

The Impact of On-line Design Factors on Shopping Values

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Abstract

On-line retailing has attracted a great deal of attention in recent years due to its potential for both buyers and sellers. Because of consumers' emphasis on efficient use of time, with technology improvements that provide greater convenience and more information than traditional retailing, more retailers are considering going on-line a good way of doing business. Therefore, this research discussed the key factors that might influence consumers' shopping decisions on on-line shopping: on-line design factors and customer shopping values.

Keywords

Website Design, Hedonic Value, Utilitarian Value, Shopping Values.

1. Introduction

A surge of electronic-commerce (e-commerce) that allows transactions over the Internet has grown rapidly in the last few years. By the maturity of the security, logistics and cash flow systems of the web-based e-stores, more and more web users are willing to shop on line. Though it is clear that the trend of going on-line is the norm today, some dot-coms have faced some failures. For that reason, researchers in the e-marketing field attempt to discover theoretical implications of the success of e-commerce. In the context of on-line retailing, we define the stimulus as the sum total of all the cues that are visible and audible to the on-line shopper. It seems likely that atmosphere variables may become relevant in electronic retailing.

Traditionally, consumer behavior studies have focused on information processing or expectancy-value models characterizing consumer shopping as no more than a routine task. However, models are beginning to evolve into more realistic representations of consumption experiences, accounting for consumers' hedonic and emotional sides. Holbrook and Hirschman (1982) argued that, while much of consumer behavior can be explained by conventional research, it neglects an important segment of the consumption experience, namely, fantasies, feelings, and fun. Then, a dichotomy has been presented in the retail context by the themes of shopping as work (Sherry, McGrath, and Levy 1993) versus the more enjoyable perspective on shopping as fun (Babin, Darden, and Griffin, 1994). These two themes demonstrate that utilitarian value - whether the purchase goal of the shopping trip was accomplished, and hedonic value - which reflects the individual's evaluation of the entertainment and experiential worth of the shopping trip.

2. Related work

Compared to brick-and-mortar business, dot-coms are very different in three key aspects which need to be noticed by researchers. First, the window of sight is narrower rather than walking into a huge physical store; the shopping environment is a small screen instead. Second, distance and time are

compressed. Last, consumers have more control over the information they seek and the websites they visit.

Researchers confirm that there is the new type of “atmospheric” variable, and the next step of the study is to find out how that influences consumer’s feelings at the moment. The concept of shopping value and illustrate the importance of the concept. They specify two types of shopping values: utilitarian value and hedonic value, which play the dark side and the bright side of shopping, respectively. Taken together, these two components represent a comprehensive picture of the value an individual derives from a shopping trip. Indeed, the value that a shopper takes away from the experience is amply described by these two factors.

With the current emphasis on creating more lasting relationships with customers, the concept of customer satisfaction is intensely discussed. Assessing what factors contribute to high customer satisfaction is a crucial issue that can affect future strategic planning. Hence, the main purpose of the study is to investigate the potential influence of the web-site design factors on consumers’ shopping.

3. On-line Design Factors

Since the design factors of the web-sites draw great attention of researchers in the field of e-commerce, there are plenty of relevant studies published. Wan (2000) divided web quality attributes into four categories: information, friendliness, responsiveness, and reliability. Huizingh (2000) indicated that content refers to the information, features, or services that are offered in the Web site; design to the way the content is made available for Web visitors. Liu and Arnett (2000) named such quality factors as accuracy, completeness, relevancy, security, reliability, customization, interactivity, ease of use, speed, search functionality, and organization. Liang and Lai (2002) conduct an empirical to verify that the quality of the web-sites design can be measured by three factors: hygiene factors, motivation factors, and media richness. Hygiene factors are critical when consumer decide whether to shop electronically, while motivation factors play a key role when consumer choose from a number of different web-sites. Media richness is least important among all. Based on the survey of Ranganathan and Ganapathy (2002), four key dimensions of web-sites are derived: information content, design, security, and privacy. Chang, Cheung and Lai (2005) identified 45 relevant articles, generalizing website features and information content to be the most crucial factors.

