



Chapter I

Online Shopping for Positive and Negative Reinforcement Products

Patricia Sorce, Rochester Institute of Technology, USA

Victor Perotti, Rochester Institute of Technology, USA

Stanley Widrick, Rochester Institute of Technology, USA

ABSTRACT

The present research applies operant conditioning theory to the question of what products and services consumers will shop for and buy online. Operant conditioning theory explains differences between products that are used to alleviate uncomfortable experiences (negative reinforcement) and those providing enjoyable experiences (positive reinforcement). The preliminary results described in this study confirmed the importance of operant conditioning as a factor in the behavior of online shoppers. For example, when asked to provide an open-ended list of products that they had shopped for, our respondents mentioned products that produce positive reinforcement 476 times versus only four mentions for those that create negative reinforcement. Furthermore, for a list of seventeen common product categories, the results showed that respondents were not only less likely to shop for negative reinforcement products but also even less likely to purchase negative products online than positive products. The results of this exploratory study lay the groundwork for future research by introducing negative and positive reinforcement as a predictor of Internet shopping behavior.

INTRODUCTION

With the failure of many online commercial sites, business managers are re-evaluating their approaches to e-Commerce. In the last few years, some research has been able to clarify the behavior of online shoppers. Much of this research focuses on understanding the shoppers themselves. However, several important management questions about products remain: What types of products will consumers seek or buy on the Internet? Why do consumers choose these products over other products? Are there different categories of products consumers will shop for but not purchase online? The authors propose using operant conditioning theory to answer these questions. The present research begins with a description of the existing literature relevant to Internet shopping behavior. After the literature review, operant conditioning theory and its application to understanding buyer behavior is discussed. Lastly, three hypotheses are presented that test whether the use of operant conditioning theory contributes to a more complete understanding of the online shopping process.

Shopping Behavior on the Internet

Much of the research in the last five years has focused on three general questions: Who will buy online, why do they choose this channel, and what do they buy? Regarding who will buy online, Bellman, Lohse and Johnson (1999) investigated several predictors for whether an individual will buy online. They found that the most important determinant of buying on the web was previous behavior such as using the Internet to search for product information (i.e., pre-purchase search). Bellman et al. concluded that several demographic variables such as income, education, and age have a modest impact on the decision of whether to buy online. More recent research has revealed that there are gender effects regarding attitudes towards shopping online. For example, Van Slyke, Comunale and Belanger (2002) found that men expressed greater intention to purchase on the Internet than women. They also found higher purchase intentions for those with more computer and Internet experience. In another study of shopping attitudes, Alreck (2002) found that women's attitudes towards Internet shopping were less favorable than men's attitudes but that women have more favorable attitudes towards other channels such as catalog and store shopping.

Other research has pointed to the importance of consumer risk perception in predicting Internet purchase behavior. For example, Vellido, Lisboa and Meehan (2000) found that online purchase behavior was best predicted by consumer risk perception of shopping on the Internet. In addition, Bhatnagar, Misra and Rao (2000) developed a two-part definition of perceived risk to examine its impact on Internet shopping behavior. Their two types of risk were product category risk and financial risk. High product category risk represented conditions when the product was technologically complex, satisfied ego needs of the purchaser, was high priced, or was sold based on its feel or touch. High financial risk was defined

12 more pages are available in the full version of this document, which may be purchased using the "Add to Cart" button on the publisher's webpage: www.igi-global.com/chapter/online-shopping-positive-negative-reinforcement/30395

Related Content

Individual Telecommunications Tariffs in Chinese Communities

H. Chen (2008). *Global Mobile Commerce: Strategies, Implementation and Case Studies* (pp. 301-316).

www.irma-international.org/chapter/individual-telecommunications-tariffs-chinese-communities/19267

Pushing Elusive Alliances into the Light: Discovering the Value of Informal Networks on the Internet

Rian van der Merweand Leyland F. Pitt (2003). *Journal of Electronic Commerce in Organizations* (pp. 14-31).

www.irma-international.org/article/pushing-elusive-alliances-into-light/3410

NFT-Based Marketing Campaigns

Renu Bala (2024). *Adoption of NFTs and Cryptocurrency in Marketing* (pp. 91-120).

www.irma-international.org/chapter/nft-based-marketing-campaigns/345332

Ontology for E-Government Public Services

Costas Vassilakisand George Lepouras (2006). *Encyclopedia of E-Commerce, E-Government, and Mobile Commerce* (pp. 865-870).

www.irma-international.org/chapter/ontology-government-public-services/12643

Does Successful Social Media Marketing Affect Brand Value?: An Empirical Investigation

Stefan Kochand Asli Dikmen (2015). *Journal of Electronic Commerce in Organizations* (pp. 15-26).

www.irma-international.org/article/does-successful-social-media-marketing-affect-brand-value/131467