INTRODUCTION

The past few years have borne witness to a revolution in business with acceleration in the use of the World Wide Web to support or, in many cases, supplant traditional modes of marketing and selling products and services. The Internet consumer base is continually growing. According to a report conducted by Computer Industry Almanac, Inc. (www.c-i-a.com, 1999), 490 million people around the world will have online access by the year 2002. With the rapid increase in the number of online consumers, the managers and marketers are moving to exploit this opportunity to reach millions of customers worldwide. Between 1997-1999, Internet hosts grew from 16 million to over 72 million worldwide (www.isc.org, 2000). The explosive growth of websites raises the question to the Web designer and marketer about how to attract consumer attention to their sites and how to differentiate their sites from other sites.

In the physical world, time and cost considerations make it difficult for people to change grocery stores for product selection, while searching a product on the Web generates quite low costs to the consumers. Consumers can switch to other websites or competitive URLs in seconds with minimal financial costs. Every commercial website is exploring a variety of efforts to hold its existing custom-
ers because acquiring new customers is expensive (Hanson, 2000). Web managers and marketers have been paying more attention to the “Stickiness” of websites (Anders, 1999; Davenport, 2000; Murphy, 1999; O’Brien, 1999; Pappas, 1999). Some measurement companies, for instance, Media Metrix, and Nielsen/Netrating, reported the rank of the websites with a stickiness rating, which indicates how long the average user spent on a site in a period of time.

Stickiness is the same concept as customer loyalty. It is the competence of a website to create both customer attraction and customer retention for the purpose of revenue or profitability. Customer attraction is related to how to attract and keep customers at the site, whereas customer retention is the ability to retain customer loyalty. Some sites spent millions of dollars by combining many stickiness programs that attempt to hold their customers, but these investments may not be wisely made since not every method is profitable. Therefore, what makes a site sticky is debatable. Moreover, there are many possible strategies to achieve site stickiness. Web managers and marketers would benefit from reliable and consistent measuring tools for choosing the proper site alternative.

Although Web marketers monitor aggregate measures on Web traffic, such as average time spent, in order to determine the stickiness of a site, they gain little insight into the effectiveness of stickiness programs. For example, if the average time spent at a site is increasing monthly, is the site sticky? It is possible that each month the site attracts some new visitors who connect to the site and leave it on his/her screen for days while existing customers may be dropping out completely? In addition, the longer time spent at a site might be forged by the network delays at download time. Other traffic measures representing consumers’ behavior should be considered as well. Beyond the traffic volumes, it is important to quantify how much revenue and profits are impacted as well as to understand the underlying consumer behavior.

In this chapter, the concept of customer loyalty in traditional businesses is applied to digital products or services in order to describe a conceptual model of online stickiness. Using the conceptual model, we identify the measures that determine the stickiness of a website and describe the applications of the stickiness value.

**STICKINESS AS CUSTOMER LOYALTY**

The loyal customers who repeat their purchases or visits persistently are valuable assets of a website. The goal of a sticky program is to establish a high level of customer loyalty by providing increased satisfaction and value to the customer. The increase of customer satisfaction and loyalty has a positive influence on long-term financial performance (Anderson, Fornell, and Lehmann, 1994; Reichheld and Sasser, 1990). To determine the long-term efficacy of a sticky program, Web marketers must assess the program’s influence on customers’ usage or purchase behavior and verify the cost effectiveness and profitability of the program.
A New Efficient and Effective Fuzzy Modeling Method for Binary Classification
www.igi-global.com/chapter/new-efficient-effective-fuzzy-modeling/67481?camid=4v1a