



Chapter V

A Meta-Analysis Approach toward the Development of an Integrative Framework for Online Consumer Behavior Research*

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ABSTRACT

The recent failure of a large number of e-tail companies epitomizes the challenges of operating through virtual channels and underscores the need to better understand key drivers of online consumer behavior. The objective of this study was to provide a comprehensive review of the extant information systems (IS) literature related to online consumer behavior and integrate the literature, in order to enhance our knowledge of consumer behavior in electronic markets and provide clear directions for future research. Forty-two studies published in major IS journals were located via computer searches of large bibliographic databases (UMI-Proquest and ScienceDirect) and by scanning journals manually. We group these studies

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into three categories of web use, online purchase, and post-purchase behavior, and describe important predictors identified by those studies for each category. We also conducted a meta-analysis to quantify the interrelationships between the study variables that appeared multiple times across studies. We then introduce a framework, which integrates research findings across studies, to develop a coherent and comprehensive picture of the online consumer behavior research conducted in the IS field. The integrative framework proposes system quality, information quality, service quality, and vendor and channel characteristics as key factors that impact online consumer behavior, achieving their effects by altering the perceptions of usefulness, ease of use, trust, and shopping enjoyment. Consumer characteristics and social context variables are also included in the framework. Future research directions are identified to advance the current status of knowledge and stimulate further research.

INTRODUCTION

The Internet offers immense opportunities for companies to reach a wide base of consumers and efficiently market their products through an electronic channel. According to the Boston Consulting Group, online retailing will reach \$168 billion by 2005 (Mark, 2001). Such an estimate substantiates that the Internet has emerged as a powerful alternative channel for selling products and services. However, the recent failure of a large number of e-tail companies exemplifies the challenges of operating through virtual channels and also highlights the need to better understand key factors that drive consumer behavior in online market channels. The infusion of the Internet technology into customer-supplier interactions requires a reconsideration of existing theories and frameworks regarding consumer behavior. Explicit attention should be made to understanding the factors that can explain a consumer's interaction with the technology, their purchase behavior in electronic channels, and their preference to transact with an electronic vendor on a repeat basis.

Although online consumer behavior has been the subject of considerable research in the last few years, there is a paucity of research that attempts to integrate research findings across studies. Online consumer behavior research is a young and dynamic academic domain that is characterized by a diverse set of variables studied from multiple theoretical perspectives. Researchers have relied on the Technology Acceptance Model (Davis, 1989; Davis et al., 1989), Theory of Reasoned Action (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975), Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen, 1991), Innovation Diffusion Theory (Rogers, 1983, 1995), and Flow Theory (Csikszentmihalyi, 1988) in investigating consumers' adoption and use of electronic commerce. Studies have examined various aspects of consumer behavior such as web site use, future use, purchase, future purchase, unplanned purchase, channel preference, and satisfaction. In terms of explanatory factors that drive such behavior, researchers have explored the role of attributes of the web site, attributes of the vendor, consumer

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