



**INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL STIMULI OF ONLINE SHOPPING CART
ABANDONMENT AND DECISION TO BUY FROM A LAND-BASED
RETAILER**

By

WANG SIQI

**Thesis Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies, Universiti Putra
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Abstract of thesis presented to the Senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia in fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL STIMULI OF ONLINE SHOPPING CART ABANDONMENT AND DECISION TO BUY FROM A LAND-BASED RETAILER

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November 2022

Chair : Jacky Cheah Jun Hwa, PhD
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The growth of e-commerce has disrupted traditional forms of consumption, and consumer shopping activity is rapidly digitalizing. Scholars have conducted a plethora of studies on online shopping behavior; however, a phenomenon that has surprisingly received less attention in the consumer behavior literature is "non-purchase behavior", particularly online shopping cart abandonment (OSCA). Though OSCA may be the topmost frustrating outcome for e-retailers in generating sales, the stimuli factors leading to this behavior and the determinants of the decision to buy from a land-based retailer (DBLR) remain relatively unexplored.

To fill the gaps in the literature, this study aimed to identify the determinants of OSCA and DBLR among Mainland China consumers. First, the cognition-affect-behavior (C-A-B) model and buyer behavior theory were employed to explain the causal patterns of factors that stimulate online non-purchasing behavior. Specifically, the effects of consumers' cognitive factors (i.e., internal stimuli - attribute conflicts, self-efficacy, and interpersonal conflicts; and external stimulus - total costs) and affective states (i.e., emotional ambivalence, wait for lower price) on output behaviors (i.e., hesitation at checkout, OSCA, and DBLR) were evaluated. Next, the mediating role of hesitation at checkout in the research framework was explored. Finally, expectancy disconfirmation theory was adopted to test the moderating role of perception factors (i.e., perceived transaction inconvenience, perceived risk). Data from 883 questionnaires were collected through an online platform (i.e., Wenjuanxing). Purposive sampling was used to ensure that the respondents were Mainland China consumers with experience in online shopping. Subsequently, the data were analyzed using partial least squares structural equation modelling (PLS-SEM).

Several significant findings were found, as follows: i) internal stimuli (i.e., attribute conflicts, self-efficacy, and interpersonal conflicts) positively influence emotional ambivalence; ii) the external stimulus, total costs, positively influences consumers' emotional ambivalence; iii) total costs positively influences the wait for lower price; iv) affective states (i.e., emotional ambivalence, wait for lower price) positively influence hesitation at checkout; v) hesitation at checkout mediates the relationship between affective states (i.e., emotional ambivalence, wait for lower price) and OSCA; and vi) perception factors (i.e., perceived transaction inconvenience, perceived risk) strengthen the relationship between emotional ambivalence and hesitation at checkout. This study provides theoretical contributions and managerial insights for scholars and e-retailers.



Abstrak tesis yang dikemukakan kepada Senat Universiti Putra Malaysia
sebagai memenuhi keperluan untuk ijazah Doktor Falsafah

**RANGSANGAN DALAMAN DAN LUARAN UNTUK PENGABAIAN TROLI
BELI-BELAH DALAM TALIAN DAN KEPUTUSAN UNTUK MEMBELI
DARIPADA PERUNCIT BERASASKAN TANAH**

Oleh

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Sekolah : Perniagaan dan Ekonomi

Perkembangan e-dagang telah mengganggu bentuk penggunaan tradisional, dan aktiviti membeli-belah pengguna semakin didigitalkan. Penyelidik telah menjalankan banyak kajian mengenai tingkah laku membeli-belah dalam talian; namun, fenomena yang hairannya kurang mendapat perhatian dalam literatur tingkah laku pengguna ialah "tingkah laku bukan pembelian", terutamanya pengabaian troli beli-belah dalam talian (OSCA). Walaupun OSCA boleh menjadi hasil yang paling mengecewakan bagi e-peruncit dalam menjaga jualan, faktor rangsangan yang membawa kepada tingkah laku ini dan penentu keputusan untuk membeli daripada peruncit berasaskan fizikal (DBLR) masih belum diterokai.

Untuk mengisi jurang dalam literatur, kajian ini bertujuan mengenal pasti penentu OSCA dan DBLR dalam kalangan pengguna Tanah Besar China. Pertama, model kognisi-pengaruh-tingkah laku (C-A-B) dan teori tingkah laku pembeli digunakan untuk menerangkan corak penyebab faktor-faktor yang merangsang tingkah laku bukan pembelian dalam talian. Khususnya, kesan faktor kognitif pengguna (i.e., rangsangan dalaman - konflik atribut, efikasi sendiri, dan konflik interpersonal; dan rangsangan luaran - jumlah kos) dan keadaan afektif (i.e., ambivalensi emosi, penantian harga yang lebih rendah) ke atas tingkah laku terhasil (i.e., keraguan semasa pembayaran, OSCA, dan DBLR) telah dinilai. Seterusnya, peranan pengantara keraguan semasa pembayaran dalam rangka kerja penyelidikan telah diterokai. Akhirnya, teori penolakan jangkaan telah diterima pakai untuk menguji peranan penyederhana faktor persepsi (i.e., persepsi kesulitan transaksi, persepsi risiko). Data daripada 883 soal selidik telah dikumpul melalui platform dalam talian (i.e., Wenjuanxing). Persampelan bertujuan digunakan untuk memastikan responden adalah pengguna Tanah Besar China yang berpengalaman dalam

membeli-belah dalam talian. Seterusnya, data dianalisis menggunakan pemodelan persamaan struktur kuasa dua terkecil separa (PLS-SEM).

