Internet Marketing and Consumers Online: Identification of Website Attributes Catering to Specific Consumer Intents in a Digital Paradigm

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ABSTRACT

The internet plays two important roles in marketing—influencing consumer behavior and harnessing consumer intelligence. While it’s vital for organizations to evaluate consumer intentions and provide consumers the necessary information they are looking for; equally important is the need for collecting consumer data by studying the consumer behavioral patterns on the internet and subsequently nurturing long term relationships with consumers. This study aims at identifying the dimensions of website attributes that represent intentions of consumers for visiting product and brand websites and examines the relationship between various website attributes, with respect to the function performed by the attribute. The methods on how the results were obtained and used will be explored further in this article. This research will be further used for analyzing website attributes with respect to Web Traffic, Website Reputation, Alexa Reach & Readability.

Keywords: Consumer Behavior, Consumer Intelligence, Consumer Intent, Internet, Internet Marketing, Website Attributes

INTRODUCTION

Consumer behavior has changed dramatically in the past decade. Today, consumers can order many customized products online, ranging from sneakers to computers. Many have replaced their daily newspapers with customized, online editions of these media and are increasingly receiving information from online sources. This has proliferated because these channels reflect an understanding of consumer needs and consumer behavior (Schiffman & Kanuk, 2009). The heart of marketing is relationships, and nurturing long term relationships should be the goal of marketing practice (Berry et al., 2006). These relationships can be formed and managed with the use of Information Technology tools. While web 2.0 applications offer...
new and previously unknown possibilities and empowerment through forums of dialogue and confrontation of procedures and vendors with their social, ethical and commercial responsibilities (Constantinides et al., 2008), there seems to be rapid adoption of the internet by consumers for various purposes, including information search and online shopping (Ranganathan & Ganapathy, 2002). Marketers are using internet to make their offerings more personalized and convenient. Papa John’s recently announced that it hit the $1 billion mark through online and text message options, which represents 20 percent of its overall sales (Hawkins et al., 2010). The internet offers many advantages to businesses, such as the ability to reach new segments since products can be sold globally rather than locally or regionally, and there is substantial potential to reduce cost through streamlining of the supply chain (Teo & Yeong, 2003). If nowadays, experts want to identify the most profound influences on consumer behavior in recent times, the answer would be the internet. Consumers also recognize the substantial impact the Internet has had on their shopping behavior. One reason the internet is dramatically changing consumer behavior is that it helps us search much more easily and efficiently than ever before (Blackwell et al., 2006). This research study explores consumer intents for venturing online and then attempts to study the ability of the online media to retain them by engaging them suitably.

LITERATURE REVIEW

In the twenty-first century, e-commerce and online shopping have reached a stage of steady growth. To encourage consumers to shop online, internet advertising has become one of the most important marketing strategies (Wu et al., 2011). Electronic commerce is rapidly changing the way people do business all over the world. In the business-to-consumer segment, sales through the web have been increasing dramatically over the last few years. Customers, not only those from well developed countries, but also those from developing countries, are getting used to the new shopping channel (Cheung et al., 2003). An organization’s key to survival in the new information age revolution is in its ability to successfully integrate and adapt its management practices with new information technologies offered by the internet (Cudmore et al., 2011).

Consumer-Organization Relationship Using the Internet

The internet has become mainstream in everyday communications and transactions (Muhammad et al., 2011). The internet today has been hailed as the single most important invention of the 20th century. With its increasing popularity, as noticed from more and more number of users coming online, and services being offered online in general, the internet now occupies a central role in young educated people’s lives, all over India (Majumdar, 2010). Purchasing on the internet has unique features that make it different from the traditional shopping process (Weisberg et al., 2011).

If a website meets a customer’s expectations, then the customer is likely to reuse the website in the future, recommend it to his peers, and become loyal. On the other hand, if the website does not meet the customer’s expectations, then the customer is likely to switch to another website, and perhaps never go back to the initial one (Dadzie et al., 2005). Therefore, the perceived quality of a website is an important determinant of such expectations, resulting in development of an attitude towards a particular website and perhaps even garnering visitor loyalty (Cristobal et al., 2007). Although it has been argued that the capabilities embedded in an e-service technology provide many potential benefits for customers, if customers think the technology is too difficult to use, customers may refuse to use the e-service technology at all (Ba & Johansson, 2008). Information provided by an online store is an important factor that affects each consumer’s site loyalty and purchase behavior (Park & Kim, 2003).
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