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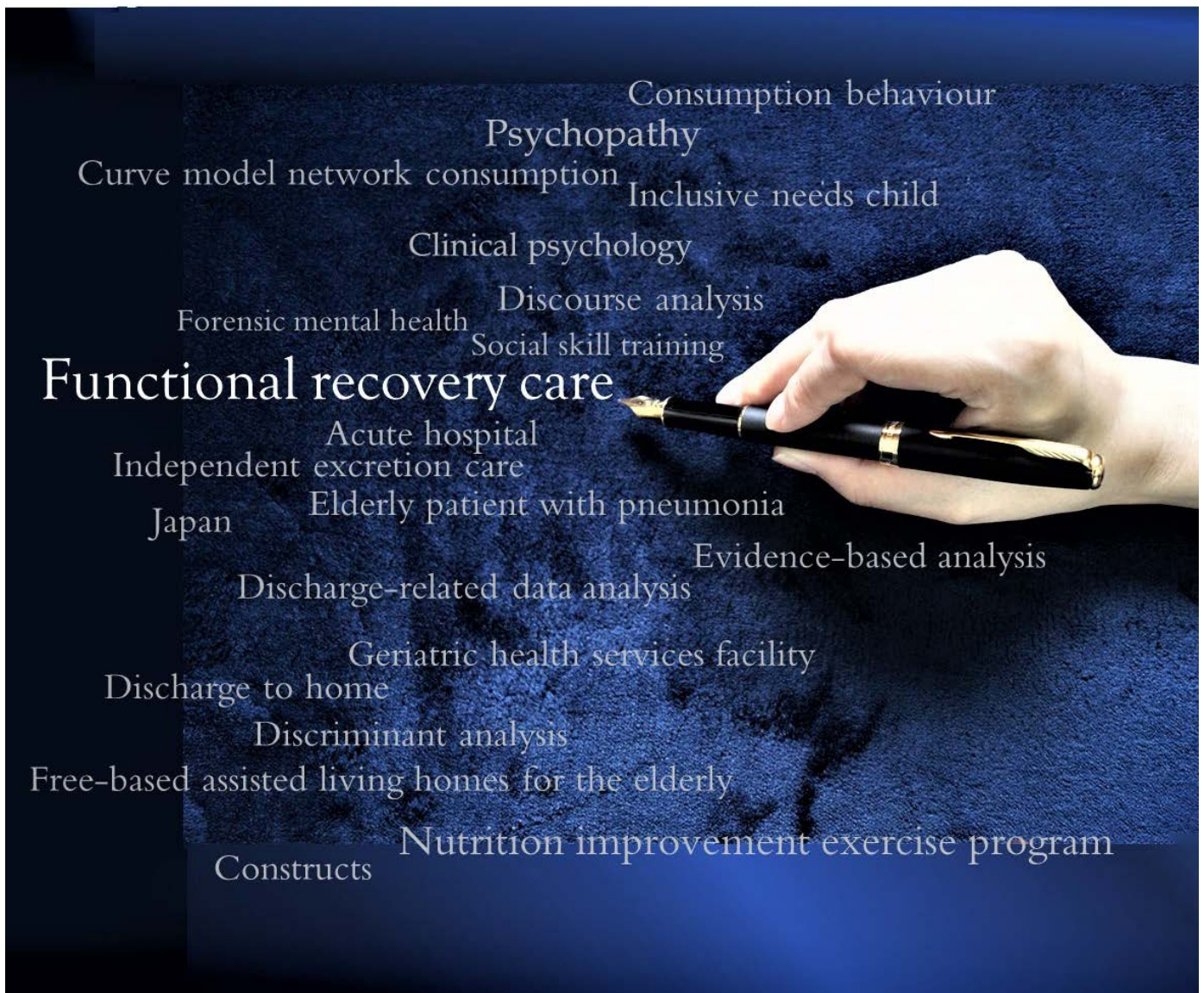
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ORIGINAL ARTICLE

A Study on the Characteristics of Network Consumption Behaviors and Evidence-Based Analysis of Influencing Factors

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ABSTRACT

Due to the broad variety of network resources and the fast pace of day-to-day living, more and more consumers are switching to the network for shopping. In this context, characteristics of network consumption behaviors are studied in this paper. The Howard & Sheth pattern is modified based on the S-O-R model (stimulus-organism-response). Human behavior is usually following the S-O-R model, which was first set up by Reynolds in 1974. This paper adjusts the Howard and Sheth theory based on the S-O-R model and classifies the factors influencing online consumption behaviors into five categories: individual consumers, risk awareness, retailer characteristics, marketing, and consumption intentions. Hypotheses regarding the factors which influence network consumption behaviors are proposed. A questionnaire survey is then performed to collect sample data. The structural equation model is then adopted to test each of the hypotheses.