Beberapa penemuan signifikan ditemui, seperti berikut: i) rangsangan dalaman (konflik atribut, efikasi sendiri, dan konflik interpersonal) mempengaruhi ambivalensi emosi secara positif; ii) rangsangan luar, jumlah kos, secara positif mempengaruhi ambivalensi emosi pengguna; iii) kebimbangan tentang jumlah kos secara positif mempengaruhi penantian harga yang lebih rendah; iv) keadaan afektif (iaitu, ambivalensi emosi, penantian harga yang lebih rendah) secara positif mempengaruhi keraguan semasa pembayaran; v) keraguan semasa pembayaran mengantara hubungan antara keadaan afektif (ambivalensi emosi, penantian harga yang lebih rendah) dan OSCA; dan vi) faktor persepsi (persepsi kesulitan transaksi, persepsi risiko) mengukuhkan hubungan antara ambivalensi emosi dan keraguan semasa pembayaran. Kajian ini memberikan sumbangan teori dan pandangan pengurusan untuk para penyelidik dan e-peruncit.

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"Those who sow in tears will reap with shouts of joy."--Psalms, 126: 5

This thesis was submitted to the Senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia and has been accepted as fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy. The members of the Supervisory Committee were as follows:

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

| | |
|----------|--|
| e.g., | exempli gratia, for example |
| i.e., | id est, that is |
| et al. | et alia, and others |
| etc. | et cetera, and the rest |
| COVID-19 | Coronavirus disease |
| OSCA | Online shopping cart abandonment |
| DBLR | Decision to buy from a land-based retailer |
| C-A-B | Cognition-affect-behavior |
| BBT | Buyer behavior theory |
| EDT | Expectancy disconfirmation theory |
| CDT | Cognitive dissonance theory |
| SEM | Structural equation modeling |
| CB-SEM | Covariance-based structural equation modeling |
| PLS-SEM | Partial least squares structural equation modeling |
| HOC | Higher-order construct |
| LOC | Lower-order construct |
| AVE | Average variance extracted |
| HTMT | Heterotrait-monotrait |
| VIF | Variance inflation factor |
| RMSE | Root mean squared error |
| MAE | Mean absolute error |
| CMB | Common method bias |
| CR | Composite reliability |
| AC | Attribute conflicts |

| | |
|-----------|-------------------------------------|
| PAC | Positive attributes conflicts |
| NAC | Negative attributes conflicts |
| SE | Self-efficacy |
| IC | Interpersonal conflicts |
| TC | Total costs |
| EA | Emotional ambivalence |
| WLP | Wait for lower price |
| HC | Hesitation at checkout |
| PTINC | Perceived transaction inconvenience |
| PR | Perceived risk |
| H | Hypothesis |
| CNY | Chinese Yuan |
| <i>B</i> | Beta |
| CI | Confidence interval |
| <i>f</i> | F-test |
| <i>M</i> | Mean |
| <i>n</i> | Sample size |
| OR | Odds ratio |
| <i>p</i> | P-value |
| <i>SD</i> | Standard deviation |
| <i>SE</i> | Standard error |

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This study aimed to investigate the drivers of Mainland China consumers' abandonment of online shopping carts and their decision to buy from a land-based retailer. The first section of this introductory chapter provides an overview of online shopping and consumer behavior in online shopping. Based on this, the problem statement is elaborated, and the research questions and objectives are proposed. The theoretical and practical significance of the study are then discussed, along with the scope of the study. In addition, the definitions of the variables used in this study are provided. Finally, the structure of the study is outlined in a research plan and a conclusion is offered.

1.1 Overview of online shopping

Online shopping refers to the process of selling products and services through electronic transactions involving multiple parties, data, and/or money (Chawla & Kumar, 2021). The development of technology has led to an increase in Internet penetration and the widespread use of mobile devices or smartphones, driving the global expansion of e-commerce in the retail industry (Nielsen, 2019). The growth of companies such as Alibaba, Amazon, eBay, and Walmart enables traditional physical retailers to create a virtual marketplace for consumers, where new technologies make it easier for consumers to shop online. Online shopping is the process by which consumers purchase products or services over the Internet (Li & Zhang, 2002).

One of the main advantages of online shopping is convenience. For example, consumers can easily compare the attributes, functions, and prices of different products through their personal computers or mobile devices (Camilleri, 2021). Online shopping also has a lower carbon footprint and is more environmentally friendly than shopping in physical stores, as it eliminates the need to leave one's house (Research and Markets, 2020). Moreover, shopping online expands consumers' geographical range and removes the distance limitation (Cairncross, 2001). According to Statista (2022a), as many as two billion consumers have experienced purchasing services or products online, with global online sales exceeding \$5.2 trillion. Electronic companies offer a wider range of services and products to online consumers, as evidenced by Walmart's grocery e-commerce growth of about 74% and Shopify's of about 95% (UN News, 2021). Notably, the outbreak of the coronavirus (hereafter referred to as COVID-19) pandemic accelerating has accelerated the shift to a more digital world, highlighting the important role that online shopping plays in this crisis and its aftermath (Pantano et al., 2020). Undoubtedly, the changes triggered by the pandemic in consumer shopping behavior will have a lasting impact (UNCTAD, 2020).

China, being one of the countries with the largest number of internet users in Asia (989 million according to the CNNIC, 2021), is at the forefront of recovery from the pandemic. With many provinces slowly returning to normal levels of activity (McKinsey, 2020), e-commerce is taking advantage of the "non-contact" trend to create new online service models, such as unmanned vehicle delivery, contactless delivery, cloud shopping, and more. There is no doubt that e-retail will play a significant role in the recovery, as seen in the trend of offline consumption moving online. In fact, Statista (2022b) projected that in 2021, the number of online shoppers would reach 782 million and e-retail sales revenue would hit \$1.81 trillion.

