

To whom and when to give: Effects of intimacy and obligation on expressive motives, gift choice, and information search in gift giving

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Abstract

When consumers purchase gifts for others, their behaviors are different from those when they buy something for themselves. The present study aims to understand the entire gift purchase process including perception of the recipient and occasion, formation of motives, gift type choices, and information search. For this purpose, an expressive motive (motive to express the relationship or givers' self through a gift) was introduced and hypotheses were developed on how perceived intimacy and obligation influence expressive motives and how these motives affect consumers' choice of gift types (hedonic vs. utilitarian) and information search modes (online vs. offline). A memory-based survey involving a student sample ($n = 355$) was conducted, and three major findings were revealed. First, more intimacy and less obligation increased expressive motives. Second, expressive motives influenced the giver's choice of a gift type. More specifically, givers with high expressive motives tended to choose a gift with a high level of hedonic quality and a low level of utilitarian quality. Finally, gift types that givers intended to purchase influenced information search. Givers searched for information online more when they purchased gifts with high utilitarian quality whereas they searched for offline information more when they purchased gifts with high hedonic quality. Results have practical implications for manufacturers and retailers whose businesses involve gifts.

1 | INTRODUCTION

Gift-giving behavior is as old as culture itself (Baskin, Wakslak, Trope, & Novemsky, 2014). Gift industry is as big as \$135 billion in 2014 in the United States alone (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2014), and it is projected to grow at a rate of 8.11% from 2018 to 2023 (Mordor Intelligence, 2018). With this economic importance, gift giving has been researched in a wide range of disciplines including sociology, psychology, anthropology, and marketing (Antón, Camarero, & Gil, 2014). Consumer behavior researchers have also paid attention to gift-giving behaviors from the perspective that gifting is a choice for

others. Traditional consumer behavior research has mostly dealt with the choice for oneself (Laran, 2010). However, gift giving is one of the most common behaviors that is executed to establish some relationship between two parties (Ward & Broniarczyk, 2011). Giving gifts is a critical symbolic communication method for the maintenance of social relationships (Belk, 1979). Therefore, consumers show very different behaviors when they buy gifts for others compared with the case when they purchase for themselves (Goodwin, Smith, & Spiggle, 1990). In line with existing literature, the present study focused on givers who try to choose gifts for others.

Specifically, this study focuses on givers' gift purchase process including the perception of occasions and the recipient, formulation of motives to give, gift type choices, and information search. First, to

deepen our understanding of the gift purchase process and add research implications, this study introduced expressive motives to explain diverse motives givers might have. Researchers with interest in givers' motives have paid attention to the classification of different motives (e.g., Goodwin et al., 1990; Sherry, 1983; Ward & Broniarczyk, 2016; Wolfinbarger & Yale, 1993). However, the present study focuses on expressive motives (motive to express the relationship or givers' self through a gift) and tries to understand how expressive motives are built and how these built motives could affect consumers' choice of gift types.

The intimacy that givers feel toward the recipients and the obligation givers feel to give gifts are adopted as influencing variables to explain how givers' expressive motives are built. Gift-giving behavior consists of four dimensions: the giver, recipient, occasion, and gift (Belk, 1979; Joy, 2001). Occasion and the relationship between givers and recipients are known to heavily influence givers' choice of gift (Belk, 1979; Pandya & Venkatesh, 1992). The present study introduces intimacy that givers feel toward the recipient to address the relationship between givers and recipients because it is one of the most important factors that influences givers' motives (Wolfinbarger & Yale, 1993). As for occasion, the current study adopts the concept of obligations to understand givers' occasions. Existing studies dealing with gift-giving occasions have usually focused on the classification of occasions (e.g., Antón et al., 2014; Larsen & Watson, 2001). The current research explains various occasions with how much givers feel obligated to give gifts.

To understand how givers' expressive motives might influence their choice of gifts, this study focuses on givers' product type choice for gifts and information search mode. First, a hedonic/utilitarian concept is adopted. Specifically, it is expected that givers' different degrees of expressive motives will influence gift types that givers choose (hedonic/utilitarian). The hedonic/utilitarian concept is one of the most researched topics in marketing research. However, this concept has not been investigated yet in gift-giving research. Therefore, results of this study will be meaningful for both gift-giving and hedonic/utilitarian concept research. This study also includes gift information search mode (online vs. offline) and posits that givers with a high level of expressive motives tend to purchase hedonic gifts and search for information offline whereas givers with a low level of expressive motives are likely to buy utilitarian gifts and search for information online. To sum up, this study covers the entire gift choice process, ranging from givers' perception of the occasion and the recipient, their motives, and the gift type choices to information search. This study deepens our understanding of gift-giving behaviors in the entire gift choice process that few researchers have dealt with. Moreover, the study adopts an empirical approach when existing scholars have used conceptual or qualitative methods. It also expands the research scope of gift-giving research by adopting new concepts such as expressive motives, hedonic/utilitarian gift types, and information search modes. Practitioners can also have detailed implications when they design diverse strategies such as communications, product assortment and in-store display, and multichannel strategies.

