is proportional to consumers' perceived risk. Such as the purchase of a computer and a towel, the former's perceived risk is big because of high price; therefore consumers need to pay a high degree of attention to goods performance, quality, price, style and so on. However consumers for the latter generally do not need to spend a lot of time and efforts understanding goods function, structure and the price etc. So when consumers buy high valuable goods, they will worry more about that the quality of goods and concern that the description is not consistent with sellers or the

goods are damaged because of the current low level of logistics service, then perceived risk will increase and consumers' willingness of signing before the inspection will be weakened.

Hypothesis 5: Perceived value of goods associates with consumers' goods receiving way. When perceived value of goods is high, consumers' willingness of signing before the inspection will be weakened. Otherwise it will be enhanced.

Trust in Logistics Companies

The definition of trust is quite complex, so far there is no unified definition to cover all the meanings of different levels judging from the literature. Taking McKnight's view as the representative point, trust is confidence and positive beliefs of relying party on the trusted party's ability, honesty and good faith, which contains both the cognitive component and the emotional component. Traditional transactions' principle is cash on delivery and then the transaction ends. Even large commodities need door-to-door; consumers often get sales documents, so they do not need to worry. However, when consumers buy goods online, goods are still in the hands of the seller after the payment and they reach consumers' hands through subsequent logistics service, so consumers often have a variety of concerns. They worry that whether the goods are lost or damaged in transit or consistent with their own imagination and so forth. And the longer time goods need in transit, the more concern consumers feel. However, when consumers trust logistics companies, consumers will be assured of logistics companies. They believe that logistics companies will try their best to transport goods without error and damage to their hands in the shortest time. They also believe that logistics companies will put themselves for the sake of consumers and put the interests of consumers in the first place. So when consumers trust logistics companies, consumers' willingness of signing before the inspection will be enhanced.

Hypothesis 6: Trust in logistics companies associates with consumers' goods receiving way. When consumers trust logistics companies, consumers' willingness of signing before the inspection will be enhanced. Otherwise it will be weakened.

RESEARCH METHOD AND ANALYSIS RESULT

Measuring Tool

This study adopts the self-administered questionnaire to collect data. The questionnaire is divided into two parts; the first part is about consumer's personal information, including gender, age, education level, etc. The second part is measurements of seller reputation, electronic word-of-mouth, subjective norm, seller commitment, perceived value of goods,

trust in logistics companies and consumers' willing of signing before the inspection. In order to ensure the accuracy and effectiveness of the data obtained from the questionnaire, this study adopts mature scales used in the previous research. And this study modifies scales slightly according to the realistic situation of e-commerce context so as to adapt to it. Seller reputation references Ganesan (1994) literature. Electronic word-of-mouth combines comprehensive literature to design. Subjective norm references Venkatesh, Davis (2000) literature. Seller commitment combines actual situation to design. Perceived value of goods combines comprehensive literature to design. Trust in logistics companies references McKnight, Chervany (2002) literature and Corritore et al. (2003) literature. Consumers' willing of signing before the inspection references Dodds et al. (1991) literature and Gefen et al.(2003) literature.

SAMPLING

This study is mainly to explore consumers' willing of signing before the inspection, so the object of this study is mainly those consumers with online shopping experience. College students are a major subject of online shopping, so this study adopts convenient sampling and sets out questionnaires on university campuses. There are 350 questionnaires. This study recycles 336 copies and finally obtains 311 valid questionnaires due to eliminating missing or incorrect questionnaires; effective recovery rate is 89%. Men accounts for 62.4%, women accounts for 37.6%. Undergraduates accounts for 62.7, graduates and above accounts for 37.3%.

VALIDITY TEST AND RELIABILITY TEST

This study uses SPSS16.0 to test the validity and reliability of variables. Validity is divided into convergent validity and discriminant validity. It can be seen that all the variables meet convergent validity and discriminant validity and pass validity test through table 1.

Reliability refers to measurement without deviation degree. Reliability includes retest reliability, internal consistency reliability (Cronbach's alpha) etc. The most commonly used is Cronbach's alpha. Internal consistency reliability (Cronbach's alpha) reflects the relationship between internal items. Because these items are independent units of measurement for the same concept, so there should be a high degree of correlation between each other. It is generally believed that Cronbach's alpha should be greater than 0.7 in sociological research. Table 2 shows the variables' reliability. It can be seen that Cronbach's alpha of all the variables are greater than 0.7 and therefore they pass reliability test.