Since the outbreak of COVID-19, an increasing number of consumers are buying goods through online platforms. In 2020, the five best e-commerce platforms in China were Taobao, Tmall, JD.com, Pinduoduo, and Xiaohongshu (as shown in Figure 1.1). Among them, Taobao has 691 million monthly active users, and consumers from tier-one cities make up the majority of the market. According to Figure 1.1, the main group of online consumers is millennials (those born between 1980 and the mid-1990s), who make up 11% of annual sales (China Daily, 2019). Within this group, female consumers are the dominant demographic on all online shopping platforms. These platforms cater to both consumers and products, with most brands tending to reach out to the most popular platform in China, Tmall. Speciality retailers, on the other hand, choose to stay on Pinduoduo, where consumers can buy in groups.

Moreover, it is increasingly the case that retailers are expanding into new channels of online sales through live-streaming (e.g., TikTok, Youtube Live, etc.). At the same time, e-retailers are creating more shopping festivals and themes (e.g., Singles' Day, Queen's Day, and 618 shopping festivals), which are important drivers of economic revitalization. Data shows that there are 340,000 mobile applications (or mobile apps), totaling 10.7 billion downloads (Gov.cn, 2021). Indeed, a majority (85%) of Mainland China consumers prefer to spend time and money online, which is a shopping habit that carries a huge and lasting impact (Hi-Com, 2021).

Although online shopping has become a fun and exciting platform for consumers to enjoy their purchasing experience, many e-retailers have faced limited growth in sales over the past decade (Harris et al., 2017). Online shopping, as a device-based channel, can be relatively risky and uncertain (Kummer et al., 2021; Lee & Bell, 2013). Many potential problems can arise in the consumer's decision-making process, such as: i) the inability to try on clothes through online purchases; ii) potential credit card security issues; iii) expensive logistics and shipping costs; and iv) the cumbersome process of returning and replacing goods (Baymard Research, 2019). These potential risks make consumers concerned about cost, and without a better deal, they may not proceed to the checkout confirmation process. Instead, they may wait to purchase or even simply exit the transaction, leading to the frequent occurrence of online shopping cart abandonment. This study defines online shopping cart abandonment (hereafter referred to as OSCA) as "consumers'

placement of item(s) in their online shopping cart without purchasing any item(s) during that online shopping session" (Kukar-Kinney & Close, 2010, p. 240). The data shows that the global OSCA behavior rate is as high as 88.05% (Statista, 2021a). By region, the OSCA rate of Asia Pacific (76.30%) exceeds that of Europe (70.90%) and North America (74.00%) (FinancesOnline, 2021). In terms of device type, mobile phones have a higher OSCA rate (85.65%) than tablets (80.74%) and desktops (73.07%) (FinancesOnline, 2021).

Consumer OSCA behavior is a major challenge for e-retailers (Rejikumar & Asokan-Ajitha, 2020), and can lead to the decision to buy from a land-based retailer (hereafter referred to as DBLR). An industry report shows that 46% of consumers agreed that shopping in a physical store is their first choice (Marian, 2021), as they seek to avoid shipping fees and gain the physical experience (e.g., touch, consultative interaction, etc.) that online shopping cannot provide (Raydiant, 2021). In addition, with the development of contactless payment technology, the process of shopping in a physical store is now fast, efficient, and secure (PowerReviews, 2021).

While acknowledging that the COVID-19 pandemic has changed consumers' traditional way of shopping, it is evident that OSCA is exacerbated by the development of online technology and mobile apps, causing significant losses for e-retailers (e.g., slower sales, loss of consumers and revenue, increased competition, etc.). E-retailers are adjusting their marketing strategies and marketing tools for online sales to meet this shift in consumer behavior (Nielson, 2020). Therefore, understanding the phenomenon of consumers' OSCA and DBLR is a topic worthy of study.