2 | THEORETICAL BACKGROUND AND HYPOTHESIS DEVELOPMENT

2.1 | Motives of gift giving

Previous studies have found that motives that givers have can heavily influence their gift-giving behaviors (e.g., Babin, Gonzalez, & Watts, 2007; Othman, Ong, & Teng, 2005; Sherry, 1983). Thus, researchers have attempted to investigate different motives givers may have (Goodwin et al., 1990; Sherry, 1983; Ward & Broniarczyk, 2016; Wolfinbarger & Yale, 1993). However, different researchers have different and somewhat confusing classifications. For example, Sherry (1983) has classified givers' motives into altruistic and agonistic ones. Altruistic motives refer to motives by which givers try to maximize the pleasure of recipients. Givers with altruistic motives try to give gifts the recipients want (Sherry, 1983). Meanwhile, givers with agonistic motives try to give gifts to express the power or social status of givers themselves and tend to give gifts that givers themselves want to give (Sherry, 1983). In a similar but different vein, Ward and Broniarczyk (2016) have classified givers' motives into altruistic and relation-signaling motives. Their altruistic motives are the same as those of Sherry (1983). However, their concept of relation-signaling motive is different from Sherry's (1983) agonistic motives. Relation-signaling motives mean that givers try to show how well they know the recipients or try to show givers' own identity through the gift. Givers with this motive tend to select gift that seems to be suitable to express their relationship with the recipients.

Some researchers have included the concept of "reciprocity" into gift-giving motives. Wolfinbarger and Yale (1993) have divided motives into experiential, obligated, and practical dimensions. According to them, experiential motives refer to givers' motives to show love for the recipients whereas practical motives concern givers' motives to give gifts that are most useful to the recipients. These two motives are similar to Sherry's altruistic motives in the sense that both of them concern recipients more than givers themselves. Some givers, however, give gifts because of others' expectations or some feeling of reciprocity (Wolfinbarger & Yale, 1993). This type of motive is called obligated. Givers with this motive focus on getting rid of indebtedness by reciprocating what givers themselves have received. Goodwin et al. (1990) have classified motives into symbolic messages and obligation. Symbolic messages refer to givers' intention to symbolize the relationship with the recipients or identities of the givers or recipients (Goodwin et al., 1990). Obligation, on the other hand, means that givers attempt to give gifts as "part of mutual exchange or in return for another gift" (Goodwin et al., 1990, p. 691), which is the same as Wolfinbarger and Yale's (1993) obligated motives.

Some problems have emerged from these mixed classifications. First, the classification of motives might not involve all motives givers have. For instance, Sherry's (1983) classification did not consider givers' relation-signaling motives whereas Ward and Broniarczyk (2016) did not involve givers' motive to pick what they wanted to give (egoistic motives). Second, practitioners might find it difficult to utilize

existing classifications because most givers do not have just one motive. As Sherry (1983) stated, “gift exchange results from multiple motives that fall between the poles of altruism and agonism on a motivation continuum” (p. 161). In this sense, the present study adopts expressive motives to explain confusing and research-specific classifications of motives. Because gifting is a symbolic communication means to build and maintain relationships between givers and recipients (Belk, 1979), it is inevitable that gifts contain expressive values that can reflect what motives givers have. Therefore, this study posits that givers have different degrees of expressive motives when they purchase gifts.

According to this argument outlined so far, different motives from the existing literature have expressive qualities in common, but at varying degrees. Symbolic or experiential motives are very expressive because givers with these motives try to show love or signal relationship (Goodwin et al., 1990; Wolfenbarger & Yale, 1993). Givers with these motives will choose gift that reflects givers' insight into “the unique preferences, tastes, and identities of their recipient” (Ward & Broniarczyk, 2016, p. 1002). Meanwhile, givers with altruistic motives are concerned with pleasing recipients. When givers try to give what recipients want to please recipients, they need to know or predict recipients' needs and wants. Therefore, givers with this motive will choose gifts that can signal that givers have put an effort to choose the right gift and they know or can predict recipients' needs and preferences (Prendergast & Stole, 2001). In this sense, altruistic motives also possess expressive quality. Reciprocity or obligated motives are also expressive in some way. Givers show that they care about the relationship or express “relational reciprocation” through gifting because reciprocity is a way of exhibiting “a bond of good will” (Babin et al., 2007, p. 898). To sum up, givers with different types of motives are expected to have expressive motives in common, but at different degrees.

2.2 | Intimacy, obligations, and expressive motives

As stated in Section 1, gift-giving behavior consists of the giver, recipient, occasion, and gift (Belk, 1979; Joy, 2001). The occasion and the relationship between givers and recipients can heavily influence givers' choice of gift (Belk, 1979; Pandya & Venkatesh, 1992). The occasion refers to situation that givers give presents to the recipients. It varies from birthdays, Christmas, Mother's Day, Father's Day, wedding (anniversary), and graduation to just because (Othman et al., 2005). Recipients also vary from spouses/romantic others, friends, family members, relatives, and coworkers to business partners and acquaintances. To understand these various occasions and recipients, scholars have tried to categorize them.

First, the existing literature has found that the relationship between givers and recipients is critical in shaping gift-giving behaviors (Joy, 2001; Sankar & Bose, 2019; Ward & Broniarczyk, 2016). For example, givers put effort and cautions to match needs of recipients and give gifts on various occasions such as birthdays, Valentine's Day, and just because for romantic others and close friends. However,

they do not put much effort to purchase a gift for just friends or hi/bye friends (Joy, 2001). Givers also tend to diverge from the registry and choose gifts of their selection for close friends in a gift registry context (Ward & Broniarczyk, 2016). They purchase gifts that match their own preferences in the belief that close recipient will have similar preferences (Sankar & Bose, 2019). Belk (1979) has performed pioneering research on gift giving and adopted the concept of “intimacy” to explain these various giver–recipient relationships. The author found that intimacy between givers and recipients could influence the price of gift that givers chose. When givers choose gifts for intimate recipients, they select more personal gifts (Belk & Coon, 1991) and put more effort and caution into choosing gifts (Joy, 2001). However, they tend to give cash or less personal items to mere acquaintances (Johnson, 1974).

