Chapter V

E-commerce System: An Examination of User Experiences of the E-commerce Site with the Standard User Interface

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E-commerce offers speed, convenience, and often cost-effectiveness for today’s busy shopper, but most e-commerce sites are still too hard to use. The problem with e-commerce sites is the controls and organization are different for each site. The question is that “Do e-commerce users need a standard navigation system to make e-commerce sites easy to use?” This research investigates how an individual’s perceptions of key beliefs surrounding the use of the e-commerce site with the standard navigation system would influence the individual’s decision to accept these e-commerce sites for online shopping purposes. This study applies the technology acceptance model (TAM), identifying components of usefulness, ease of use, and richness that predict user attitude toward the usage of the standard navigation system. The research uses a Web-based survey and is tested by TAM with path
analysis. There are 129 subjects in the pretest samples. The study could identify features of the standard navigation system that might contribute to its usefulness, ease of use, and richness. The study would determine whether the standard navigation system would increase the usability of e-commerce or not. It could thus provide implications about usefulness, ease of use, and richness for e-commerce developers and practitioners.

INTRODUCTION

Electronic commerce (e-commerce) offers speed, convenience, and often cost-effectiveness for today’s busy shoppers, but most e-commerce sites are still too hard to use (ZDInternet.inc, 1999). Zona Research (1999) found that 62% of online shoppers had given up at least once while looking for products, and 42% had turned to traditional channels to make their purchases. These statistics are astounding. What are the most important features that affect the users’ emotions while browsing e-commerce sites (Ahuja, 2000)? Why is the Web too hard to use (ZDInternet.inc, 1999)? What do e-commerce customers want? Books are always printed with the table of contents in front, the index in back, and sequential page numbers in the middle (Shirky, Webber, Newcomer, & Jaworski, 1999). Why should e-commerce sites be any different (Shirky et al., 1999)?

The future of economic competitiveness for most enterprises relies on entrance and active participation in the e-commerce market (Vestal, 1999). E-commerce is changing how businesses market their products, and how they serve their customers and business partners. However, about a third of the time, users fail when they try to purchase products on an e-commerce site (Nielsen & Norman, 2000). In reality, what happens is not just that the user fails, but that the site fails and does not sell a thing. Is “lost-in-hyperspace” primarily a psychological or an engineering problem (McKnight, Dillion, & Richardson, 1991; Theng, 1997; Theng & Thimbleby, 1998)? In other words, is “lost-in-hyperspace” a problem for users, or is it a symptom of poor design, which itself may be a psychological problem for authors of e-commerce sites (Theng & Thimbleby, 1998)?

Current e-commerce sites make it hard to predict what will happen if a link is being followed. Users may get different information than they expect, a new window may open, a download starts, or the destination object is unavailable. Questions arise as to the usability of e-commerce. How long does it take for customers to do typical tasks at an e-commerce site? What percentages of potential customers are leaving the site and why? (Forrester Research suggests it may be as high as 40%). E-commerce sites are losing
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