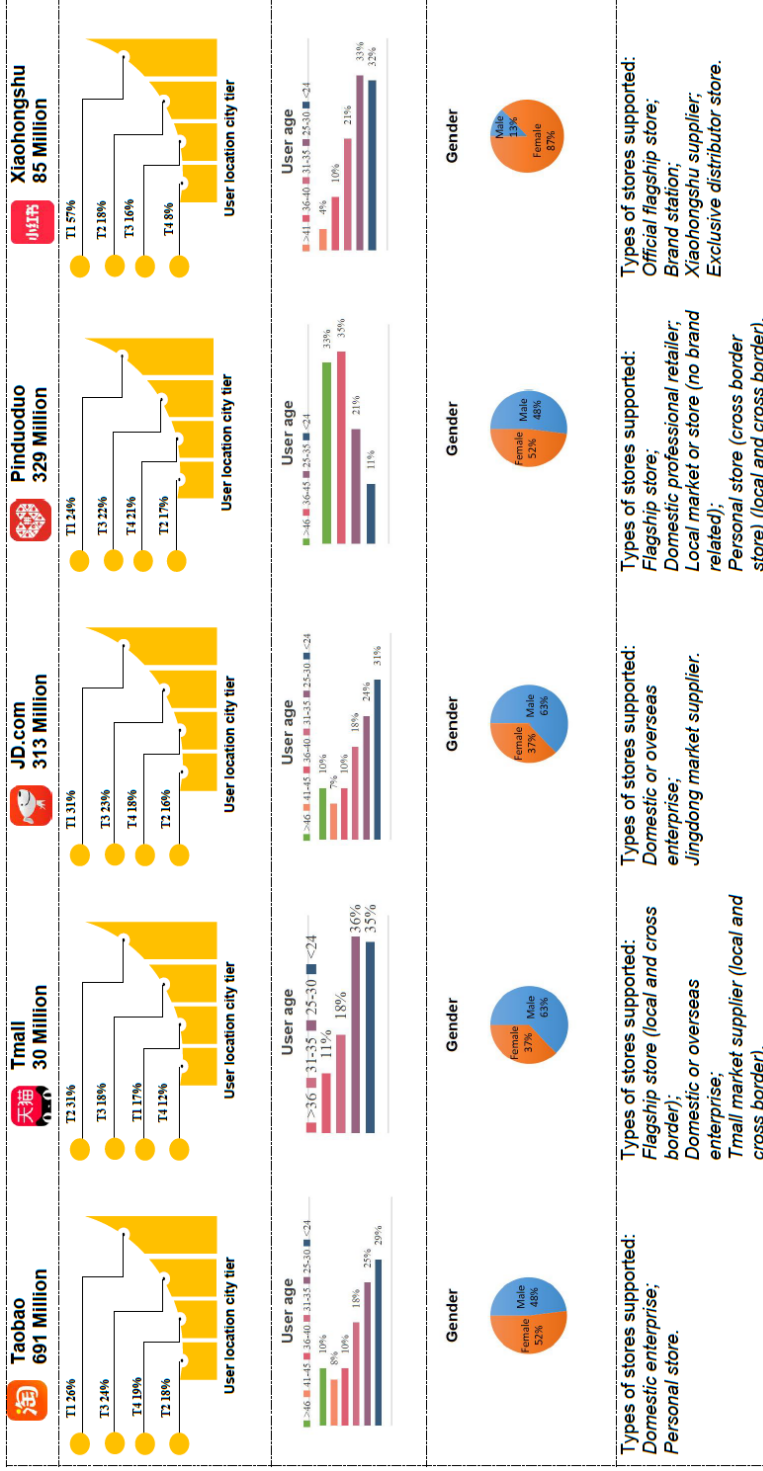


Figure 1.1: Chinese e-Commerce Platform Comparison 2021
(Source: Hi-Com, 2021)

1.2 Consumer behavior in online shopping

The behavior of consumers in the online shopping environment is diverse, and is governed by their psychological changes and various psychological activities that influence their purchase decisions (Kim et al., 2008; Sharma et al., 2010). The psychological processes of consumers in purchasing goods begin with a cognitive assessment (Kim et al., 2008). In the e-commerce setting, consumers' cognitive factors encompass attribute conflicts, self-efficacy, and interpersonal conflicts (Huang et al., 2018; Priester & Petty, 2001).

First, attribute conflicts refer to consumers' positive and negative ideas about online shopping platforms (Huang et al., 2018). For example, online shopping can save time without queuing. On the contrary, there is a security risk pertaining to payment or fake products. According to the Sina 315 Survey (2019), 25.32% of online consumers indicate that they have bought counterfeit and inferior maternal and infant products, while Internet data shows that fake and substandard product complaints account for 20% (China Quality News, 2020). When this positive and negative cognitive attitude occurs concurrently, it causes emotional fluctuations and uncomfortable tension (Baek, 2010; Lee & Aaker, 2004), which can inhibit consumers' purchasing behavior.

Second, some consumers lack self-efficacy in online shopping. That is, they do not feel capable of completing the online purchase process, which demands proficiency in electronic product usage, online searching, product selection, mailing address filling, payment transfer, and more (Huang et al., 2018). The popularity of mobile devices brings great convenience to people, but not all consumers can use them proficiently. For example, persons who are less receptive to electronic products would still find it difficult to connect to the Internet via computers, mobile phones, mobile payments, and other advanced technologies. Even digital natives who are surrounded by frequently updated shopping platforms or applications need to adapt and learn to operate the different interfaces.

Interpersonal conflicts represent the possibility of disagreements between oneself and significant others in making online shopping choices (Huang et al., 2018). Many consumers consult their family members or intimate others before making a purchase decision, with one study reporting that 59% of people do so (Laja, 2019). The influence of word-of-mouth (WOM) is also widely recognized. When consumers encounter someone with different opinions, they experience discomfort (Kim & Lennon, 2011), leading to delayed purchases or even abandonment of the product.

More importantly, consumers' cognition of total cost is the most intuitive cue that influences purchase decisions. Product pricing, historical prices, and expected prices all influence consumers' cognitions (e.g., benefit motivation) and decision-making behavior (Cheah et al., 2020; González et al., 2021).

According to Kukar-Kinney and Close (2010), total costs include the sum of shipping, handling, taxes, and other charges that trigger OSCA behavior in price-sensitive consumers. Indeed, when purchasing on online platforms, consumers generally expect e-retailers to offer lower product prices (Kukar-Kinney & Close, 2010) and fulfil expected orders (Han et al., 2020).

It is imperative for e-retailers to ensure that shopping carts containing their products are not abandoned in a highly competitive market. As analyzed in this study, cognitive factors are critical in influencing the non-buying behavior of online consumers. Understanding the cognitive factors of consumer OSCA and DBLR can therefore provide informative value to e-retailers in developing effective strategies to improve this non-buying behavior. In particular, examining the potential interdependence of cognitive conflicts and total costs on actual market behavior (Cham et al., 2020) can provide more comprehensive insights into OSCA and DBLR.

1.3 Problem statement

The proliferation of the internet and smartphones has led to a rise in mobile app downloads, but it has also contributed to an increase in cart abandonment rates. Baymard research (2019) reported that the global OSCA rate rose by 69.57% from 2006 to 2018, causing a significant reduction in retail profits and a loss of \$18 billion in annual sales revenue (Dopson, 2021). The top reason for OSCA is unexpected costs such as shipping fees, surcharges, and taxes. Industry reports show that more than half of consumers prefer e-retailers who offer free shipping and 68% may reconsider their purchase decisions if the e-retailer does not provide incentives such as free returns or shipping (Fox, 2022). Comparison shopping is another trigger of OSCA behavior, as consumers tend to add goods to their shopping cart to determine the product's overall cost (SaleCycle, 2022). Most consumers (85%) further expect e-retailers to offer special deals and discounts (Novat, 2021). Physical stores, however, still bring in more than 65% of the business, as they offer a unique set of advantages that entice customers to visit, such as the opportunity to touch and feel the product (PuroMarketing, 2019). According to research, 58% of consumers will purchase goods offline after researching them online (Thomas, 2019), and 90% are more likely to buy with the help of knowledgeable shop assistants who offer timely and personalized services as well as the opportunity to touch and feel the product (Timetrade, 2018). Although OSCA is an obstacle that e-retailers cannot completely eliminate, efforts can still be made to improve it. Therefore, exploring the factors that contribute to non-buying behavior among online consumers is critical to alleviating the situation.