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I. Introduction

The advent of network and the expansion of network coverage have exerted considerable impact on consumption to the point where a new group has emerged, i.e., online consumers. As more and more consumers are switching to the network for shopping, online shipping has emerged as a new fashion (Yan Xueyuan, 2014). Currently, the number of online shopping websites is increasing in China. By December 2015, China had 413 million online shoppers, increasing at 14.3% by 5.183 million compared to the previous year. The Internet shopping market of China is growing steadily. In particular, the size of mobile Internet shoppers has increased dramatically to 340 million at a rate of 43.9%. The proportion of mobile Internet consumption has risen from 42.4% to 54.8%. China's total retail sales was 3.88 trillion yuan for 2015, up 33.3% compared with the previous year. Retail sales of commodities transacted over the Internet was 3.24 trillion yuan, up 31.6% compared with the previous year. It increased faster than the growth rate of the total retail sales of consumer goods at 20.9%, accounting for 10.8% of the total retail sales of consumer goods (China Online Shopping Market Research Report, 2015).

Online consumption is characterized by transaction convenience, wide choices and environment privacy. Due to these reasons, many retailers keep increasing their market shares by switching to the Internet to sell their products. Despite this, some retailers failed during fierce competition. Therefore, in order to find the reason for these failures, both retailers and researchers divert their attention to the characteristics of online consumption behaviors and the influencing factors (Jiang Sufang, 2009).

II. Literature Review

Online consumption behavior is a behavioral process where the consumers meet their demands by finding, purchasing, using and evaluating products or services of their interest over the Internet. What is consumed over the Internet is available from the virtual network platform. Shopping of these products or services is a dynamic interaction between consumers and network resources, whose ultimate goal is to meet the unique demands of consumers (He Yu, 2018). For the research model, by the retailing research, the factor of individual consumers (GT) is highly possible influences the internet shopping. The features of consumers themselves, as well as the experience of internet shopping have huge impacts with clothing suppliers. Stephenson and Willett (1969) considered that customers can be divided into three types: entertainment type, convenient type, and price guide type. Risk awareness (FX) is the uncertainty of purchasing process by the consumers. Consumers also have this risk awareness with the result of purchasing online. And the specialty of online shopping makes customers feel more risks than the traditional shopping. By the support of technology, increasing the

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risk awareness can help consumers improving the ability of forecasting (M Samadi, 2009). Retailers sell products at the end of the selling process. They give service to customers only, not wholesalers or producers. Retailers (LS) image is set up by external characteristic and operation power. In the traditional business, the popularity and credibility of a retailer are the most important company assets. It is same with the online business. Customers prefer good reputation online shop rather than the common ones(S Saleem, 2011). In the marketing (YX), 4Ps (Product, Price, Promotion, place) analysis helps companies making decisions to motivate customers go shopping (Mendelson and Bolls, 2002). About consumption intention (MY) extensive studies have been carried out to reveal relationship between consumption intention and consumption behavior. According to the Theory of Reasoned Action proposed by Fishbein & Ajzen in 1975, behavior arises from intention. Based on the technical acceptance model and the innovation diffusion theory, Cheng Hua (2003) constructed a model to describe the consumers' acceptance of online shopping. The influence of consumption intention on consumption behavior was clarified, and the external variable of consumption characteristics was introduced to the model. Consumption Behavior (Y) is people's buying attitudes and intentions. If a group of people is exposed to some form of advertising of a product or a service they will then response to the advertised message with certain definable behaviors (S Saleem, 2011).

