# Individual values and motivational complexities in mobile shopping consumption

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**Abstract**

**With the expansion of mobile shopping (m-shopping) consumption, there is an increased need to understand the variety of consumer motives for consumer engagement in such behaviour. For the rapidly growing area of m-shopping, this study explores consumers' desired consumption outcomes and personal values that drive m-shopping preferences. Analysis of data obtained through a hard laddering approach (n = 300 m-shopping consumers) reveals new dominant perceptual patterns that draws new consumer typologies relating not only to social values, but also more individual motives of value for personal image and social recognition. Further analysis shows that consumers have to compromise and balance between their conflicting personal values. The study augments previous literature in personal values research and m-shopping motivational research, as researchers can better understand how specific attributes of m-shopping relate to more emotional and symbolic aspects and link back to more private personal values. The study contributes towards a deeper understanding of m-shopper behaviour.**

*Keywords: Personal value, mobile shopping, motivation, hard laddering, and means-end theory*

*Track: Consumer behaviour*

**Introduction**

With the exponential growth of internet-enabled mobile phone subscribers, advancement in mobile technology has enhanced the mobile device's potential as a new channel for service delivery in the retail landscape (Yang, 2010; Ewe, Yap & Lee, 2015). The notion of mobile shopping (hereafter m-shopping) is multifaceted, as reflected by the interpretation of its meaning. While some researchers describe m-shopping as an extension of the online shopping activities with the mobile terminal (Muller-Veerse, 1999; Ngai & Gunasekaran, 2007), others have attempted to study the differences between these two shopping channels (Wu, Chen, Zhou, & Guo, 2010). As m-shopping services are accessible on the move through mobile devices with fundamentally different presentation, processing and interaction features compared to a desktop computer, they are arguably different from the computer-based web shopping services (Kourouthanassis & Giaglis, 2012). Based on the work of Huang, Lu and Ba (2016), we define m-shopping as an activity relating to consumers' shopping processes through a wireless handheld device such as smartphone, tablet, or personal digital assistant.

Issues around understanding m-shopping consumption have been significantly attributed to the complex motivations that underlies consumers' choice criteria. Studies exploring consumers' motivation in m-shopping context utilise m-shopping attributes to assess consumer preferences and choices of using m-shopping. While these past studies have produced noteworthy insights, they merely illuminate the desirable consequences that consumers expect from the consumption activity such as hedonic and utilitarian motivations and specifically, hedonic values are outstanding factors that strongly fix consumers to stay as loyal m-shoppers (Lu & Su, 2009). However, the decision of positive or negative consequences that occupy consumers' preference and selection criteria in m-retailing consumption are determined by individuals' personal values and the pull back of m-shopping growth are due to the complex and conflicting nature of those personal values. Despite it's importance and valuable contributions, the exploration of personal values that drive consumers to desire those consequences remain unanswered. Moreover, conflicting nature of those personal values has appeared in the literature in different areas, but empirical research in m-retailing area is highly fragmented and still lacking and indigent amount of empirical investigations have sought to determine how people's multiple end-goals may interact in potentially converging, conflicting, or compensating ways to influence their motivation and behaviour in the m-shopping environment. Hence, an understanding of the new personal value assets in m-shopping context seems a worthy focus of attention.

This study aims to explore the m-shopping consumers' new types of personal values they possess and the motivational complexities they suffer by having incompatible values simultaneously. This study uses a hard laddering technique to develop hierarchical structure of values among a sample of m-shoppers that is closely related to means-end theory. This study sheds light on the motivational complexities faced by m-shoppers and supports the broadening and strengthening of consumer involvement from a novice mobile shopper merely conducting browsing and searching activities towards a higher involvement mobile shopper who is also making a purchase through a mobile device. Our preliminary findings using content analysis suggest that new types of personal values and motivational complexities that have not appeared in the literature emerge and present that individuals simultaneously possess incompatible values, which require consumers to conflict and balance those values to make optimal choice. Further, new consumer typologies emerge in the mobile shopping context as new values create new consumer groups.

Existing studies in m-shopping literature merely related physical features with hedonic and utilitarian consequences (Lu & Su, 2009; Koo, Kim, & Lee, 2008). This research extend past research by exploring what types of personal values in relation to m-shopping consumption motivate consumer to engage in m-shopping and the conflicting nature of those personal values that hinder consumers from consuming m-shopping or drive frustration around because the consumer needs to forgone incompatible values. Lastly, the study found out how consumers deal with when they confront conflicting motivations. Accordingly, this study seeks to address the following research questions:

What are the experienced personal values (found out from m-shopping consumption)?
Why are they experiencing personal values conflict?
How do they cope with the personal values conflicts?

Overall, after a review of the literature on m-shopping and the role of personal values in m-shopping consumption, this study uses a hard laddering method to develop consumer motivational chains among a sample of m-shoppers. The study reveals the dominant motivational patterns behind m-shopping choice, and discusses the implications and research directions in the context of m-shopping. Further, in highlighting the importance of personal values as determinants of m-shopping consumption, this study sheds light on the motivational complexities faced by m-shoppers and supports the broadening and strengthening of consumer involvement from a novice m-shopper merely conducting browsing and searching activities towards a higher involvement m-shopper who is also making a purchase through a mobile device.

