

Negative relationships in the interactions between consumers and smart objects

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Abstract:

Smart Objects (SOs) are spreading among the public and are increasingly present and significant in consumers' every-day life. Furthermore, due to their abilities and anthropomorphic features, consumers can interact with them as they do with other humans. This aspect can have positive implications for consumer experience. However, as SOs are not immune to flaws (e.g., biases and privacy issues), the negative implications of such interactions should not be underestimated. Despite this, literature is focusing mainly on the positive side of consumers-SOs relationships, leaving negative relationships understudied. This work, therefore, taking a cue from consumers-object relationship literature and literature about interpersonal relationship aims to fill this gap. Through a qualitative analysis of consumers' narratives about their relationships with a SO, this research unveils six types of negative relationships and six corresponding SO social roles: Dealer, Diminishing Partner, Stalker, Enemy, Annoying Acquaintance, and Master. The theoretical and managerial implications are discussed.

Keywords: consumer object relationship, negative relationship, smart object

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