Psychologists have recognized that intimacy and self-disclosure are strongly associated (McCarthy, Wood, & Holmes, 2017). When people express their thoughts and feelings to other people and when other people try to understand and care, both of them will have “mutual feelings of closeness” (Howell & Conway, 1990; McCarthy et al., 2017). When they want to express themselves and build mutual feelings of closeness, they have to have faith that the other person will accept and approve them (McCarthy et al., 2017). According to Murray, Holmes, and Collins (2006), people have a risk regulation system in building relationships. Thus, they do not express themselves when they are not sure whether they will be accepted or rejected. The same logic can be applied to gift giving because choosing and giving gifts are social acts that givers perform, and gifting is a special kind of language between givers and recipients (Antón et al., 2014). When givers feel intimate toward the recipient, they will try to express themselves to build more close relationships. However, givers will be reluctant to reveal or express themselves toward less intimate recipient because of the risk regulation system. Some gift-giving researchers have provided evidence to this logic. For example, Larsen and Watson (2001) have asserted that givers consider expressive values to be important when they choose gifts for intimate recipients. Similarly, Wagner, Ettenson, and Verrier (1990) have found that givers prefer to give expressive gifts for close recipients and utilitarian gifts for distant recipients. Therefore, it can be expected that the intimacy givers feel toward the recipients will influence the expressive motive they have when they choose gifts. On the basis of this, we have the following hypothesis:

H1. *Givers' expressive motive is positively related to the intimacy they feel toward the recipients. They will have more expressive motives when they purchase gifts for intimate recipients than for less intimate recipients.*

Regarding gift occasions, Antón et al. (2014) have categorized gift purchase situations into personal and commercial situations. Commercial situations refer to occasions on which everybody gives and receives presents, such as Christmas and Valentine's days. On these occasions, everybody expects to exchange gifts. Therefore, givers feel social pressure to give gifts. Meanwhile, personal

situations mean that givers give presents for personal reasons (e.g., birthdays, anniversaries, and other personal celebrations). On personal occasions, givers feel more “gift-giving freedom” with less social pressure (Antón et al., 2014, p. 34). Larsen and Watson (2001) have divided gift-giving situations into formal rituals (such as Christmas, birthdays, and wedding days) and spontaneity (meaning the occasion when gifts are given in spontaneous situations). Baskin et al. (2014) have investigated how consumers behave differently when both givers and recipients have certain expectations for a desirable gift (such as Valentine's Day) and when no such expectation existed (such as birthdays).

Review of existing literature revealed that different scholars had different standards to classify gift occasions. Thus, the same occasion was classified differently. For example, Antón et al. (2014) viewed birthday as a personal situation that givers felt less social pressure to give whereas Larsen and Watson (2001) thought the same occasion as a formal ritual that gift exchange was a must. Such inconsistency resulted from the fact that the existing literature focused on individual occasions. Therefore, this study adopts consumers' perception of obligations to solve such inconsistency because how consumers perceive the occasion is expected to influence givers' behaviors more than the occasion itself. Christmas, for instance, is classified as a commercial situation in which giving gift is regarded mandatory. However, some givers might not feel much social pressure to give gifts whereas others feel much obligations. Such difference will yield different purchase behaviors. This logic is similar to Goodwin et al. (1990). They described gift-giving contexts by focusing on givers' motives to give rather than occasions and divided motives into voluntary and obligatory ones. Givers with voluntary motives give gifts without a sense of obligation whereas givers with obligatory motivations give presents out of obligations.

How obligatory givers perceive gift-giving occasions is expected to influence gift-giving behaviors. Although few studies have directly dealt with the relationship between givers' expressive motives and perceived obligations, researches hinting such relationship are sufficient. For instance, Pandya and Venkatesh (1992) have analyzed respondents' self-reports on gift giving and found that givers consider gifts as symbols of the relationship or means to express givers' emotions when they give presents with voluntary intentions. On the other hand, givers pick less personal and simple gifts when they feel some obligations to give gifts (Scammon, Shaw, & Bamossy, 1981). Similarly, when givers buy gifts to reciprocate, choosing gift with the “right amount” is more important than choosing something representative of the relationship (Babin et al., 2007, p. 903).

Indeed, when givers must purchase something (such as in obligatory situations), they tend to think shopping is arduous. Thus, their shopping behavior becomes more utilitarian (Babin et al., 2007; Lowrey, Otnes, & Ruth, 2004). In other words, consumers consider shopping for gifts as a work or mission that has to be done. Therefore, they will put less effort in gift shopping. Thus, the gift selection process becomes more simplified, resulting in the selection of less personal gifts (Heeler, Francis, Okechuku, & Reid, 1979). Therefore, it is expected that givers will have less expressive motive when they feel

obligated to give gifts. On the basis of this, we have the following hypothesis:

H2. *Givers' expressive motive is negatively related to the obligation they feel toward gift occasions. They will have less expressive motives in more obligated situations than in less obligated situations.*

2.3 | Expressive motives and gift choices

The concept of hedonic/utilitarian dimensions is one of the most common concepts adopted in marketing research to classify products. However, few gift-giving studies have applied these dimensions for products selected as gifts, although existing literature has dealt with hedonic/utilitarian shopping orientations in a gift purchase. For example, Babin et al. (2007) have investigated the relationship between gift motivations and shopping orientation. According to them, givers would focus on finding the perfect gift that fits the recipient when they purchase gifts with the intention to express love for the recipient. Accordingly, they would pay more attention to the utilitarian aspect of shopping to achieve their shopping goals. Givers also have utilitarian orientations when they have egoistic motivations. In other words, givers tend to be more utilitarian when they shop for gifts regardless of the motivation to give gifts.