From the academic perspective, consumers' OSCA behavior has not been fully explored (Huang et al., 2018; Kukar-Kinney et al., 2022). By To better reflect on OSCA behavior, it is necessary to understand how cognitive factors cause consumers' mixed feelings towards online shopping. In this regard, the cognition-affect-behavior (C-A-B) model (Huang et al., 2018) describes the

process of behavior formation, where beliefs or emotions are reacted to as favorable or unfavorable, resulting in behavioral intentions (Huang et al., 2018). Wu et al. (2018) used the C-A-B model to explore the relationship between consumers' attitudes and decision-making behaviors. Another study by Huang et al. (2018) adopted the C-A-B model to explain online consumers' OSCA. The C-A-B model is indeed essential for exploring a range of decisions that identify consumer intentions and behaviors (Gursoy et al., 2019). Therefore, the application of the C-A-B model in the context of this study is appropriate as the model captures consumers' affect and behavior by understanding their cognitive factors.

Drawing from the C-A-B model, this study proposes six literature gaps. To begin with, previous research has identified several causes of OSCA, including time pressure and unpleasant shopping experiences (Cho et al., 2006; Khan et al., 2022), as well as security and privacy risks (Rajamma et al., 2009; Yang & Forney, 2013). More recent research by Kukar-Kinney et al. (2022) confirms that information seeking and organizational motivation can also contribute to OSCA behavior. However, there have been few studies examining the impact of consumer cognitive factors on OSCA (Huang et al., 2018). Consumer cognition is related to internal psychological stimuli (Cham et al., 2021) that can lead to positive or negative affective priming effects and influence purchase intentions (Fritz & Dreisbach, 2015; Nguyen et al., 2019). This is supported by Huang et al.'s (2018) study, which suggests that cognitive conflicts (i.e., attribute conflicts, self-efficacy, and interpersonal conflicts) can reveal the dynamic process of ambivalence as an antecedent of OSCA behavior. Therefore, this study used the C-A-B model to propose cognitive conflicts (i.e., attribute conflicts, self-efficacy, and interpersonal conflicts) as internal stimuli that explain the complex feelings that emerge from emotional ambivalence and their impact on consumer decision-making behavior.

Online transactions typically incur additional shipping, handling, and tax fees that increase the overall cost of the order, unlike shopping in physical stores (Kukar-Kinney & Close, 2010). Previous research has shown that price, as an external stimulus, can impact consumer purchase behavior (González et al., 2021; Hufnagel et al., 2022; Li et al., 2022; Yeh et al., 2020). Mookherjee et al.'s (2021) recent study support this claim, as it shows that price differences between online and offline channels can motivate consumers to return or reorder items. Although the impact of price has been widely discussed in the marketing literature, there is a lack of research exploring the relationship between total costs and emotional ambivalence. Emotional value perception affects purchase intentions (González et al., 2021), and negative emotions in particular are more dominant and influential in personal decisions (Huang et al., 2018). Consumer behavior models that include emotional ambivalence are rare, and the different channels of consumer behavior resulting from emotional ambivalence have yet to be explored. This study examines the gap, based on the C-A-B model, this study examined the relationship between total costs and emotional ambivalence to provide additional insights into the OSCA phenomenon.

Howard and Sheth (1969) proposed the buyer behavior theory (BBT), in which financial status is used as an external environmental factor that affects consumer buying behavior. Close and Kukar-Kinney's (2010) work supports this theory by establishing that price factors influence consumer buying behavior. Subsequently, Kukar-Kinney and Close (2010) built on this research by extending total costs and wait for lower price to the online environment, justifying them as critical inhibitors of online purchase decisions. Though the research on price has been impactful in the marketing literature, it has mainly focused on the economic cognitive perspective. At the same time, it is necessary to analyze the positive or negative responses to waiting for discounts as affective states (Li et al., 2022). Therefore, based on the C-A-B model and buyer behavior theories, this study extends total costs and wait for lower price to the context of OSCA, given that responses ranging from cognitive to affective may be important antecedents to OSCA and DBLR.

The diversity of choices in the Internet environment can cause delayed purchases by creating positive or negative emotions when consumers face a variety of information and product prices (Cho et al., 2006). Previous research has established that the wait for lower price affects online consumers' purchase behavior (Wu, 2003). So far, however, few studies have investigated the effects of both emotional ambivalence and wait for lower price on multiple behavioral decisions. According to the C-A-B model, affect is an emotional evaluation with preferences that cause behavioral responses (Chou et al., 2020). This study thus investigated the effects of emotional ambivalence and wait for lower price on output behaviors (i.e., hesitation at checkout, OSCA, and DBLR), extending the applicability of the C-A-B model in the OSCA context.

