Chapter V

The Challenge of Web Site Design for Global Organizations

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Abstract

The growth of Internet shopping motivates a better understanding of how e-loyalty is built online between businesses and consumers. In this study, Web site design and culture are advanced as important to Web site trust, Web site satisfaction, and e-loyalty in online business relationships. Based on data collected in Canada, the U.S., Germany, and Japan, the research considers (1) examining, within culture, preferences for design elements of a local vs. a foreign Web site, and subsequent participant perceptions of trust, satisfaction, and e-loyalty, and (2) comparisons between cultures for design preferences of local and foreign Web sites, and subsequent participant perceptions of trust, satisfaction, and e-loyalty. As predicted,
similarities were greatest among Americans, Canadians, and Germans, with the Japanese representing a different and unique case. The results are discussed against hypothesized expectations. Implications for future research are outlined.

Introduction

The origin of online shoppers is progressively more global and represents a multicultural community. In 2006, there are more than one billion Internet users with access to online consumer products (Internet Usage Statistics, 2006). Of those Internet users, the primary language is English (35.6%), followed by Chinese (12.2%), Japanese (9.5%), Spanish (8%), and German (7%). Understanding how to build trust, satisfaction, and ultimately loyalty for diverse consumers in electronic markets is a central imperative (Grewal, Munger, Iyer, & Levy, 2003; Jarvenpaa, Tractinsky, Saarinen, & Vitale, 1999; McKnight, Choudhury, & Kacmar 2002; Rattanawicha & Esichaikul, 2005; Schlosser, Barnett White, & Lloyd, 2006; Urban, Sultan, & Qualls, 2000; Yoon, 2002).

Despite an anticipated large number of consumers from multiple cultures, few studies have systematically examined Web preferences of users related to design characteristics across cultures. This appears an omission in the literature, considering Chen and Dhillon (2003, pp. 310-311) who note:

In the case of an Internet vendor, the Web site is perhaps the only way a firm communicates with its customers. Therefore, its appearance and structure encourage or discourage a consumer’s purchase intentions. In the marketing literature Web site features such as layout, appeal, graphics, readability, and ease-of-use have been considered to affect consumers’ clicking frequency.

Some researchers have done work in the area of culture and design (Barber & Badre, 2001; Del Galdo & Nielsen, 1996; Marcus & Gould, 2000), but results have been either inconclusive or unrelated to developing loyal online customers. Issues of interest extend beyond consideration of language to also include color, product information, and use of images.

With increased prevalence of the Internet for shopping, research has been focused on how to develop trust online. As with the literature on trust prior to the Internet, the elements contributing to online trust are diverse and include quality, customer support, on-time delivery, compelling product presentations, convenient and reasonably priced shipping and handling, clear and trustworthy privacy policies (Reichheld & Schefter, 2000), company reputation (Egger, 2000; Jarvenpaa et al., 1999; Lohse
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