Although there are so many useful and quality studies in this area being published, they are fragmented and focused only on subset of web quality. For example, Liu and Arnett list two dimensions of web quality—information and system. Several important quality dimensions are missing from the authors’ list. Moreover, the majority of the suggested web quality attributes and scales are relevant to web designers than to web users; like for instances, the ideas and scales proposed by Chang, Cheung and Lai. In addition, web quality is a vastly undefined concept. Existing scientific research discusses the meaning of some aspects of web quality in a descriptive manner without delineating its major dimensions or providing tested scales to measure it.

3.1 Technical Adequacy

According to a survey conducted by the European Electronic Messaging Association (EEMA), more than 79% of respondents said that security is the top concern of EC customers (Shankar 1996). To overcome such fears, many B2C web-sites offer alternative payment modes, like telephonic transactions or checks. In order to allay the consumer concerns, many web sites also offer individual accounts with a login-ID and password. Ease of navigation is also needed, especially in consumer electronic markets. Difficulties in navigating a B2C web-site have been cited as a barrier for on-line purchasing.

In addition to security and ease of navigation, this dimension also includes availability, reliability, browser sniffing, personalization, customization and speedy page loading. A more detailed list of the sample items included in the Technical Adequacy construct is shown in TABLE 3—1.

3.2 Specific Content

Many studies describing how to use the Web stress the importance content. ‘Content is king’ is a well-known slogan (McCarthy, 1995). Content refers to the information, features or services offered in the web site. An informative site should provide detailed and specific information with respect to products (prices, specifications, delivery terms), the company (mission, balance sheet, number of employees), or other relevant topics. The information given in a B2C web site should be just sufficient for the consumers to make a decision, and care should be taken to avoid giving too much, as this is likely to result in information over load.

Specific content reflected concerns related to finding specific details about products/services, customer support, privacy policies, and other important information. TABLE 3—1 shows more detailed list of the sample items included in the Specific Content construct.

3.3 Content Quality

Content quality dealt with such attributes as information usefulness, completeness, accuracy, and so on and so forth. Prior research employed various measure of IS success, including user satisfaction, improved decision quality and performance. Both of them stressed the importance of information quality (Liu and Arnett, 2000). More detailed sample items are shown in TABLE 3—1.

3.4 Web Appearance

Web appearance is the way how the contents are presented to consumers which playing an important part in attracting, sustaining and retaining the interest of a consumer at a site. The appearance styled includes the lay out, colors, font style and size, mix of text and graphical information, and sort, shape, size, and placement of links. TABLE 3—1 contains more detailed list of the sample items of the Web Appearance construct.

TABLE 3—1: On-line Design Factors Dimensions

Dimension	Sample Items
Technical Adequacy	Security; ease of navigation; broadcast services; limited use of special plug-ins; search facilities; anonymity; availability; valid links; reliability; browser sniffing; personalization or customization; speedy page loading; interactivity; ease of access; multi-language support; protected content; bookmark facility
Specific Content	Finding contact info.; finding people without delay; finding site maintainer; finding links to relevant sites; finding firm’s general info.; finding products/services details; finding customers’ policies; finding customer support; finding FAQ list; finding free services; using limited registration forms; finding on-line help; diversity of content; finding free info
Content Quality	Usefulness of content; completeness of content; clarity of content; uniqueness of content; broadness of content; originality of content; currency of content; conciseness of content; accuracy of content;
Web Appearance	Attractiveness; distinctive hot buttons; changing look; organization; proper use of fonts; proper use of colors; proper use of graphics; graphics-text balance; proper use of multimedia; style consistency; proper choice of page length; good labeling; text-only option; proper use of language/style; color consistency

4. Utilitarian Value and Hedonic Shopping Value

Traditionally, researchers focus on the theme of shopping as work. Then, more and more researches start to notice the enjoyable perspective theme of shopping as fun. Most typologies consider instrumental and hedonic motivations as fundamental to understanding consumer shopping behavior because they maintain a basic underlying presence across consumption phenomena.