1. Related work on characteristics of individual online consumers

The characteristics of individual online consumers refer to the age, gender, education and profession of individual consumers who do Internet shopping (Zhao Xueju, 2014). Views regarding online consumption vary among researchers. According to Li & Russell (1999), the 4% shopping deviation can be explained by consumer characteristics, and that the demographical features have certain influence on consumption behaviors. But Bhatnager et al. (2000) refuted this, saying that the demographical features do not have considerable influence on consumption behaviors. In its 2013 Report on Behaviors of the Chinese Internet Shoppers, iResearch stated that gender has little influence on online shopping behavior. The 25-30 age group accounts for the largest proportion of online consumers, followed sequentially by the 19-24 and 31-35 age groups. These three age groups occupy 77% of the total online consumers in China. Hence, the 19-30 age group is the backbone of the Chinese online consumers. Investigation about the profession of online consumers indicated that students and white-collar workers approximately account for 8% of the total online consumers in China. Professionals, technicians and teachers occupy about 8%. These demographical features demonstrate that certain demographical features do have influence on online consumption behaviors. According to Martin et al. (2011), the demographical features do not have considerable influence on online consumption behaviors because the online consumption market has no constraint on age group, income level and gender. In a Forsythe & Bo Shi survey (2003), 43% of all

existing netizens have an undergraduate degree, but for the new netizens, only 29% of them have completed undergraduate education. It also showed that the online consumers mainly consisted of middle-income groups. Zhong Xiaona (2005) reported that the fundamental demographical features do not have considerable influence on the consumers' cognition of shopping, and that only age and income have differential influence on the consumers' cognition and risk awareness.

2. Representation of characteristics of consumption behaviors

The environment of online consumption is different from that of real-world consumption. Online consumption happens under the Internet-enabled virtual environment or website for shopping online, where the consumers are anonymous and cannot communicate face-to-face with the retailers. Moreover, the consumers can browse around and purchase the products without any temporal or spatial constraints (Weng Shuzhen, 2014). Based on existing works and taking our own research into account, the characteristics of online consumption behaviors are as follows.

(1) A high proportion of impulsive shopping: This refers to the behavior of consumption where the products are purchased on impulse rather than being planned beforehand. As the number of netizens is increasing, more and more people endeavor to collect market information via the network. The broad variety of information about the products over the Internet inclines the consumers to purchase on impulse. Therefore, online consumption is very impulsive (Yu-Chi Sung, 2007).

(2) A high demand for convenience: When the rhythm of life accelerates, there is a greater demand for quality, price and convenience of daily necessities. The modern logistics and operational management technologies accelerates the circulation of products, enabling the consumers to be more informed about product quality and price via the Internet. In addition, the consumers are clearer about their needs under the Internet environment and choose the most convenient means to satisfy them(Chen Hai Quan, 2013).

(3) More discretion is left to consumers: With further division of labor, the wide choices of products heighten the consumers' awareness of risk. As a result, more and more consumers are risk-averse and no longer trust spoon-fed marketing. Prior to the purchase of daily necessities, especially durable goods (e.g., computer and washing machine), the consumers usually collect information in different ways for comparison and analysis. Even if the analysis might be incomplete or inaccurate, the consumers can find psychological balance (Jia Yuemei, 2001) and avoid regret which may occur after purchase, deriving psychological satisfaction from their trust in and pursuit of the products. When the uncertainty of modern society increases and the demand for psychological stability grows, consumers have more discretion over consumption.

(4) The pursuit of brand products: The brand effect is so influential that the pursuit of brand products has emerged as a fashion. In this context, the retailers are devoted to the

establishment of their brand over the Internet. Through the use of the network, the consumers can keep themselves informed of product information and make their decisions by comparing the prices and performance of various brand products(Chen Hai Quan, 2013).

(5) Dominance of online shopping: Due to progress in e-commerce, online shopping and retrieval of product information via the network are no longer merely a fashionable behavior. Rather, it has become an indispensable part of daily consumption for network users. By establishing online shopping platforms, the retailers make it easier for consumers to access the channels of product distribution, thereby arousing the consumers' enthusiasm for shopping over the Internet. Reforming the traditional means of marketing reshapes the behavior pattern of consumers in the era of network. (Wang xin long, 2015).

(6) Customization of consumption: The consumers begin to pursue customization rather than blindly follow fashion trends. The consumers can collect product information more quickly and comprehensively from the Internet. For some new and customized products, consumers can make their decisions based on the information collected. The retailers can also disseminate product features more widely using the network (Dong xiao mei, et al., 2010).