The growth of the Internet allows consumers to be more selective when shopping online. When more products or platforms become available, the perceived uncertainty of information arises, and the resulting hesitation at checkout leads consumers to leave without purchasing a product (Jessup et al., 2009). Cho et al. (2006) tested the types of delay or hesitation in purchasing an online product, while Huang et al. (2018) supported this study by exploring hesitation at checkout as a significant variable in the context of OSCA. Although hesitation at checkout has been studied, empirical evidence on the impact of hesitation at checkout on OSCA and DBLR remains relatively scarce. To fill this gap, this study adopted the C-A-B model to explore the mediating role of hesitation at checkout between affective inputs (i.e., emotional ambivalence, wait for lower price) and output behaviors (i.e., OSCA, DBLR).

Notwithstanding the aforementioned attempts, previous research has ignored the boundary conditions that influence OSCA behavior. Consumers would expect a satisfactory shopping experience during online shopping (Rezaei & Valaei, 2017). As such, the expectancy disconfirmation theory (EDT) (Oliver, 1980) is influential in consumer satisfaction research and sufficiently explains consumers' expectations of e-retailing. Research has highlighted convenience as one of the determining factors influencing online shopping (Parker & Wang, 2016). Relatedly, Rajamma et al.'s (2009) study showed that perceived

transaction inconvenience (e.g., account registration, internet delays, complex sales activities, etc.) and payment/privacy risks lead to OSCA behavior. Research on transaction inconvenience and risk is necessary as consumers often encounter a complex online shopping process (Rajamma et al., 2009). However, there is a lack of empirical research to guide the boundary role of these two perception factors in the context of OSCA. To fill this gap in the literature, this study investigated the moderating roles of perceived transaction inconvenience and perceived risk between affective states (i.e., emotional ambivalence, wait for lower price) and hesitation at checkout.

While the existing literature highlights the different ways in which consumers understand online shopping, other scholars have provided insights into the cross-channel free-riding behavior of consumers (see Chung et al., 2022; Flavián et al., 2020; Goraya et al., 2020; Guo et al., 2021). They have explored multiple aspects of online and offline channels, such as the effectiveness of cross-shopping in consumer purchase behavior (Flavián et al., 2020), the impact of channel integration on purchase preferences (Goraya et al., 2020), and the impact of various factors on multichannel price payment (Viejo-Fernández et al., 2020). Kukar-Kinney and Close (2010) call stressed the importance of investigating consumers' OSCA behavior and their intentions to complete purchases in land-based retailers. This is because consumers may choose to shop via integrated channels to maximize their benefits (Hall et al., 2017). Although scholars have provided different insights into consumer behavior in the integrated channel, in the context of OSCA, consumer considerations (i.e., cognitive, affective) are fragmented and the resulting final patronage (i.e., DBLR) of consumers remains unexplained. Therefore, this study was based on the C-A-B model not only to empirically substantiate the drivers of OSCA but also to explain consumers' DBLR decisions.

In summary, the main objective of this study was to examine the determinants of consumers' OSCA and DBLR behavior in Mainland China. Based on the C-A-B model, BBT, and EDT, six knowledge gaps were identified in the literature, underscoring the need to study the following: i) cognitive conflicts (i.e., attribute conflicts, self-efficacy, and interpersonal conflicts) as internal stimuli impacting emotional ambivalence and the psychological processes behind OSCA; ii) total costs as an external stimulus influencing emotional ambivalence; iii) the impact of total costs on wait for lower prices; iv) the effects of emotional ambivalence and wait for lower price on output behaviors (i.e., hesitation at checkout, OSCA, and DBLR); v) hesitation at checkout as a mediating variable between affective inputs (i.e., emotional ambivalence, wait for lower price) and output behaviors (i.e., OSCA, DBLR); and vi) perceived transaction inconvenience and perceived risk as moderating variables between affective states (i.e., emotional ambivalence, wait for lower price) and hesitation at checkout.

1.4 Research questions

To investigate the drivers of consumer OSCA and DBLR behavior in Mainland China, this study proposed the following research questions: i) Do cognitive conflicts (i.e., attribute conflicts, self-efficacy, and interpersonal conflicts) influence emotional ambivalence? ii) Do total costs influence emotional ambivalence? iii) Do total costs influence wait for lower price? iv) Do emotional ambivalence and wait for lower price influence hesitation at checkout, OSCA, and DBLR? v) Does hesitation at checkout mediate the relationships between the affective inputs (i.e., emotional ambivalence, wait for lower price) and output behaviors (i.e., OSCA, DBLR)? vi) Do perceived transaction inconvenience and perceived risk moderate the relationships between affective states (i.e., emotional ambivalence, wait for lower price) and hesitation at checkout?

1.5 Research objectives

The OSCA phenomenon comes from real market issues and is prevalent across different industries. However, the reasons behind abandonment behavior and how they influence DBLR have not yet been examined by scholars. Therefore, the objective of this study was to investigate the drivers of OSCA and DBLR among Mainland China consumers. The specific research objectives were as follows: i) To evaluate the impact of cognitive conflicts (i.e., attribute conflicts, self-efficacy, and interpersonal conflicts) on emotional ambivalence. ii) To explore the relationship between total costs and emotional ambivalence. iii) To explore the relationship between total costs and wait for lower price. iv) To explore the effects of emotional ambivalence and wait for lower price on hesitation at checkout, OSCA, and DBLR. v) To determine the mediating role of hesitation at checkout in the relationships between affective inputs (i.e., emotional ambivalence, wait for lower price) and output behaviors (i.e., OSCA, DBLR). vi) To test the moderating roles of perceived transaction inconvenience and perceived risk in the relationships between affective states (i.e., emotional ambivalence, wait for lower price) and hesitation at checkout.