Then, will hedonic/utilitarian dimensions be applied to explaining the gift types consumers choose? Specifically, will givers' motives influence the product type that givers choose? No researchers have yet explored these questions in gift-giving field. However, other research on consumer behavior could help us answer these questions. According to existing literature, consumers tend to use hedonic products as a means to express their wants and tastes (Maimaran & Simonson, 2011). Consumers try to purchase products with unique traits when they want to express themselves differently from other people. Therefore, they tend to purchase hedonic products (Maimaran & Simonson, 2011; Whitley, Trudel, & Kurt, 2018). Meanwhile, consumers try to purchase products that are similar to others' choices so that they are less likely to receive criticism when they want to conform to society and feel a sense of belonging (Baumeister, 1982). In this case, they tend to choose utilitarian products that make it easier to justify the purchase and less likely to be criticized (Böhm & Pfister, 1996).

A similar effect is expected to happen in gift-giving situations. When consumers have a high level of expressive motive, they will want to express the uniqueness of themselves or the relationship. Consequently, they will purchase products with hedonic quality. However, utilitarian products are less likely to reflect consumers' identities because consumers' tastes, which signal identity, are not expressed much in utilitarian products (Berger & Heath, 2007). When product was presented to respondents to ask them what kind of person the user of that product will be like, respondents who were shown utilitarian products came up with the fewest descriptions of the user (Shavitt & Nelson, 1999). Consumers with a high level of expressive motive are less likely to purchase utilitarian products because a utilitarian quality

is unsuitable to contain expressiveness. Therefore, the following hypothesis is drawn.

H3. *Givers' expressive motive can influence their gift type choices such that givers with a high (low) expressive motive will purchase gifts with high hedonic (utilitarian) quality.*

2.4 | Information search for gift choices

Consumers show different information search behaviors when they choose for others compared with the case when they choose for themselves. They are known to search for more information (Liu, Polman, Liu, & Jiao, 2018; Polman, 2010) and employ more search criteria (Lee, Herr, Kardes, & Kim, 1999) when they make a choice for others. Gift giving as one form of choice for others is known to show similar patterns: givers visit more stores, consider more alternatives, and spend more time searching for information (Cleveland, Babin, Laroche, Ward, & Bergeron, 2003), although there is little research on this issue.

Some researchers have tried to investigate givers' distinct behaviors when they search for information for a gift. For example, Sherry (1983) has proposed that givers can perform both internal (the conception of self, other, and gift) and external search. Segev, Shoham, and Ruvio (2012) have differentiated information search into direct and indirect ones through a qualitative approach. According to them, some givers directly ask what the recipients want to give exactly what recipients want. If givers use direct method, recipients will not be surprised, although they get what they want. To overcome this shortcoming, givers may use another tactic that involves observation. They may use hints that recipient gives. This is termed as indirect information search.

To obtain more understanding of givers' information search, the current study focuses on online and offline information search. The internet has evolved as one of the most used channels to search for product information (Rose & Samouel, 2009). Consumers are known to utilize both online and offline to search for information and purchase the product interchangeably and simultaneously (Voorveld, Smit, Neijens, & Bronner, 2016). Therefore, there seems to be scope for investigating givers' online/offline gift search behaviors for both practitioners and researchers.

Consumers search for information on products and compare alternatives before they make purchase decisions. In doing so, they utilize various information sources that can be classified into online and offline sources. Consumers can look at products, read reviews and articles from the internet, and check manufacturers' advertising online (Cheema & Papatla, 2010). They can touch the product, have a conversation with friends or salespeople, read articles in newspapers and magazines, and read or watch advertising offline (Cheema & Papatla, 2010).

Online and offline information searches have very different traits. First of all, consumers can touch and feel products offline. Touching and feeling products before purchasing gives consumers confidence about their purchase (Flavián, Gurrea, & Orús, 2016) and reduces the

resistance consumers feel when they pay for their purchase (Peck & Childers, 2003). Online, on the other hand, contains abundant information consumers have an easy access to (Bhargava, Mantonakis, & White, 2016; Shen, Cai, & Guo, 2016). For example, consumers can gather information only from their acquaintances offline. However, they can collect information from millions of users around the world online (Chatterjee, 2001).

The present study posits that givers prefer offline information search when they choose gifts with high hedonic quality whereas they prefer online information search when they choose gifts with high utilitarian quality due to two reasons. First, different levels of expressive motives are expected to influence consumers to use different information search modes. Consumers may feel that online information is less credible than offline information because they cannot experience the product physically and have face-to-face interaction with salespeople through online (Bao, Zhou, & Su, 2003; Riquelme & Román, 2014). Therefore, consumers will perceive more risks in online shopping environment than brick-and-mortar shopping (Biswas & Biswas, 2004; Riquelme & Román, 2014). Meanwhile, offline information search has higher perceived cost than an online search. Offline search incurs travel cost (Riquelme & Román, 2014), time-related cost (travel and in-store time; Arce-Urriza, Cebollada, & Tarira, 2017), and transportation cost (Chintagunta, Chu, & Cebollada, 2012) whereas information search through online is convenient and efficient with fewer search costs for consumers (Rose & Samouel, 2009). Givers tend to choose hedonic gifts because they are expressive. When givers want to express themselves or the relationship through the gift, they are willing to put great effort to choose the right gifts (Ward & Broniarczyk, 2016). Therefore, they will try to use less risky channels regardless of perceived cost. They will utilize more offline sources to search hedonic gifts with a high level of expressive motives.

