

# Chapter 64

## Internet Consumer Behavior: Behavioral Variables

**Marie-Odile Richard**  
*University of Montreal, Canada*

**Michel Laroche**  
*Concordia University, Canada*

### INTRODUCTION

In the previously, the authors covered the major stimulus variables, i.e., flow, emotions and web atmospherics, which impact the organism and response variables of the model. This chapter now covers some behavioral variables as indicated in the shaded areas of Figure 1.

### BACKGROUND

The key behavioral variables identified by the literature are: exploratory behavior, site attitude, product attitude, site involvement and product involvement. This chapter will define them and explain their roles in the model.

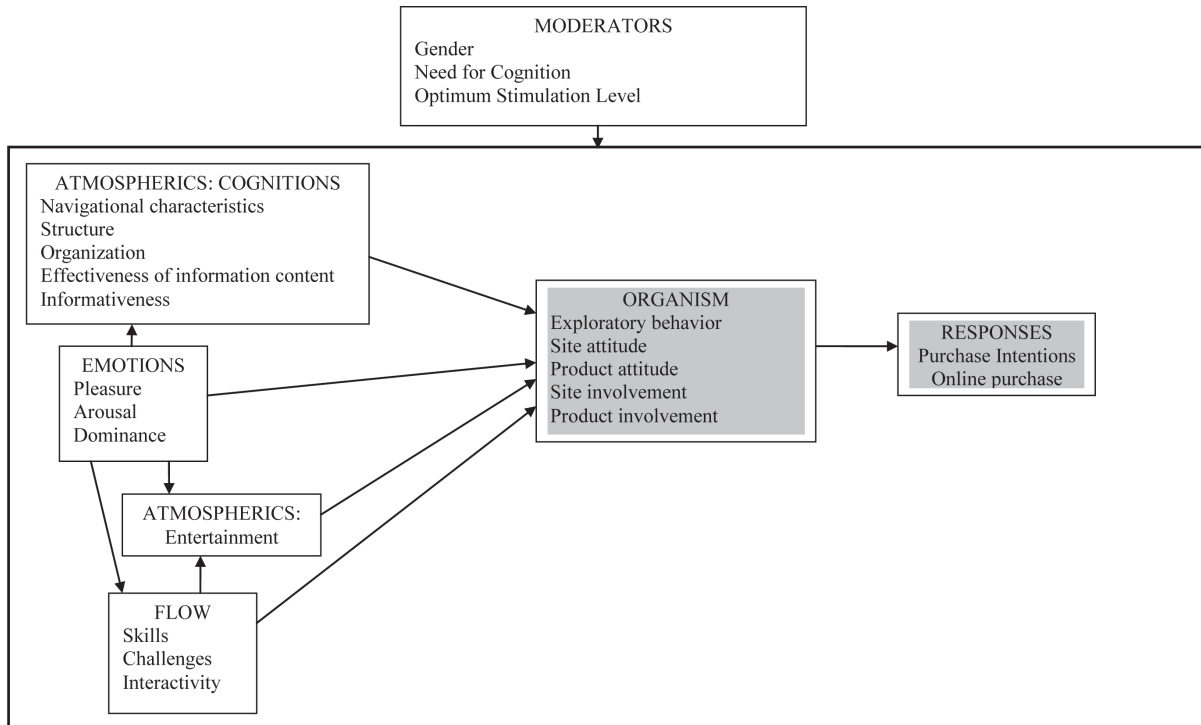
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### Exploratory Behavior

*Exploratory behavior* is defined as a behavior with the unique function of changing the stimulus field (Berlyne, 1963). Raju (1980) lists risk taking, innovativeness, brand switching, repetitive behavior proneness, information seeking, exploration through shopping and interpersonal communication as aspects of exploratory consumer behavior. There are several specific types of exploratory behavior: innovative behavior (Foxall, 1986), cognitive responses to ads (Faison, 1977), and curiosity-motivated search for product information (Hirschman, 1980).

Studies suggest a two-factor conceptualization of exploratory consumer buying behavior: exploratory acquisition of products and exploratory information seeking (Baumgartner & Steenkamp, 1996). Browsing, one form of exploratory behavior, is performed when surfers do not have knowledge of

Figure 1. Model of consumer navigation behavior: behavioral variables (Source: Adapted from Richard, M.O. (2009). Modeling the internet behavior of visitors by the study of cognitive variables and moderators. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, HEC-Montreal Business School.)



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available information, are not sure whether their requirements can be met or how these requirements may be achieved. Browsing is either general or purposeful. *Purposive* browsing occurs when surfers have specific requirements, whereas general browsing is an opportunity for surfers to fine-tune the perceptions of their requirements or simply keep themselves up-to-date on the latest changes in a field or product type (Rowley, 2000).

Exploratory behavior by site visitors influences their site attitudes. The more they explore the possibilities offered by the site, the more they fine-tune their requirements and have a positive idea of the site they visit, triggering approach behavior.

### Site Attitudes and Product Attitudes

As there are few studies on site attitudes, the literature on ad attitudes can be used for websites. Ad attitude consists of feelings of favorability/unfavorability toward the ad and mediates the influence of brand attitudes on purchase intentions (Shimp, 1981). Laczniak and Muehling (1990) define ad attitude as the predisposition of individuals to answer favorably or not to an ad exposure; product/brand attitudes as the predisposition of individuals to answer favorably or not to a product or a brand.

### Findings from Ad Attitude Research

Ad attitude is unidimensional, purely affective without any cognitive or behavioral components

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