1.6 Significance of the study

By adopting the C-A-B model to explain the causal pattern of factors that stimulate non-buying behavior in the online environment, this study adds value to academic research in six ways. First, it explores the psychological processes of consumer OSCA behavior through cognitive conflicts (i.e., attribute conflicts, self-efficacy, and interpersonal conflicts) and emotional ambivalence. This combination of cognitive and affective factors provides a theoretical basis for a better understanding of non-buying behavior. Second, previous research highlights that external and internal stimuli can interact with each other (Liao et al., 2009; Kalla & Arora, 2011). In this regard, this study addresses a gap in the literature by examining total costs as an external stimulus affecting emotional

ambivalence. The new insights on internal stimuli (i.e., attribute conflicts, self-efficacy, and interpersonal conflicts) and external stimulus (i.e., total costs) as cognitive factors affecting emotional ambivalence enrich the existing literature on OSCA research.

Furthermore, in response to Kukar-Kinney and Close's (2010) call for a deeper understanding of consumer non-buying behavior in the online environment, this study extends BBT to the online environment. Specifically, the impact on wait for lower price is assessed by considering total costs. Meanwhile, the C-A-B model is employed to understand the influence of affective factors (i.e., emotional ambivalence, wait for lower price) on output behaviors (i.e., hesitation at checkout, OSCA, and DBLR). This expands the applicability of the C-A-B model to the context of OSCA and adds knowledge on the relationships among the predictors of online non-buying behavior.

Subsequently, hesitation at checkout is used as a mediating variable to explicate the relationship between affective inputs (i.e., emotional ambivalence, wait for lower price) and output behavior (i.e., OSCA, DBLR). Based on the C-A-B model, hesitation at checkout adds a theoretical contribution to the explanation of consumers' non-buying behavior. Finally, this study adopts EDT to test the boundary role of perception factors (i.e., perceived transaction inconvenience, perceived risk). It highlights the importance of perceptions in the relationship between affective states (i.e., emotional ambivalence, wait for lower price) and hesitation at checkout, enriching the applicability of EDT in the OSCA context.

In practical terms, the results of this study can help e-retailers reduce the rate of OSCA by addressing consumers' cognitive conflicts (i.e., attribute conflicts, self-efficacy, and interpersonal conflicts) about online shopping. By gaining an understanding of the psychology behind consumer purchases, e-retailers can improve and maintain customer loyalty in online channel. The study also provides valuable insights for e-retailers to better understand the internal psychology of consumers and develop effective pricing strategies. As online consumers are known to be more price sensitive, e-retailers can strengthen communication with them by sending promotional messages, offering free shipping, and reducing the emotional ambivalence caused by additional costs.

Next, this study provides recommendations for e-retailers on how to notify customers of any price changes and sales, both online and offline, through email or direct mail when facing customers who prefer lower prices or conducting price comparisons. Offering other incentives, such as additional discounts and activities, can provide e-retailers with an effective and timely pricing strategy in the face of price competition. Furthermore, the study highlights the impact of emotional ambivalence and the desire to wait for lower prices on non-purchasing behavior in an online environment, providing useful information for e-retailers to develop effective buying strategies across different channels.

In addition, by analyzing hesitation at checkout, this study provides recommendations for e-retailers to understand why consumers delay purchases. With this understanding, they can develop strategic ways to reduce delayed decisions, alleviate consumers' negative emotions and apprehensions, and increase consumers' willingness to pay. The goal is to reduce hesitation and increase profitability by understanding consumers' decision-making styles. Finally, this study provides managerial insight that perceived transaction inconvenience and perceived risk affect the transaction process. E-retailers can simplify and speed up the payment process by offering information storage features and addressing consumer concerns about privacy and payment security.

1.7 Scope of the study

Taobao is China's largest B2C shopping platform with over seven million professional sellers. However, almost 10,000 online stores are closed every day (CNBC, 2021). Also, a staggering 67.91% of online shopping carts are abandoned by consumers, which is a major problem resulting in a loss of sales for many e-retailers. Therefore, it is important to study the behavior of consumers who abandon their shopping carts and identify the factors influencing them to do so. Such research would generate useful marketing suggestions for e-retailers to improve their shopping operations.

This study focused on investigating the driving factors of Mainland China consumers' OSCA and DBLR behavior. First, based on the C-A-B model, internal stimuli (i.e., attribute conflicts, self-efficacy, and interpersonal conflicts) and emotional ambivalence were used to elaborate the psychological processes of OSCA. Next, total costs was used as an external stimulus to assess its impact on emotional ambivalence. Subsequently, based on BBT, the relationship between total costs and wait for lower price was explored. In addition, the applicability of the C-A-B model to OSCA was extended by incorporating emotional ambivalence and wait for lower price as key affective factors in consumers' behavioral responses (i.e., hesitation at checkout, OSCA, and DBLR). Moreover, the mediating role of hesitation at checkout was examined between affective inputs (i.e., emotional ambivalence, wait for lower price) and output behaviors (i.e., OSCA, DBLR). Finally, based on the EDT, empirical evidence was provided to explore the moderating role of perception factors (i.e., perceived transaction inconvenience, perceived risk) between affective states (i.e., emotional ambivalence, wait for lower price) and hesitation at checkout. The above theoretical framework enriches the research on OSCA and DBLR behavior, offering theoretical implications. to researchers and practical directions to e-retailers to develop their marketing strategies.

The survey population was expected to be 400 participants, based on the purposive sampling technique to obtain samples from an unknown population. In terms of the sampling criteria, respondents were limited to Mainland China consumers who had experience in online shopping on platforms like Taobao

and JD.com. Meeting the set criteria was critical in obtaining correct responses to ensure that the research data would adequately and successfully meet the scope of the research. The data was collected using an online survey administered through Wenjuanxing (<https://www.wjx.cn>).

1.8 Definitions of each variable

To understand the operationalization of each research variable, Table 1.1 lists the definitions of the terms used in this study.