Ⅲ. Methodology

1. Hypotheses and Research Model

It has been reported in previous works that the factors which influence consumption behaviors can be classified into three types, i.e., consumers, environment and enterprise marketing. Because the quantification of these three factors is influenced by many tiny factors, it is hard to determine the way each factor influences consumption behavior. Taking the purchase process of consumers into account, the research on this issue will be variable and intractable. The amount of information involved in the research will also be very large and the conclusions will hardly explain the real-world consumption behavior (Shi Shuzheng, 2011). In order to simplify the research, this paper adjusts the Howard and Sheth theory based on the S-O-R model and classifies the factors influencing online consumption behaviors into five categories: individual consumers, risk awareness, retailer characteristics, marketing, and consumption intentions. The hypotheses are listed in Table 1.

<Table 1> Research hypotheses

Research hypotheses	Contents
H1	Factors of individual consumers are correlated with consumption intention
H2	Factors of individual consumers are correlated with consumption behavior
H3	Sensed risks are correlated with consumption intention
H4	Characteristics of retailers are correlated with consumption intention
H5	Marketing factors are correlated with consumption intention
H6	Marketing factors are correlated with consumption behavior
H7	Consumption intention is correlated with consumption behavior

The characteristics of consumers themselves have considerable influence on their consumption behaviors. In order to shop online, the consumers have to equip themselves with necessary network and computer usage skills as well as familiarize themselves with Internet shopping procedures. The accumulated experience about online shopping yields insights into the future behaviors of consumption, helping them evaluate product quality more accurately (Dong xiao mei, 2010).

Therefore, H1: the factor of individual consumers is correlated with consumption intention and hypothesis

H2: the factor of individual consumers is correlated with consumption behavior.

Risk awareness refers to the perception of uncertainty which arises during the shopping process. Internet shopping is virtual and the chance to check the products beforehand is lacking, resulting in uncertainty over payment and delivery. Furthermore, Internet shopping may cause leakage of personal and private information, thereby increasing the consumers' perception of risk (Wang Juan, 2015) and affecting their desire to purchase.

In this context, H3: risk awareness is correlated with consumption intention.

Retailers refer to the enterprises or individuals that provide products or services to consumers rather than wholesalers or manufacturers. Traditionally, the retailers tend to win recognition from the public and consumers by showcasing their external characteristics and internal strengths. Reputation is an important part of enterprise assets in the traditional marketing paradigm. Under the network environment, the retailers still have enormous influence on the consumers' purchasing intention. Usually, the consumers favor the brand products of traditional enterprises (Jiang Sufang, 2009) because these enterprises have good reputation. It has been extensively proven that the retailer's good image and quality of service make it easier for consumers to accept their products, stimulating their desire to purchase.

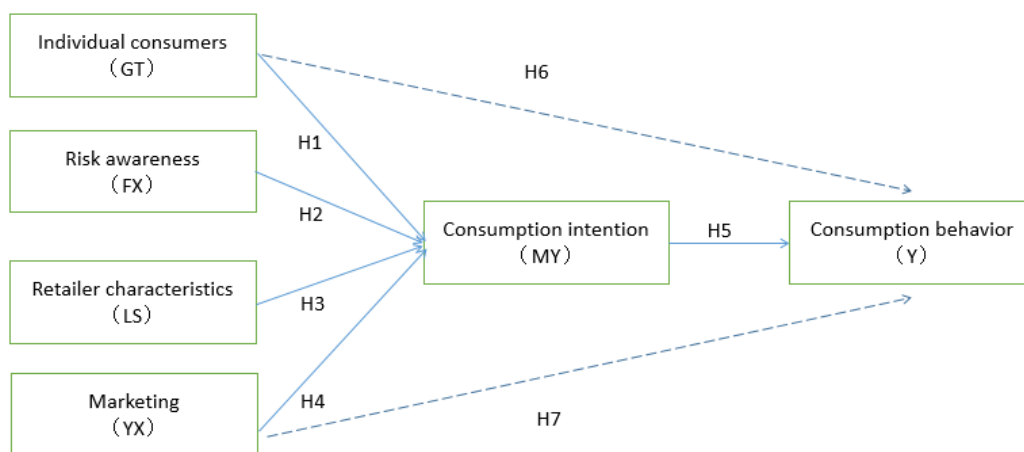Therefore, H4: characteristics of retailers are correlated with consumption intention.

