

Psychographic Profiling of the Online Shopper

Leo R. Vijayasathy, Colorado State University, USA

ABSTRACT

Shopping orientations are psychographic measures that have been used to discern consumers' preferences for shopping media. In this study, shopping orientations and their relationship with consumers' actual use and intention to use online shopping are examined. Data for the study was collected through a survey that was mailed to a stratified sample of 800 consumers. Usable responses were received from 281 survey participants, who were classified into three shopping segments — home, community, and apathetic — based on their shopping orientations. The three shopping segments were found to differ on online shopping measures. Specifically, the home shopping segment was found to be positively associated with online shopping in contrast to the community and apathetic shopping segments. Further analysis revealed that there were no significant associations between shopping segments and commonly used demographic variables including gender, age, income, and education. Implications of these findings are discussed along with suggestions for future research.

Keywords: online shopping, shopping orientations

INTRODUCTION

A popular approach to studying the phenomenon of online shopping has been the adoption of intention-based theories including the theory of reasoned action (Fishbein and Ajzen, 1975), theory of planned behavior (Ajzen, 1985, 1989), and the technology acceptance model (Davis, 1989; Davis et al., 1989). These

theories model an individual's intent to engage in a behavior as a function of his/her salient beliefs and attitudes towards the behavior of interest. Studies that have applied and tested these theories (e.g., Bhattacharjee, 2000; Gefen and Straub, 2000; Limayem et al., 2000) can offer valuable guidelines to online retailers to help them focus on those aspects of online shopping that are important to customers

(e.g., ease of use) and/or make improvements in areas which are found to be lacking (e.g., security). However, for purposes of market segmentation, it is essential to explore the external variables, whose influence on intentions and behavior is theorized by Fishbein and Ajzen (1975) to be fully mediated by beliefs and attitudes.

These external variables could include demographic, personality, and psychographic characteristics that can help Internet marketers to segment their market for customized advertisement, promotion, service, and retention campaigns. Demographic indicators such as age, gender, income, and ethnicity may have, especially during the Internet's nascent stage, been accurate indicators of who shops online. But with the global diffusion of the Web and the steady narrowing of the digital divide, demographics may no longer be reliable predictors of online shopping.

Therefore, in this study we explore the relationship between another segmentation factor, namely shopping orientations, and intentions to use online shopping. As a psychographic measure, shopping orientations are intended to capture the motivations of shoppers and/or the desired experiences and goals they seek when completing their shopping activities (Stone, 1954). For example, an in-home shopper may be motivated by convenience, while a personalizing shopper may value the interaction experience with a known sales clerk.

While demographic indicators such as age, gender, marital status, and income have been traditionally used in the study of consumer behavior and market seg-

mentation, shopping orientations have also emerged as reliable discriminators for classifying different types of shoppers based on their approach to shopping activities (Gehrt and Carter, 1992; Lumpkin and Burnett, 1991-92). Researchers have tapped into shopper orientations to study patronage behavior among elderly consumers, catalog shoppers, out-shoppers, and mall shoppers (Bloch et al., 1994; Evans et al., 1996; Gehrt and Shim, 1998; Korgaonkar, 1984; Lumpkin, 1985; Lumpkin et al., 1986; Shim and Mahoney, 1992). By extending this psychographic construct to online shopping, our study aims to contribute to the knowledge and understanding of consumer response to electronic modes of shopping.

It is becoming increasingly clear that in order to survive and more importantly to succeed, online merchants should embrace and actively pursue fundamental principles of good retailing that apply to any medium. One of these principles is knowledge about existing and potential customers and their preferences and behaviors. Shopping orientations have been shown to be reliable predictors of customer patronage behavior in other retail formats such as catalog and mall shopping. Therefore, it is expected that the study of shopping orientations can also help electronic retailers identify and understand those consumers who prefer to shop online and the reasons why. Further, shopping orientation could be used to segment customers and formulate different strategies based on each segment's relative propensity to adopt and use online shopping.

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