Table 1.1: Definitions of each variable

| No. | Construct | Definition | Source |
|-----|-------------------------|---|---------------------------------|
| 1. | Attribute conflicts | Online shoppers may possess both positive and negative thoughts about online channels. | Huang, Korfiatis & Chang (2018) |
| 2. | Self-efficacy | Online users' perception regarding their ability to operate an online device. | Huang, Korfiatis & Chang (2018) |
| 3. | Interpersonal conflicts | As the incongruence between a person's attitude toward online shopping and those of his/her important others. | Huang, Korfiatis & Chang (2018) |
| 4. | Total costs | Cost of goods in cart, shipping charges, sales taxes, other fees. | Kukar-Kinney & Close (2010) |
| 5. | Emotional ambivalence | The occurrence of incompatible emotions or cognition. | Huang, Korfiatis & Chang (2018) |
| 6. | Wait for lower price | Consumer's decision to wait until a lower price can be found on at least some item(s) in the cart, whether it be at the same or a different store, through the same or a different channel. | Kukar-Kinney & Close (2010) |
| 7. | Hesitation at checkout | Postponing or deferring product purchases by having additional processing time before making final product-purchases on the internet. | Cho, Kang & Cheon (2006) |

Table 1.1: Continued

| | | | |
|-----|--|--|----------------------------------|
| 8. | Perceived transaction inconvenience | Complex shopping procedures, long registration forms to be filled up, shipping and handling charges that are not revealed until late in the purchase process, out of stock product information revealed at the checkout, technical glitches that bounce back orders and nonavailability of alternative methods of payment (other than credit cards). | Rajamma, Paswan & Hossain (2009) |
| 9. | Perceived risk | The perception of loss (in terms of personal information, credit card information, etc.) at the transaction conclusion/checkout stage. | Rajamma, Paswan & Hossain (2009) |
| 10. | Online shopping cart abandonment | Consumers' placement of item(s) in their online shopping cart without purchasing any item(s) during that online shopping session. | Kukar-Kinney & Close (2010) |
| 11. | Decision to buy from a land-based retailer | I decided that I would rather purchase the same item from a land-based store (as opposed to online). | Kukar-Kinney & Close (2010) |

1.9 Organization of proposal

This study provides a clear guide for the reader to understand the process of identifying research, conducting research, forming results, and drawing conclusions. It is divided into six chapters, each addressing different aspects of the study. The first chapter presents the research background, problem statement, research problem and objective, research significance, and research scope. The second chapter focuses on the literature review, which provides a comprehensive overview of the theoretical bases of consumer behavior and past research, as well as a review of current literature and industry research results. Chapter Three outlines the development of the research framework and hypotheses. The fourth chapter discusses the research methods and details the sampling, data collection, and data analysis methods used. Chapter Five presents the study's analysis results, while the sixth and final chapter highlights the study's theoretical and managerial contributions, as well as its limitations and future research directions. The research plan Gantt chart is illustrated below (see Figure 1.2).

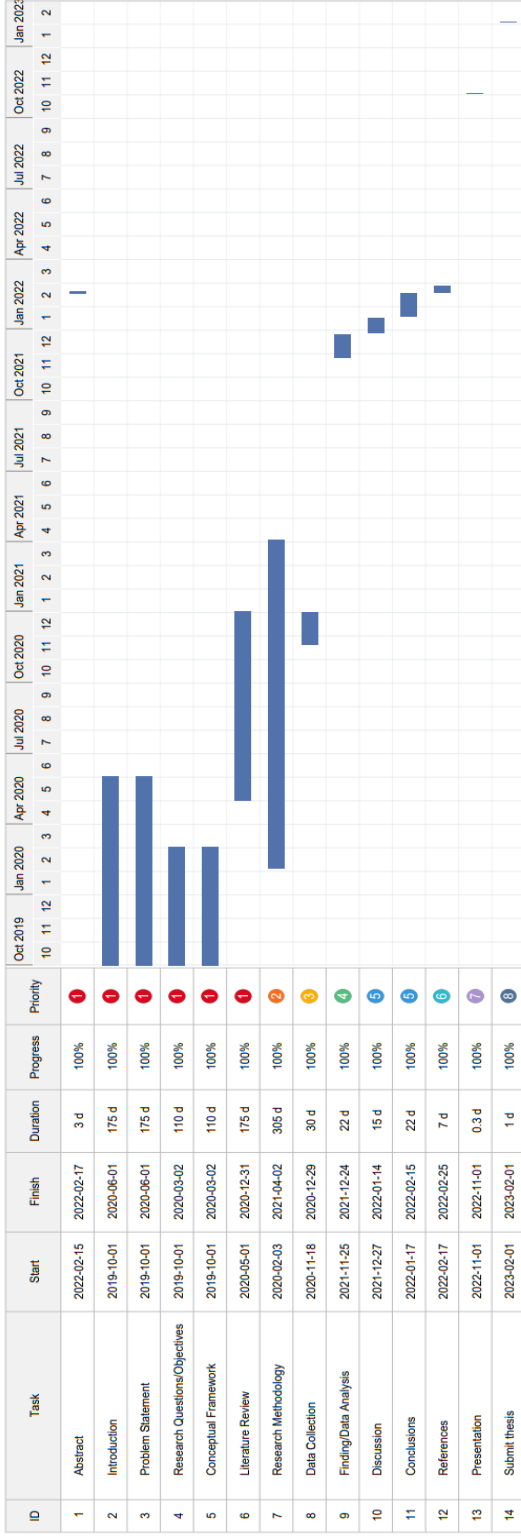


Figure 1.2: Research Plan-Gantt Chart PhD Full Time
 (Source: Extracted from EdrawProject software)

1.10 Conclusion

The first chapter of this study began with the background of the research and the statement of the problem. It then illustrated the research questions, objectives, and significance. The scope of the study and the definitions of the variables used were discussed, and the structure of the thesis concluded the chapter. The next chapter reviews the important literature of this research.



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