Second, different product characteristics are expected to affect givers' information search behaviors. Hedonic quality is primarily characterized by "an affective and sensory experience of aesthetic or sensual pleasure" (Dhar & Wertenbroch, 2000, p. 61) that gives consumers fun, pleasure, fantasy, and excitement (Holbrook & Hirschman, 1982). Therefore, "how one feels about the product" is the most important factor in the consumption of hedonic product (Roy & Ng, 2012, p. 82). Consumers prefer to touch, feel, and experience products before purchase (Cheema & Papatla, 2010). Consumers are likely to feel less confident and more anxious when they evaluate hedonic products online because they cannot physically experience online products (Cheema & Papatla, 2010). At the same time, utilitarian quality is "cognitively driven, instrumental, and goal oriented" (Roy & Ng, 2012, p. 82). Consumers who purchase products with high utilitarian quality tend to focus on cognitive aspects such as "economic value for the money, convenience, and time savings" (Overby & Lee, 2006, p. 1161). In this sense, consumers will feel more comfortable searching for information online because online information covers product attributes more effectively (Flavián et al., 2016) with its convenience, rich information, objectivity, and flexibility (Riquelme & Román, 2014). Utilitarian products can be evaluated more effectively online because consumers can easily locate and compare merchants,

products, and attributes in a shorter time (Grewal, Gopalkrishnan, Krishnan, & Sharma, 2003; Mathwick, Malhotra, & Rigdon, 2001). Based on these reasonings, the following hypothesis is proposed.

H4. *Gift type will influence givers' information search modes such that givers who purchase gifts with high hedonic (utilitarian) quality will search product information offline (online) more than online (offline).*

3 | METHODOLOGY

3.1 | Questionnaires and measures

The present study attempted to test hypotheses using a memory-based survey. Respondents were asked to recall a recent experience and answer questions to the recalled experience. Because the survey relies on respondents' memory, data can be distorted (Groves et al., 2011). However, this method is useful for gathering "naturally occurring responses" (Schoefer, 2010, p. 57). It has been used by many researchers to gather real-life responses (e.g., Kelley, Hoffman, & Davis, 1993; Schoefer, 2010; Tax, Brown, & Chandrashekar, 1998). To reduce distortion, most researchers have limited responses to experiences within the past 6 months (Schoefer, 2010; Tax et al., 1998). The present study also asked respondents to only answer questions about their gift-giving experiences within the past 6 months.

Respondents were first asked to retrieve the most recent experiences of gift purchase within 6 months. They were requested to answer experience-related questions, such as characteristics of the recipient (including age, relationship, and gender), the gift (including product specifications and price), and circumstances to encourage memory retrieval (Groves et al., 2011). After that, respondents were asked about intimacy they felt toward the recipient, obligation perceived, expressive motives, perceived hedonic/utilitarian quality of the gift, and information search modes to test our hypotheses. All measurement items were borrowed from existing literature using a 7-point Likert scale. Specifically, Ward and Broniarczyk's (2016) three items were used to measure intimacy and five items from Wolfenbarger and Yale (1993) were used to measure obligation. Expressive motives were assessed with two items: "Choose something that acknowledges or expresses the relationship you have with the recipient" and "Choose something that reminds the recipient of you" from Ward and Broniarczyk (2016). Hedonic/utilitarian qualities were addressed with items from the study of Voss, Spangenberg, and Grohmann (2003) using a semantic differential scale. Finally, online/offline information search items were adopted from the study of Noble, Griffith, and Adjei (2006) and modified to fit the present study.

3.2 | Data collection and sample

Respondents were recruited from both business and nonbusiness classes (including undergraduate and graduate) at a university in Korea.

Student sample has been reported to have bias and lack generalizability (Ashraf & Merunka, 2017). However, this study decides to use such sample because students younger than other generations are the most fluent users of both online and offline medium. In addition, they are less susceptible to bias related to online issues such as security and delayed delivery (Shen et al., 2016). In this sense, they are expected to be suitable for the present study that encompasses both online and offline gift information search.

Prior to each class, the purpose of the survey was explained and questionnaires were placed at the corner of the classrooms. Respondents were guided to fill out and return the survey freely during class break. A total of 390 responses were gathered and 355 responses (35 incomplete responses were excluded) were used for the analysis. Their average age was 21.6 years (range, 18 to 29 years). Males accounted for 49.6%. Details of gift-giving experiences of these respondents are as follows. The most mentioned recipients were friends (38.9%), followed by romantic others (27.9%) and parents and siblings (25.1%). The occasion that was mentioned the most was birthday (65.1%) followed by no specific reason (e.g., just because, 16.3%).