Table 1 Rotated Component Matrix

	R	W	N	C	V	T	S
R 1	0.764						
R 2	0.740						
R 3	0.762						
R 4	0.741						
R 5	0.703						
W 1		0.836					
W 2		0.768					
W 3		0.726					
N 1			0.833				
N 2			0.867				
N 3			0.795				
C 1				0.896			
C 2				0.918			
C 3				0.854			
V 1					0.976		
V 2					0.978		
V 3					0.969		
T 1						0.777	
T 2						0.802	
T 3						0.784	
T 4						0.774	
S 1							0.801
S 2							0.753
S 3							0.779
S 4							0.734

R=Seller reputation; W=Electronic word-of -mouth; C=Seller commitment; N=Subjective norm; V=Perceived value of goods; T=Trust in logistics companies; S=Consumers' willingness of signing before the inspection

Table 2 Variables' Reliability

Variable name	The number of items	Cronbach's Alpha
Seller Reputation	5	0.805
Electronic Word-of -Mouth	3	0.703
Subjective Norm	3	0.800
Seller Commitment	3	0.900
Perceived Value of Goods	3	0.975
Trust in Logistics Companies	4	0.808
Consumers' Willingness of Signing before The Inspection	4	0.765

Hypothesis Test

This study uses SPSS16.0 to verify hypotheses. The testing result of DW is 1.631, which is less than 2, so the residual is independent. VIF values are less than 2, so there is no multicollinearity.

Table 3 The Result of The Regression Equation

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics	
	B	Std. Error	Beta			Tolerance	VIF
(Constant)	4.482	.397		11.280	.000		
Seller Reputation	.084	.038	.079	2.237	.026	.924	1.082
Electronic Word-of -Mouth	.090	.041	.079	2.211	.028	.913	1.096
Subjective Norm	.109	.031	.124	3.451	.001	.900	1.111
Seller Commitment	-.072	.026	-.103	-2.761	.006	.836	1.197
Perceived Value of Goods	-.264	.012	-.735	-21.547	.000	.993	1.007
Trust in Logistics Companies	.149	.035	.155	4.295	.000	.886	1.129
R ² :	0.649						
Adjusted R ² :	0.642						

Dependent variable: Consumers' willingness of signing before the inspection

From the table we can see that the regression coefficient of seller reputation on consumers' willing of signing before the inspection is 0.079 ($P<0.05$), seller reputation positively influences consumers' willingness of signing before the inspection. This shows that hypothesis 1 is verified. The regression coefficient of electronic word-of-mouth on consumers' willingness of signing before the inspection is 0.079 ($P<0.05$), electronic word-of-

mouth positively influences consumers' willingness of signing before the inspection. This shows that hypothesis 2 is verified. The regression coefficient of subjective norm on consumers' willingness of signing before the inspection is 0.124 ($P<0.05$), subjective norm positively influences consumers' willingness of signing before the inspection. This shows that hypothesis 3 is verified. The regression coefficient of seller commitment on consumers' willingness of signing before the inspection is -0.103 ($P<0.05$), seller commitment negatively influences consumers' willingness of signing before the inspection. This

shows that hypothesis 4 is verified. The regression coefficient of perceived value of goods on consumers' willingness of signing before the inspection is -0.735 ($P < 0.05$), perceived value of goods negatively influences consumers' willingness of signing before the inspection. This shows that hypothesis 5 is verified. The regression coefficient of trust in logistics companies on consumers' willingness of signing before the inspection is 0.155 ($P < 0.05$), trust in logistics companies positively influences consumers' willingness of signing before the inspection. This shows that hypothesis 6 is verified. So all the independent variables put forward in this paper on the effects of the dependent variable are significant, all the hypotheses are valid.