During online shopping, the consumers' perception of the brand, price and advertisement shapes their attitude and intention, exerting direct influence on their purchase behavior. Brand loyalty will cause repeat consumption and even recommendation to others. Appropriate pricing on the part of retailers promotes customer loyalty. Too much advertisement may affect the consumers' consumption psychology and behavior (Pei Haiseng, 2012).

In this context, H5: the marketing factors are correlated with consumption intention, and hypothesis H6: the marketing factors are correlated with consumption behavior.

It has been reported in some studies that there is a correlation between consumption intention and consumption behavior. Fishbein and Ajzen (1975) formulated the reasonable behavior theory, stating that intention causes behavior. Chen Hua (2003) established a model for online consumption behavior using the technology acceptance model and the innovation diffusion model. The external variable of consumer characteristics was introduced to demonstrate the influence of consumption intention on consumption behavior.

Therefore, this paper proposes hypothesis H7: there is a correlation between consumption intention and consumption behavior.

Based on the abovementioned hypotheses, a model of factors which influence online consumption behaviors is established, and the correlation between these factors is obtained, as shown in Fig. 1.

<Figure 1> Model and hypotheses

2. Research Implementation and Evidence-Based Test
1) Sample collection

A questionnaire survey was sent out and evidence-based analysis was carried out using the statistical theories. Scale was determined based on the hypotheses described above. Questions in the survey consisted of basic information on online consumption and questions about each variable. Questions concerning individual consumers, risk

awareness, retailer characteristics and network marketing were mainly obtained from existing literature. The respondents were asked to fill out the questionnaire and each variable was measured using a seven-point scale, where 1-7 represented completely disagree and completely agree, sequentially. A total of 512 questionnaires were distributed, and 87.3% of them (i.e., 447) were returned. The features of the data samples are presented in Table 2.

<Table 2> Descriptive statistics of samples

		Frequency	Percent
sex	man	114	25.5
	woman	333	74.5
age	18years	5	1.1
	18~25years	262	58.6
	26~30years	70	15.7
	31~40years	76	17.0
	41~50years	26	5.8
	51~60years	8	1.8
edu	<Bachelor	132	29.6
	Bachelor	217	48.5
	master	82	18.3
	doctor	16	3.6
cost	<1000yuan	107	23.9
	1000-3000yuan	148	33.1
	3000-5000yuan	64	14.3
	5000-8000yuan	77	17.2
	>8000yuan	51	11.4

2) Test and analysis

The scale's reliability and validity was tested by checking the questionnaire's internal consistency and structural validity. Each dimension of the scale was divided into 29 sub-items, Retailer characteristics reliability index is 0.927, Consumption intention reliability index is 0.947, Risk awareness reliability index is 0.892, Marketing reliability index is 0.917, Individual consumers reliability index is 0.869.

The scale's validity was tested using the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) test and Bartlett spheroidal test methods. Results indicate that it was suited for factor analysis, as the KMO value of the 29 items was 0.939, higher than 0.6. Also, the accumulated variance of all factors was 72.447% during factor analysis. Therefore, the scale has great explanatory ability when used to measure relevant concepts. Furthermore, factors extracted from factor analysis was approximately the same as the classification of the theoretical framework. These results prove the high level of scale validity. The results of validity analysis and reliability analysis are shown in the Table 3. The measured results are all good.