## Conceptual Foundations

*M-Shopping Background Research*
Along with the trend, research interest in m-shopping has increased in recent years, however, studies tend to focus on single issues such as mobile shopper profile (Jih & Lee, 2003; Wu et al., 2004; Bigne, Ruiz, & Sanz Blas, 2005), motivation for adoption (Wu & Wang, 2005; Ko, Kim, & Lee, 2009; Agrebi & Jallais, 2014; Chen & Lan, 2014; Wong, Tan, Ooi, & Lin, 2015), intention to use illuminating utilitarian and hedonic motivations (Aladas-Manzano, Ruiz-Mafe, & Sanz-Blas, 2009; Lu & Su, 2009; Yang, 2010; Yang & Kim, 2012; Li et al., 2012), continuance intention to predict future purchasing behaviour (Hung, Yang, & Hsieh, 2012), impact on traditional shopping experience and consumer decision-making process (Karaatli, Ma, & Suntornpithug, 2010; Holmes, Byrne, & Rowley, 2013), relationship between shopper profile and motivation to use (San-Martin, Prodanova, & Jimenez, 2014; Assarut & Eiamkanchanalai, 2015), and change in spending behaviour and shopping patterns (Wang, Malthouse, & Krishnamurthi, 2015; Huang, Lu, & Ba, 2016).

According to the insight from previous literature, attributes are the most influential predictor to consumers' attitude towards m-shopping (Musa et al., 2016). Studies exploring consumers' motivation in m-shopping context utilise m-shopping attributes to assess consumer preferences and choices of using m-shopping. Investigations have led scholars to relate m-shopping consumption to established theories and theoretical models to explain and predict m-shopping behaviours such as the Technological acceptance model (TAM) and Unified theory of acceptance and use of technology (UTAUT), in addition to hedonic and utilitarian motivation theories on shopping behaviour. While these past studies have produced noteworthy insights, they merely illuminate the desirable consequences that consumers expect from the consumption activity and still the exploration of central personal values that drive consumers to desire particular consequences remain unanswered. These studies reveal the divergence and

complexity of perceptual and motivational patterns of consumers when conducting m-shopping. In particular, how m-shopping choice considerations interact, for instance, mobility features such as the always on, are linked to the eager to continuous connection with friends motivations of social belongingness.

Existing m-shopping researchers emphasise the power of relationships between profiles of m-shoppers with their motivation to use m-shopping (e.g. San-Martin, Prodanova, & Jimenez, 2014; Assarut & Eiamkanchanalai, 2015; Jih & Lee, 2003; Wu et al., 2004; Bigne, Ruiz, & Sanz Blas, 2005). Specifically with motivational studies, scholars have documented hedonic and utilitarian as well as intrinsic and extrinsic values, where multiple motivations are triggered and valued to engage in m-shopping (e.g. Wu & Wang, 2005; Ko, Kim, & Lee, 2009; Agrebi & Jallais, 2014; Chen & Lan, 2014; Wong, Tan, Ooi, & Lin, 2015; Aladas-Manzano, Ruiz-Mafe, & Sanz-Blas, 2009; Lu & Su, 2009; Yang, 2010; Yang & Kim, 2012; Li et al., 2012). However, past research has established that shoppers do hold multiple end-goals in various shopping environment (Koo, Kim, & Lee, 2008). This means that motivations of m-shopping may not always distinguished as between hedonic or utilitarian but are intrinsically triggered by personal values. With regards to antecedents of studies of areas where personal values shape consumer behaviour, scholars have primarily shown positive outcomes on shopping behaviour research such as mall shopping (Swinyard, 1998; Shim & Eastlick, 1998; Sweeney & Soutar, 2001; Cai & Shannon, 2012), discount store shopping (Jin & Kim, 2003), online shopping (Jayawardhena, 2004; Koo, Kim, & Lee, 2008), and ethical shopping (Jagel, Keeling, Reppel, & Gruber, 2012). This suggests that m-shoppers may have new types of personal values and struggle with novel motivational conflicts.

*Personal Values Motivation*
The word "motivation" is rooted from Latin which means "to move", and hence, fundamental interpretation of motivational research is the study of action (Eccles & Wigfield, 2002). In essence, motivation refers to the process which causes people to behave in the way in which they do (Dubois, 2000). Modern theories of motivation tend to concentrate on the nexus between beliefs, values, goals and action. The term motivation is multifaceted, as reflected by several synonymous terms such as needs, wants, desires, drives, motives and instincts that are often used interchangeably. Although the meaning of these concepts is not identical, they represent the existence of a force within an individual which stimulates one's behaviour with a predetermined goal. Accordingly, explaining consumer behaviour involves the identification of these forces, their number, their strength and their direction, as well as the mechanisms which underlie them (Dubois, 2000). While motivational researchers may agree on the underlying internal needs of consumers, but they may not reach a consensus when it comes to identifying their nature and dynamics, and these diverse views enrich the analysis of consumption behaviour. This study endeavours to concentrate on one particular motivational force, that is, the concept of personal value.

