Chapter IV

User-Centered Design and Marketing:
Online Customer Value

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Abstract

The purpose of this chapter is to help Web marketers better understand the basis for the development of more customer-focused, value-enhanced Web sites. To help address this issue, this chapter integrates theory and research from user-centered design with theory and research from marketing on value and goal-directed behavior to develop and support a model of online customer value. The model based on means-end theory provides a theoretical explanation for linking Web site features and functions to perceptions of value by consumers.

Introduction

To compete in today's turbulent business environment firms are being directed to focus efforts on increasing value delivered to customers (Vandermerwe, 2000). This focus on enhancing customer value is also at the cornerstone of many high-profile e-commerce books (Seybold, 1998; Tapscott, Ticoll, & Lowy, 2000).

The consensus from these sources is that the firm's Web marketing efforts will only be successful if the Web site offers something of value to the site visitor. Research on value creation (Day, 1990; Naumann, 1995) further emphasizes the importance of creating value for customers as a means of competing more effectively in the marketplace. Research on delivering customer value is consistent with the notion that firms need to be increasingly market oriented (Kohli & Jaworski, 1990; Narver & Slater, 1990). Unfortunately many Web sites fail to deliver on the opportunity that the Internet provides for enhancing value to customers. Thus the purpose of this chapter is to help Web marketers better understand the basis for the development of more customer-focused, value-enhanced Web sites.

In order to better understand the nature of value online, this chapter integrates theory and research from Human–Computer Interaction (HCI), marketing, and psychology. I begin by reviewing the principles of user-centered design (UCD) and highlighting the commonalities between UCD and consumer behavior (CB). Second, I review a variety of value-related concepts and perspectives from the marketing and HCI literature in order to propose a definition of online value. Next, I present and support a model customer value that links Web site features to perceptions of value (see Figure 1). Finally, I discuss some key implications of the model.

User-Centered Design and Consumer Behavior

There has been considerable attention paid to the issue of how to develop more useful, more user-friendly systems in the field of user-centered design (Karat & Karat, 2003; Maguire, 2001b). UCD is an approach to the design of user interfaces that includes continuous and early focus on the consumer's tasks and goals. UCD emerged from researchers and practitioners of HCI. HCI is an interdisciplinary field made up of researchers from numerous fields including psychology, cognitive science, engineering, and information systems. HCI researchers and practitioners are focused on creating more usable systems by ensuring that technology matches people's needs and supports the tasks that people would like to perform.

UCD is a design process that aims to improve the "quality in use" of a system. While the marketing literature focuses on customers or consumers, the UCD literature emphasizes the importance of the "user" as the focal point of the design effort. The term "user" refers to the general population of individuals who are expected to make use of the system. At the heart of UCD is the core philosophy

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