3.3 | Reliability and validity of the measures

Exploratory factor analysis was performed before the main analysis. Results of this analysis are shown in Table 1. All measurement items were factored to the right factor. All loadings were over 0.06. The reliability of each item was also checked using Cronbach's alpha and the result was satisfactory (refer to Table 1). In addition, a confirmatory factor analysis was run. The model satisfied the generally accepted fit criteria: $\chi^2 = 495.69$, GFI = 0.902, CFI = 0.955, and RMSEA = 0.048. Factor loadings for each item and S.E. were highly significant ($p < .05$) and the AVE of each item was higher than 0.5 (refer to Table 2), indicating that measurement items had convergent validity (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). Divergent validity was checked using the phi matrix to show correlations with latent variables. As shown in Table 3, all dimensions had correlation of less than 1, meaning that all dimensions achieved divergent validity (Anderson & Gerbing, 1988).

3.4 | Hypothesis testing

The structural model was tested using AMOS 24.0. Results showed a good overall fit. Chi-square result was significant ($\chi^2_{(281)} = 546.272$, $p = .00$). Other indices showed suitable results (GFI = 0.892, AGFI = 0.865, IFI = 0.947, CFI = 0.946, AIC = 337.526, TLI = 0.938, and RMSEA = 0.052), revealing a good model fit. The overall model with estimates is shown in Figure 1.

First of all, respondents had more expressive motives when they felt intimate with the recipient (estimate = 0.164; CR = 2.411; $p = .016$), supporting H1. H2 assumes the relationship between obligation givers feel and the expressive motive they feel when they choose gifts. Result showed that as givers felt more obligated about the gift-

TABLE 1 Result of the exploratory factor analysis

Indicator	Dimension						
	Intimacy	Obligation	Expressive motive	Hedonic quality	Utilitarian quality	Online info search	Offline info search
We are very close friends	0.843						
We know each other very well	0.836						
Our relationship is not important to me (reverse coded)	0.758						
I gave the gift because I would feel guilty if I did not		0.838					
I felt obligated to give a gift		0.815					
I gave a gift because I was expected to give one		0.783					
I felt that I was obligated to reciprocate since I received a gift		0.702					
I waited until the last minute to purchase a gift		0.599					
I chose something that acknowledges or expresses the relationship I have with the recipient			0.837				
I chose something that reminds the recipient of me			0.825				
Delightful				0.842			
Enjoyable				0.838			
Exciting				0.796			
Enjoyable				0.775			
Practical					0.878		
Efficient					0.828		
Functional					0.821		
Necessary					0.804		
I gained a great deal of information online						0.907	
I sought out online information regarding which brand to buy						0.868	
I spent much time looking for online information about products and brands before I made a purchase						0.853	
I sought out product information online before making a purchase						0.716	
I gained a great deal of information offline							0.850
I spent much time looking for offline information about products and brands before I made a purchase							0.845
I sought out offline information regarding which brand to buy							0.807
I sought out product information offline before making a purchase							0.744
Cronbach's α	.794	.833	.806	.865	.875	.892	.877
Eigenvalue	1.473	3.081	1.168	1.784	2.621	6.614	2.258
% of Variance	5.665	11.851	4.491	6.860	10.082	25.439	8.685
Cumulative var.	68.583	37.290	73.074	62.917	47.373	25.439	56.058
KMO = 0.837, Bartlett's test $\chi^2 = 5,134.213$ ($df = 325$, Sig. = .000)							

giving situation, they felt less expressive motives when they chose a gift (estimate = -0.268 ; CR = 3.686; $p = .000$), thus supporting the second hypothesis. The third hypothesis deals with the relationship between expressive motives and product characteristics of gift that givers choose. As shown in Figure 1, when givers felt more expressive motives, they tended to choose products with more hedonic quality (estimate = 0.519; CR = 7.524; $p = .000$) but less utilitarian quality (estimate = -0.230 ; CR = -3.683 ; $p = .000$). The hypothesis regarding the relationship between product quality and information search was also supported. Results showed that when givers attempted to choose a product with more hedonic quality, they tended to search for information offline more (estimate = 0.372; CR = 5.774; $p = .008$) whereas they tended to search for information online less (estimate = -0.138 ; CR = -2.307 ; $p = .021$). In the case of a product with more utilitarian quality, givers searched for information online more (estimate = 0.234;

CR = 3.924; $p = .000$) and offline less (estimate = -0.153 ; CR = -2.637 ; $p = .000$).

4 | DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

The present study attempted to understand how givers' motives differed according to givers' relationships with the recipient and gift-giving situations and how these different motives influenced gift type choices and gift information search. A retrospective survey from 355 respondents revealed three major findings. First, intimacy that givers perceived toward the recipients positively influenced givers' perception of expressive motives whereas obligations they felt toward the gift-giving situations decreased givers' expressive motives. Second, the expressive motive of givers influenced products they chose as a