Personal value is a centrally held enduring belief and a desirable trans-situational goal which guides actions and judgments in a person's life (Murray, 1938; Rokeach, 1973; Schwartz, 1994). It acts as an important motivational driver as they perform as a guiding standard in individuals' lives (Schwartz, 1994), thereby plays a significant role in determining consumption behaviour (Kilbourne & Beckmann, 1998; Rokeach, 1973). While personal values are deep seated and thus not apparent, the consequence of an individual's values can be discerned through observing his or her decision making (Sheehan & Schmidt, 2015). Past research have provided theoretical evidences that personal values can affect an individual's judgment of which attributes of an object are important in consumption decision-making. For

example, Koo, Kim, and Lee (2008) provide an insight that personal values held by a consumer provide motivation for him or her to seek certain potential benefits provided by a product or service. Thereby, after having been motivated to seek particular benefits, the consumer is motivated to evaluate certain attributes of the product or the retail environment that are more likely to be associated with his or her desired benefits, which leads to patronise a shopping channel or store and initiate a purchase.

In addition to types of personal values, conflicting nature of those personal values has appeared in the literature, but empirical research in retailing area has remained untouched. While existing research have primarily focused on hedonic and utilitarian motivations that are seen as multiple motivations occur simultaneously, they identified personal values conflicting nature as independent (Schwartz, 1994). However, the motivational complexities appear when one person simultaneously possesses multiple opposite values. This has resulted in calls for further research. Therefore, this study contrasts the personal values relationships and further identifies the coping mechanisms of m-shoppers how they react to those conflicting values. Specifically, Schwartz's (1994) circumplex model is examined to explore the interrelated relationship between personal values.

*Means-end Theory*
Means-end chain is employed as the fundamental theoretical framework of the study and as the tool to reveal the linkages between consumers' cognitive hierarchical value structures. Following the proposition of means-end theory, consumer value is of hierarchical nature (Bagozzi and Dabholkar, 1994; Overby et al., 2004; Woodruff and Gardial, 1996). This approach explains hierarchically how an individual cognitively performs through a consumption process (Zeithaml, 1988). Means-end chain is a cognitive structure linking the consumer's knowledge of product or service to one's knowledge of personal desired consequences and values (Gutman, 1982). In the main premise of means-end chain is that consumers learn to select products and services featuring the attributes that will allow them to achieve their personal values (Barrena, Garcia, & Sanchez, 2015). The suggestion is that product or service knowledge is organised into a hierarchical levels of abstraction inside a person's mind (Gutman, 1982; Reynolds, Gengler, & Howard, 1995). The stronger and more direct the personal link with the attributes and consequences, the higher the potential in the decision (Olson & Reynolds, 1983).

**Research Method**
According to means-end theory, there are three levels of abstractions in a means-end chain (Gutman, 1982, 1984): attributes; consequences; and values. These three elements will be explored through the use of the hard-laddering approach in the data collection stage. This approach allows for a better understanding of the relationship and the linkages among the attributes of mobile shopping and the goals pursued by consumers (Amatulli & Guido, 2011). During the data collection, respondents will answer open-ended questions using an open text box identifying up to three attributes that are of importance to them and subsequently writing up reasons for why each attribute is of importance (Voss et al., 2007). The patterns of responses and observed similarities across respondents construct the results of hard laddering approach (Zeithaml, 1988). The purpose of hard laddering technique is to freely elicit respondents' personally meaningful distinction of constructs from their cognitive structures and subsequently gain hierarchical connection of meanings by using a bottom-up, external-internal process of questioning (Phillips & Reynolds, 2009). The convenience sample of 300 responses are expected to be collected through online survey. The findings may give insight to retailers that they need to move beyond attributes and utilitarian and hedonic functions and measure

personal values, as these values construct a standard for consumers in making their preferences, choices and behaviours.

**Findings**
Using the sample of 300 hard laddering outcomes, the breadth of responses is attributable to the sample composition; respondents reported a wide spread of values they regard important. Our preliminary findings using content analysis suggest that new consumer value structures and motivational complexities appear and present that individuals simultaneously possess opposite values, which require consumers to conflict and balance those values to make optimal choice and maximally alleviate struggles. Further, new consumer typologies emerge in the mobile shopping context as new values create new consumer groups.

**Discussion and Implications**
This study contributes to existing m-shopping literature and practice in three important aspects. First, the value hierarchy of m-shopping helps retailers and researchers to understand the types and origins of m-shopping values. Second, the knowledge in personal value and the motivational complexities of m-shoppers enhance the knowledge of different m-shopping consumer segments which will yield new consumer typologies in m-shopping context. Lastly, the knowledge enhances our understanding of how to communicate to each segment effectively.

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