RESEARCH CONCLUSIONS AND LIMITATIONS

Under the background of rapid development of online shopping, logistics service as the link of e-commerce becomes more and more important. At present many scholars have proved that logistics service quality influences consumers' satisfaction. This paper studies the factors which influence consumers' willingness of signing before the inspection, so as to better understand the needs of consumers, improve the existing problem of logistics service, and ultimately make consumers satisfied. Specifically this paper draws several conclusions as follows: (1) Perceived value of goods negatively influences consumers' willingness of signing before the inspection. Its influence ranks first in the six factors. (2) Trust in logistics companies positively influences consumers' willingness of signing before the inspection. Its influence ranks second in the six factors. (3) Subjective norm positively influences consumers' willingness of signing before the inspection. Its influence ranks third in the six factors. (4) Seller commitment negatively influences consumers' willingness of signing before the inspection. Its influence ranks fourth in the six factors. (5) Seller reputation and electronic word-of-mouth positively influence consumers' willingness of signing before the inspection. Their influences rank fifth in the six factors. From the above results we can see that when the value of the purchased goods is high, the logistics company is not trusted, the seller promises consumers to sign after the inspection, seller reputation is not high or electronic word-of-mouth is not good, consumers usually hope to sign after the inspection. Therefore signing after the inspection is very important to consumers at this time. Meeting consumers' willingness of signing after the inspection is crucial. It will affect consumer's satisfaction, thus affecting the development of online shopping.

This study also has limitations. First, the relatively homogeneous nature of the participants (undergraduate and graduate students) restricts the generalizability of the results. Online shopping is no

longer the exclusive outlet of the young male and early adopters, nor is it the toy of the technologically savvy student body. The typical shopper profile, in fact, is the college-educated, married, middle-aged woman. Future studies should use samples to reflect this new profile. Second, this study unearths the six variables affecting consumers' goods receiving way. There may be some other factors influencing consumers' goods receiving way. Future studies can try to find other factors. Research in this direction is practically important.

MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

The conclusions of this paper have important implications for e-commerce companies and logistics companies. Due to the influence of seller reputation, electronic word-of-mouth, subjective norm, seller commitment, perceived value of goods and trust in logistics companies, consumers sometimes hope to sign after the inspection when they shop online. In order to improve customers' satisfaction and further promote the rapid development of online shopping, e-commerce companies and logistics companies should strive to practice to let consumers sign after the inspection. Despite some logistics companies' regulations show that they allow consumers to sign after the inspection currently, the actual implementation process often is not in place, resulting in the phenomenon that couriers sometimes don't allow consumers to sign after the inspection, causing consumers' dissatisfaction.

First, logistics companies should increase enforcement. Because logistics has so many links including transport, storage, loading and unloading, shipping, packaging, distribution processing, distribution and information processing, some links may cause some damages of goods or the loss of goods and so on. Thus allowing consumers to sign after the inspection can reduce consumers' psychological concern, increase consumers' confidence and satisfaction with logistics companies and win a good reputation. This will improve logistics companies' visibility, which will bring great growth in business volume and make companies develop more rapidly.

Secondly, e-commerce companies can reach an agreement with logistics companies and take some incentives to improve logistics companies' enthusiasm to let consumers sign after the inspection. These measures will increase consumers' satisfaction. As we all know in today's enterprise marketing, the key is to correctly handle the relationship between enterprises and the parties. The nature of relationship marketing is customer service oriented, coordinating the relationship between the elements of marketing system, thus creating a good marketing environment to enable enterprises to achieve the goal of occupation and expansion of market share. So in the

relationship marketing, customer relationship is seen as the most valuable strategic resource of enterprises and a key factor for enterprises to win the market competition. The formation and maintenance of customer relationship is to enhance consumers' satisfaction and trust in companies, therefore meeting consumers' willingness of signing after the inspection, increasing consumers' trust and improving their satisfaction is very important to e-commerce companies. Logistics is an important link in e-commerce. If e-commerce companies establish the concept of relationship marketing, cultivate and improve consumers' trust and take long-term relationship as the target, finally consumers will trust these e-commerce companies. And if the majority of e-commerce companies will adhere to this concept, online shopping environment will be improved, and thus it will positively impact many consumers' perception of online shopping environment. I believe that e-commerce companies, logistics companies and consumers can achieve a win-win situation ultimately through efforts of logistics companies, e-commerce companies and consumers.

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