Emergency Purchasing Situation of Home Training Equipment on Decision-making Process during the COVID-19 in China

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Due to the pandemic issue (COVID-19), the importance of home training became significant, which led to dramatic increase in sales volume of home training equipment (China National Bureau Statistics, 2020). This phenomenon is called emergency purchasing situation (EPS). EPS was defined as buying contexts characterized by unanticipated timing of a need, high product importance, and a shortened decision-making time frame (Samson & Voyer, 2014). But applying a general consumption decision-making model to understand consumers was inappropriate, which make sports related industries to think about new applicable model to adapt with changes (Ratten, 2020).

The research purpose was to explore the factors of EPS and their effects on decision-making modes (Heuristic vs Reflective; Chaiken, 1980) in product evaluation by applying the dual-process model and regulatory focus theory. Dual-process model is two different capacities and processes, an automatic process based on experiences and controlled process based on formal learning (Alós-Ferrer & Strack, 2013). Regulatory focus theory claims that human motivation is rooted in the approach of pleasure and the avoidance of pain. It differentiates a promotion focus from a prevention focus based on achievement or advancement related (Florack, Keller & Palcu, 2013). Time pressure, stress, purchase knowledge, and high product importance were verified that can influence consumer judgement and products choices (Samson & Voyer, 2014). In summary, perceived epidemic awareness, subjective state (prevention versus promotion focus, perceived time pressure, perceived pressure), personal characteristics (expertise) and motivational factors (perceived importance of products), and reflective or heuristic product evaluations have been considered in the research model.

With 52 survey items, 503 data were collected and responses with no purchasing experiences were removed (n = 307). Hypotheses testing was conducted with T-test, multiple regression analysis, and moderated multiple analysis using SPSS 22.0 statistical packages.

The T-test results for prevention focus (t = 2.25), perceived time pressure (t = 4.38), and perceived pressure (t = 5.77) indicated significant differences (p < .05) in mean scores between perceived epidemic awareness long term and short term groups. Through this results, it can be verified that perceived short term epidemic awareness induced consumers to be more prevention focused, perceived time pressure, and pressure. Multiple regression analysis revealed the promotion (β = .58, p < .01), perceived time pressure (β = .16, p < .001) and perceived pressure (β = .20, p < .001) were significant in heuristic product evaluations. It means that consumers who are more promotion focused, with higher perceived time pressure and pressure in EPS, evaluated products more heuristically. On contrary, consumers who were more prevention focus (β = .11, p < .01) and expertise in product (β = .48, p < .001) in EPS, were significant in reflective product evaluations. In addition, the moderated multiple analysis results (R square (model1) =.09, R square (model2) =.18; p < .01) that the product importance had a great moderated effect (β = .83, p < .001) on stress to heuristic product evaluations.

This study verified the consumers’ evaluations of sports equipment in EPS when pressing circumstances are likely to disrupt normal decision-making processes. Furthermore, this study was conducted during the COVID-19 crisis, it would provide suggestions to sports industries to deal with future potential pandemics issues.