Chapter XIX
The Effect of Information Satisfaction and Relational Benefit on Consumer’s On-Line Shopping Site Commitment

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ABSTRACT

Among the potential determinants of consumers’ commitment to on-line shopping site are information features of the web site because on-line shopping consumers have to base their judgment solely on the product or service information presented on the site. When consumers are satisfied with such information features and perceive clear benefits from their relationships with the site, we can expect them to be more committed to the site. In this study, we investigate the relationship between such determinants and consumers’ commitment to an on-line shopping site. Results of the on-line survey with 1,278 Korean customers of on-line bookstores and ticketing services indicate that information satisfaction and relational benefit are highly predictable of consumers’ commitment to an on-line shopping site. In addition, we found that information satisfaction is affected most by product information quality while relational benefit is strongly related to service information quality. These results seem to reflect the consumers’ different perceptual weights to different information contents of the web sites in forming their web site perceptions.
INTRODUCTION

Shopping at an on-line site is like shopping through a paper catalog because both involve mail delivery of the purchases and in both cases customers cannot touch or smell the items (Lighter and Eastman, 2002). So the promise of e-commerce and on-line shopping depends, to a great extent, on user interfaces and how people interact with computers (Griffith, et al., 2001). Moreover, the characteristics of information presentation, navigation, order fulfillment in an interactive shopping medium is considered a more important factor in building e-commerce trust than in the traditional retailing (Alba, et al., 1997; Reynolds, 2000).

However, while information contents of a web site might be an important determinant of consumers’ on-line shopping behavior, there has been little empirical research on how such information features affect consumers’ commitment to a shopping site on the web (Hong, et. al., 2005). This study examines how information features and other related technical and social aspects of an on-line shopping site affect consumers’ commitment to such sites. The study was conducted in Korea that is leading the world in the deployment and usage of high speed internet infrastructure (IMD, 2005). Korean consumers’ extensive use of online shopping would provide an appropriate context for studying online consumer behaviors.

The paper is organized as follows. First, we review information aspects of an on-line shopping site. Second, based on the literature, we develop a research model and a set of hypotheses to be tested, Third, in the research methodology section, the procedures for hypothesis testing and the testing results are described. Finally, we discuss the key findings and implications of this study and propose future research issues.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Prior studies on on-line shopping (Lohse and Spiller, 1998; Szmanski and Hise, 2000; Liu and Arnett, 2000) classify the attributes of an on-line store into four categories: merchandise, customer service and promotions, navigation and convenience, and security. These studies, however, did not recognize the fact that information aspects of these service attributes may affect the consumers’ satisfaction and perceived benefits with the shopping site, eventually determining their commitment to the site. In this section, for each category of the service attributes, the importance of information for achieving consumer website commitment is confirmed from the literature.

Merchandising includes product related characteristics such as assortment, variety, and product information. According to Lohse and Spiller’s study (1998), big on-line stores are less effective than the small ones at converting site traffic into sales because consumers have difficulty in finding the products they seek. It is argued that since a primary role of an on-line store is to provide price-related information and product information to help reduce consumers’ search cost (Bakos, 1997), more extensive and higher quality information available on-line leads to better buying decisions and higher levels of consumer satisfaction. (Peterson, 1997; Lightner and Eastman, 2002). For instance, on-line shopping stores can offer hyperlinks to more extensive product information such as price comparison, product testimonials (e.g. book reviews at an on-line book store), and product demonstrations (e.g. software downloads).

The second attribute category for an on-line store is customer service and promotion. Customers want careful, continuous, useful com-
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