Consumers' Responses to Third-party Certificates in Mobile Shopping Through the Lens of Information Processing Types

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Offering sufficient information to consumers in mobile shopping helps ameliorate uncertainty from information asymmetry in mobile shopping (Chiu et al., 2009). Third-party certificates, which are proof marks of third-party investigation, are widely used to convince consumers about high product quality (Thompson et al., 2019). Many fashion brands utilize these certificates to communicate between brands and consumers instead of having a face-to-face conversation (De Boer, 2003). Especially as online and mobile commerce have become the main methods of transaction, third-party certificates not only signal to consumers that the product is legally authenticated (Marschlich & Hurtado, 2025) but also emphasize transparency, thereby helping to build a strong sense of trust between consumers and brands (Gupta et al., 2025). However, limited studies have been done on how consumers process third-party certificates as informants and how much information consumers perceive through them. Therefore, this study aims to investigate third-party certificates' informant role in the mobile shopping environment through the lens of the consumers' information processing theory.

Information processing theory explains how consumers perceive and analyze the given information. According to the consumers' information processing preferences, there are two processing types: (a) cognitive self (CS) and (b) experiential self (ES) (Epstein et al., 1996). In the mobile shopping context, the cognitive type seeks as many information sources as possible, while the experiential type seeks to find the specific information they need (Yi & Lee, 2012). This suggests that according to consumers' information processing types, they may perceive the amount of information in these hangtags differently (Yi & Lee, 2012). In addition, the significant role of the third-party certificate is to provide clear and sufficient information by guaranteeing the products' quality (Thompson et al., 2019). Thus, it can convince consumers to revisit the seller's stores, increasing their repurchase intention (Chiu et al., 2009). Therefore, the study posits that the perceived amount of information (PAI) and the perceived quality (H1) will mediate the relationship between the information processing type—cognitive self (a) / experiential self (b)—and repurchase intention.

> **H1**: Perceived amount of information and perceived quality sequentially mediate the relationship between of information processing types – (a) cognitive self and (b) experiential self - and repurchase intention.

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Another key function of third-party certificates is to make sellers trustworthy enough by demonstrating their confidence in product quality (Thompson et al., 2019; Yu & Shim, 2020). Thus, consumers try to purchase more products from the same sellers, which enhances the consumers' repurchase intentions (Chiu et al., 2009). Accordingly, this study posits that the perceived amount of information (PAI) and consumer trust (H2) will mediate the relationship between the information processing type—cognitive self (a) / experiential self (b)—and repurchase intention.

> **H2**: Perceived amount of information and consumer trust sequentially mediate the relationship between of information processing types – (a) cognitive self and (b) experiential self - and repurchase intention

Data were collected through an online survey of 209 adults aged in their 20s to 50s who have previously had mobile shopping experience from Amason MTurk. This study provided a stimuli image of a product information page in the mobile shopping context. Participants were able to verify a certificate from a premium cotton provider and explain the certificates to help the respondents be immersed in the survey following the mobile shopping routine. All measures were selected from the existing studies (Chiu et al., 2009; Epstein et al., 1996; Kim & Lennon, 2000; Seo, 2019). CR values were over .75, except for the cognitive self (CR = .73). AVE values were over .60 and larger than the corresponding correlation coefficient of the factors. Therefore, the discriminant validity was confirmed (Kline, 2015). PROCESS macro was used for the hypotheses (Hayes, 2018; Model 6).

For H1 and H2, they were both partially supported. Both sequential mediating paths in CS were not significant (CS→PAI→PQ→RI: β = -.03 95% CI [-0.08, 0.02]; CS→PAI→CT→RI: β = -.04 95% CI [-0.10, 0.02], see Table 1), but the paths in ES were significant (ES→PAI→PQ→RI: β = .06 95% CI [0.01, 0.02]; ES→PAI→CT→RI: β = .08 95% CI [0.02, 0.17], see Table 1). In mobile shopping, consumers perceive the third-party certificate information more intuitively by checking its existence based on their purchase experiences (i.e., experiential self). Thus, the details of the product information regarding the third-party investigation and proof of premium cotton functioned as key markers in consumers' purchase decision-making. As a result, consumers perceive that the brand provides sufficient information, increasing the perceived product quality and consumer trust respectively, enhancing consumers repurchase intention.

This study explored the role of third-party certificates throughout the mobile shopping environment. The findings have several implications. First, third-party certificates function as an intuitive informant during information processing, which helps the product be seen as more qualified and reliable. Second, however, the consumers tend not to delve into the specific information of the certificates. Instead, they want to check the number of marks and enough information on the products. Since this study investigated the effect of the third-party trademark hangtags as an informant in mobile shopping, whether the trademark hangtags are more significant than other types of hangtags such as brand concept tags with brand logos is not confirmed. Therefore, future study is

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recommended to compare the effectiveness of the different types of hangtags.

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Table 1

Sequential mediating effects of the mediators: Perceived quality and Consumer trust

Mediator	Type	Path	β	Boot *SE*	Boot LLCI	Boot ULCI
PQ	CS	CS→PAI→PQ→RI	-.03	.02	-.08	.02
	ES	ES→PAI→PQ→RI	.06	.03	.01	.02
CT	CS	CS→PAI→CT→RI	-.04	.03	-.10	.02
	ES	ES→PAI→CT→RI	.08	.04	.02	.17

PQ = Perceived Quality, CT = Consumer Trust, CS = Cognitive Self, ES = Experiential Self, PAI = Perceived Amount of Information, RI = Repurchase Intention

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