<Table 3> Results of validity analysis and reliability analysis

	1	2	3	4	5
LS3	.807	.152	.085	.242	.056
LS2	.799	.196	.123	.235	.032
LS6	.786	.297	.133	.182	.073
LS1	.734	.101	.089	.311	.087
LS7	.717	.290	.083	.218	.095
LS5	.716	.237	.042	.250	.199
LS4	.714	.329	.105	.218	.047
MY2	.237	.845	.133	.221	-.017
MY3	.225	.835	.132	.244	.014
MY5	.199	.831	.141	.199	-.031
MY4	.274	.801	.098	.282	.061
MY1	.267	.766	.084	.378	.053
MY6	.300	.704	.098	.303	.052
FX3	.123	.018	.882	.097	.076
FX4	.061	-.007	.866	.129	.160
FX2	.215	.136	.759	-.007	.199
FX8	-.006	.102	.736	.100	.351
FX9	-.034	.249	.693	.117	.181
FX1	.182	.194	.641	.155	.142
YX3	.325	.245	.152	.763	.008
YX4	.378	.249	.060	.752	.132
YX2	.285	.379	.139	.691	-.013
YX1	.235	.349	.134	.674	.000
YX7	.380	.415	.094	.633	.078
YX6	.338	.243	.114	.621	.201
YX5	.207	.460	.217	.531	-.049
GT1	.154	.025	.289	.000	.851
GT2	.156	-.008	.344	.072	.794
GT3	.077	-.005	.397	.102	.763
Cronbach's Alpha	.927	.947	.892	.917	.869
Total	12.359	4.123	2.166	1.214	1.148
Initial Eigenvalues % of Variance	42.616	14.216	7.470	4.186	3.959
Initial Eigenvalues Cumulative %	72.447				
KMO	.939				

3) Hypothesis test

SPSS 16.0 was used for statistical analysis. Table 4 shows the results obtained by analyzing path coefficients of the model.

<Table 4> Analysis results of the path coefficients

Relationship path	Path coefficient	Hypothesis	Result
Individual consumers → Consumption intention	.120	H1	Support
Risk awareness → Consumption intention	.123	H2	Support
Retailer characteristics → Consumption intention	.184	H3	Support
Marketing → Consumption intention	.588	H4	Support
Individual consumers → Consumption behavior	.044	H5	Support
Consumption intention → Consumption behavior	.140	H6	Reject
Marketing → Consumption behavior	.120	H7	Reject

Results indicate that the load values of individual consumers, risk awareness, retailer characteristics and marketing with respect to consumption intentions were all significant at the level of 0.001, their path coefficients being Individual consumers 0.12, Risk awareness 0.123, Retailer characteristics 0.184 and Marketing 0.588, respectively. Also, the load values of individual consumers, the marketing and consumption intention of consumption behavior is not at the level of 0.001. their path coefficients being Individual consumers 0.044, Consumption intention 0.140, and Marketing 0.120, respectively. From these results, it can be learned that individual consumers, retailer characteristics, marketing factors and consumption intentions were positively and significantly correlated with consumption behaviors, while risk awareness was positively and significantly correlated with consumption behavior. When it comes to the degree of influence of these factors on consumption behavior, Marketing have the most influence, followed sequentially by Retailer characteristics, Risk awareness and Individual consumers. Hypotheses H1-H7 were thus verified.

IV. Conclusion

Empirical study was performed to construct a model of factors which have influence on consumer behaviors. The relationship of individual consumers, risk awareness, retailers, and marketing with consumer behaviors was validated. The influence of these factors on consumption amount, scale and frequency was investigated. Questionnaire survey was conducted on online shoppers. The results were statistically analyzed via SPSS16.0 to verify the model and hypotheses. It is revealed that the factors of individual consumer and retailer is strongly and positively correlated with the consumption intention; the risk awareness is also strongly and positively correlated with the

consumption intention. The factors of individual consumer, retailer and marketing are strongly and positively correlated with the consumption behavior.

It is learned from multivariate regression analysis that the consumption intention and behavior is most influenced by marketing, followed by the factors of retailer characteristics, risk awareness and individual consumers. Occupation, disposable income and the amount of time spent each day on the Internet have significantly distinct influence on consumption behavior. But gender, age and educational background do not have significantly distinct influence on consumption behavior.

It can be learned that the retailer is the most significant factor in influencing online consumption intention and behavior. In this study, the factor of retailer is very wide-ranging, including the ability to provide accurate information, reputation, price competitiveness, payment method allowed, security and reliability of logistic service, and the ability to protect customer privacy. These are also the chief concerns of consumers. Therefore, the retailer is the most significant factor in influencing online consumption intention and behavior. Risk awareness also has significant influence on online consumption intention. Some customers are aware of the possibility that online shopping incurs the waste of time on product search and selection, threatens privacy and even prompts them to choose the wrong product. These concerns heighten the consumers' awareness of risk and weakens consumption intention. On the contrary, reducing the risk can strengthen consumption intention. The factor of individual consumers has great influence on consumption intention, but its influence on consumption behavior is slight. Similarly, the factor of marketing has great influence on consumption intention, but its influence on consumption behavior is also slight.

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