TABLE 2 Result of confirmatory factor analysis

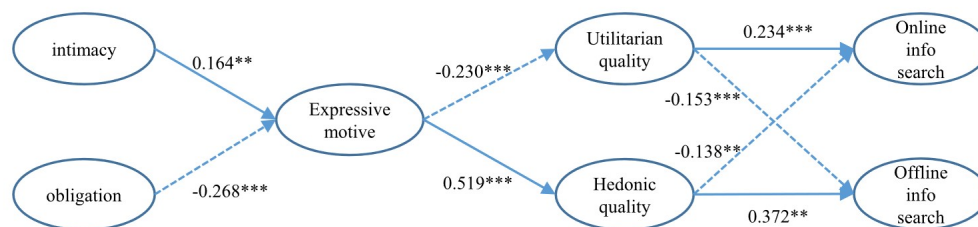
Measurement item		Standardized estimate	S.E.	CR	<i>p</i>	AVE	
Intimacy	Intimacy 3	0.825	—	—	—	0.597	
	Intimacy 2	0.525	0.063	10.064	***		
	Intimacy 1	0.928	0.075	15.036	***		
Obligation	Obligation 5	0.633	—	—	—	0.495	
	Obligation 4	0.660	0.104	10.016	***		
	Obligation 3	0.748	0.109	10.917	***		
	Obligation 2	0.777	0.111	11.043	***		
	Obligation 1	0.684	0.108	10.005	***		
Product quality	Utilitarian 4	0.855	—	—	—	0.643	
	Utilitarian 3	0.753	0.056	15.728	***		
	Utilitarian 2	0.786	0.054	16.876	***		
	Utilitarian 1	0.804	0.055	17.178	***		
	Hedonic 8	0.804	—	—	—		0.636
	Hedonic 7	0.797	0.069	15.135	***		
	Hedonic 6	0.857	0.068	15.020	***		
Information search	Hedonic 5	0.722	0.061	13.807	***	0.688	
	Online 7	0.668	—	—	—		0.649
	Online 5	0.948	0.093	15.277	***		
	Online 3	0.802	0.088	13.591	***		
	Online 1	0.871	0.089	14.549	***		
	Offline 8	0.656	—	—	—		
	Offline 6	0.909	0.098	14.089	***		
Expressive motive	Offline 4	0.799	0.093	12.952	***	0.683	
	Offline 2	0.834	0.095	13.409	***		
	Motive 2	0.768	—	—	—		
	Motive 1	0.881	0.108	10.573	***		

$\chi^2/df = 1.829$; GFI = 0.902; AGFI = 0.873; RMSEA = 0.048; NFI = 0.896; CFI = 0.955

****p* < .01

TABLE 3 Phi matrix (latent correlations)

Dimensions	Intimacy	Obligation	Utilitarian quality	Hedonic quality	Online info search	Offline info search	Expressive motive
Intimacy	1.00						
Obligation	-0.447	1.00					
Utilitarian quality	-0.064	0.277	1.00				
Hedonic quality	0.307	-0.274	-0.249	1.00			
Online search	-0.607	-0.229	0.267	-0.190	1.00		
Offline search	0.159	-0.164	-0.241	0.390	-0.443	1.00	
Expressive motive	0.271	-0.326	-0.231	0.492	-0.179	0.429	1.00

**FIGURE 1** Proposed model and the results of the hypothesis testing [Colour figure can be viewed at wileyonlinelibrary.com]

gift. When givers had a high level of expressive motive, they tended to choose products with more hedonic but less utilitarian quality. This finding that consumers' motive affects product choice is expected to

provide invaluable insight for marketers who try to position their products as gifts. Finally, this study empirically revealed that gift type influenced consumers' information search. According to this result,

consumers tend to search for information online when they purchase products with high utilitarian quality whereas they search for information offline more when they purchase products with high hedonic quality.

4.1 | Theoretical implications

The present research deepened our understanding of gift-giving behaviors via empirically testing links between gift-giving situations, gift-giving motives, gift type choices, and gift information search. Accordingly, this study yields the following theoretical implications.

First, the present study expands our understanding of consumers' gift-giving motives. The existing literature divides gift-giving motives into altruistic and egoistic ones (Sherry, 1983), altruistic and relation-signaling ones (Ward & Broniarczyk, 2016), experiential, obligated, and practical ones (Wolfenbarger & Yale, 1993), or symbolic messages and obligation ones (Goodwin et al., 1990) in attempts to comprehend gift-giving behavior. However, these classifications might not involve all motives givers may have. Also, givers might have more than one motive. In this sense, the present study adopted expressive motive and focused on how the degree of expressive motive influenced gift-giving behaviors. This change of approach is perceived to be more exhaustive because it involves all motives givers might have. It will lead to different research directions for future researchers.

Second, the present study introduced the hedonic/utilitarian concept in gift-giving research. Although classifying products into hedonic and utilitarian ones is one of the most commonly accepted concepts in marketing research, gift-giving research has not adopted this division into products chosen as gifts. Therefore, the present study utilized the hedonic/utilitarian concept to describe characteristics of product that consumers chose as a gift and determined how givers' expressive motive influenced consumers' choice of products with different hedonic and utilitarian quality. This study expanded research topic in gift-giving behaviors by introducing hedonic/utilitarian gift types.

Finally, the complete process of gift-giving (gift-giving situations, perception on the recipient, formulation of motives, choice of gift, and gift information search) was empirically tested. The existing literature mostly investigated specific issues of gift-giving behaviors without encompassing the entire choice process. For example, some researchers have focused on moderating variables that might influence gift-giving behavior such as occasions, giver-receiver relations, and givers' personal characteristics (e.g., Antón et al., 2014; Babin et al., 2007; Baskin et al., 2014; Palan, 2001; Weisfeld-Spolter, Rippé, & Gould, 2014). Others have focused on comparing gift giving (choice for others) and choices for oneself (e.g., Pandya & Venkatesh, 1992; Wang & Lans, 2018). Previous studies that tried to deal with gift-giving process adopted conceptual approach or performed qualitative research (e.g., Joy, 2001; Larsen & Watson, 2001). The present research was meaningful in the sense that it broadened the research scope by investigating the whole gift choice process including information search and investigated the process empirically.