Consumers evaluate shopping experiences along these two dimensions representing how valuable the time spent on shopping. Holbrook (1986) indicates that these two “value” assessments are key outcome variables because ultimately, they determine whether consumer actions are repeated. And shopping value represents a very comprehensive assessment of the shopping experience—much more so than shopping satisfaction.

4.1 Utilitarian Shopping Value

Utilitarian consumer behavior has been described as ergic, task-related, and rational. Perceived utilitarian shopping value depend on whether the particular consumption need stimulating the shopping trip was accomplished. Often this means a product is purchased in a deliberate and efficient manner. Utilitarian value may be most relevant in explaining shopping trips described by consumers as “an errand” or “work” where they are happy simply to “get through it all.”

Utilitarian value, reflecting shopping with a work mentality, may be useful in explaining the “dark side of shopping”. This shopping may find value only if the shopping chore is completed successfully (get everything done) and, even better, if done in a fastidious manner.

In the utilitarian view, consumers are concerned with purchasing products in an efficient and timely manner to achieve their goals with a minimum of irritation. In other words, the consumer’s perception of utilitarian value is dependent upon whether the need that stimulated the purchase was satisfied. Consumers seek utilitarian benefits in a task-oriented, rational manner.

4.2 Hedonic Shopping Value

Holbrook and Hirschman (1982) argue that while much of consumer behavior can be explained by conventional research, it neglects an important segment of the consumption experience, namely, fantasies, feelings, and fun (e.g., leisure activities, consumer esthetics, symbolic meanings, variety seeking, hedonic response, daydreaming, creativity, emotions and play). Hedonic consumption explores the consumption experience not as an information-processing event but from a “phenomenological” or “experiential” view, which is a primarily subjective state.

Hedonic value is more subjective and personal than its utilitarian counterpart and results more from fun and playfulness than from task completion. Hedonic consumption refers to consumers’ fantasies and emotional arousal in using products.

Hedonic shopping motives are similar to the task orientation of utilitarian shopping motives, only the “task” is concerned with hedonic fulfillment, such as experiencing fun, amusement, fantasy, and sensory stimulation. Such non-directed search activities are common on the Internet. For example, surfers may browse purely for recreation with non-explicit goals such as maintaining opinion leadership or building an information bank.

5. Effect of on-line design factors on shopping value

There is a significant relationship between on-line design factors and aroused emotional states. It is proved that the quality of the design of the web site can affect the emotional states of the customers surfing the web site. On-line design factors can be divided into four parts: technical adequacy, specific content, content quality and web appearance. Therefore, web sites that reach good scores on four parts can be regarded as well-designed web sites, and can improve customers’ emotional states and induce more approach behaviors towards them.

There is a relationship among aroused emotional states, utilitarian shopping value and hedonic shopping value. It is indicated that emotional states can affect the perceived value of the customer

while they do the shopping. Aroused emotional states can be divided into two parts, pleasure and arousal. Therefore, web sites that successfully advance customers' emotional states could uplift the customer utilitarian shopping value as the next step. And It is also indicated that emotional states can affect the hedonic feeling of the customers. Web sites that successfully induce customers' emotional states could uplift the customers' hedonic shopping value and make their shopping more fun.

6. conclusion

This research tries to unite relevant literature to better understand the behaviors of the consumers while they shop on the Internet. According to the result of the study, we connect the two main theories in this area, the design factors and the customer shopping values. How the websites influence customer satisfaction with customer shopping values is argued here. we focus on the discussion of utilitarian shopping value and hedonic shopping value, for they play an important role in the relevant researches. From the result of the study, it is obviously that web site managers cannot do without constructing a web site that customers can go through the whole shopping procedures easily and happily. Then, the customers would wish go on there pleasant shopping experiences.

The result of this research demonstrates the effects of on-line design factors on customer shopping values. Here are several suggestions for future researchers. First, by the convenience of the Internet, e-shopping can be done all over China. Customers' habit of shopping on the Internet can be so different due to regional culture. As a result, data need to be collected from more than one region and compare among them if differences exist. Second, customers nowadays almost accept all kinds of web sites, not just the portals can gain customers' attention. Future research could select some representative web sites in all aspects to understand customers' favorites more specifically.

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