4.2 | Practical implications

The present study has implications for both retailers and manufacturers. First, it has practical implications on the direction of communication strategies for manufacturers. Many firms try to inform consumers with messages that their products are suitable for gifts (Antón et al., 2014). For such firms, results of the present study can give some useful guidelines. The present study shows that consumers feel more expressive motives and tend to choose hedonic products when they choose gifts for intimate recipients in less obligated situations. Marketers with different product types can adopt different approaches based on this result. If companies have products with high hedonic quality, they should focus on enhancing givers' expressive motives. For this purpose, communication campaigns can focus on either emphasizing expressive motives or the intimacy givers feel toward the recipient. First, marketers can emphasize the ability of their products as a vessel to carry givers' identity or the relationship. "Celebrate your unforgettable moments with Pandora" by Pandora is a good example. Marketers also can influence givers' expressive motives by telling customers that their products are good candidates as gifts for intimate recipients. During Christmas season in 2016, Samsung aired advertising showing that relatives gathered and gifted VR machine to loved ones. They also invited twitter users to tag a friend and explain why that friend deserved the machine (derived from <https://blog.hubspot.com/marketing/holiday-marketing-campaign-examples>). Through this campaign, Samsung tried to tell customers that their product was suitable as a gift for intimate recipients.

Meanwhile, firms with highly utilitarian products should focus on givers' obligations. Givers usually feel much obligations when they should reciprocate (Belk, 1979). Marketers can appeal consumers that their products are appropriate for this purpose through communication campaigns. Another way is to utilize occasions that givers feel much obligations. The present study did not focus on the occasion itself. It argued that how consumers perceived occasions to be important. However, it is also true that consumers perceive much obligations in some occasions such as Christmas and Valentine's days (Antón et al., 2014). During these occasions, marketers can emphasize the utilitarian aspect of their product such as reasonable price to magnify product sales.

Results of this study can also help retailers design their product assortments and in-store display strategies. As stated above, most givers feel much obligations to give gifts in occasions such as Christmas and Valentine's days (Antón et al., 2014). If givers feel an obligation, they tend to have less expressive motive. They are more likely to purchase gifts with less hedonic quality but more utilitarian quality. In this case, retailers can increase sales by adopting adequate product offerings and in-store display strategies. One possible direction is that they can have more utilitarian and less hedonic gift collections in their stores. Another way is to carefully design gift guides. Most retailers provide consumers with gift guides during holiday seasons. The present study suggests that a separate set of gift guides for different recipients might be very helpful. For intimate recipients, retailers can fill gift guides with products that have high hedonic quality. However, for

less intimate recipients, they can allocate products with utilitarian quality in gift guides. The present study also gives directions to design an in-store display. As an illustration, retailers can place a POP (point-of-purchase) display to increase givers' expressive motive near the highly hedonic product section. They can also place a POP display emphasizing reciprocity or the utilitarian aspect such as price near the highly utilitarian product section.

Finally, this study has implications for retailers who have multi-channel strategies. Consumers these days not only purchase products online and offline but also attain product information from both online and offline simultaneously (Voorveld et al., 2016). Hence, traditional retailers adopt online channels whereas online retailers encompass offline store (Wang & Goldfarb, 2017). The present study revealed that the hedonic/utilitarian quality of product could influence consumers' paths of information search. When the product is more hedonic, consumers search offline more than online, and vice versa. Therefore, retailers should know their product characteristics well and decide how to divide the role of their offline and online channels accordingly.

4.3 | Future research suggestions

As with any research, the present study is not exempted from limitations. First, it did not incorporate the fact that expressive motives could have many aspects. Givers try to express or symbolize their relationships with recipients through gifts (Sherry, 1983) and gifts may convey givers' identity in the gift (Larsen & Watson, 2001). In addition, gifts contain how givers think about the recipients (Philp, Ashworth, Robitaille, & Rath, 2016). These motives can be very different. Therefore, breaking down expressive motives into motives to express givers' self and to symbolize the relationship might provide more detailed implications. For example, Ward and Broniarczyk (2011) have asserted that givers tend to choose gifts contradictory to their internal values in order to please intimate recipients. This means that givers might choose gifts that express the intimacy they feel toward the recipient instead of gifts that express themselves. In a different vein, Ward and Broniarczyk (2016) have insisted that givers tend to choose gift that can be a token to express the relationship between the giver and the recipient rather than a gift that the recipient wants. The present study suggests that the more intimacy the giver feels toward the recipient, the higher the motives they will have to express the relationship between the giver and the recipient. This suggests that the intimacy givers feel might have a positive relationship with the motive to express the relationship and a negative relationship with the motive to express givers themselves. Future research is needed to this relationship empirically.

Second, this study used a student sample to prevent some types of biases. However, student sample cannot represent the whole population (Ashraf & Merunka, 2017). Therefore, this study requires further replications in order to enhance the generalizability of the key findings. In addition, gift-giving behavior is very culture dependent. For example, East Asians use gift giving to express romantic love more

than Westerners (Beichen & Murshed, 2015). Future research can focus on how demographic and cultural differences can influence the proposed gift-giving model.

Finally, diverse search methods should be included in the gift choice process model. Little research has considered gift information search. Most of the research studies regarding this issue have used a quantitative method so far (e.g., Segev et al., 2012). The current study is meaningful in the sense that it empirically investigates givers' online/offline information search that has not been dealt with before. However, it is also true that online/offline search behaviors addressed in this study are not specific to gift-giving situations. Therefore, it will be meaningful to explore gift specific information search behaviors. Direct/indirect information search or top-down/bottom-up search can be one possible extension.

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