

Chapter 44

Gender and E-Marketing: The Role of Gender Differences in Online Purchasing Behaviors

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ABSTRACT

The increasingly widespread use of the Internet and the increasing participation of females in business have been significant changes leading to society today. As females have begun to have a more important role in business life, in addition to their crucial role within the family in the decision-making process of making purchases, they have had more financial independence. Additionally, the gap in Internet use in favor of males has also begun to narrow. This makes it necessary for e-marketers that carry out some or all of their transactions online to be fully aware of the effects of gender differences in online purchasing behaviors. This chapter consists of a literature review on the subject of Internet usage and online purchasing behaviors with a focus on gender-based differences. Accordingly, the aim of this chapter is to explore gender-based differences in Internet usage and online purchasing behavior and to suggest some e-marketing strategies for e-marketers. Additionally, this chapter provides a foundation on which to build future studies.

INTRODUCTION

The Internet brings about significant changes in all functions of businesses. In particular, marketing activities of businesses are deeply affected by these changes. In an attempt to support traditional

marketing activities, businesses not only use the Internet but also exclusively carry out their business operations online. Therefore, e-marketing constitutes a significant part of marketing activities of businesses (Krishnamurthy, 2006). Many factors help the Internet market to prosper as well. While some of these are related to technological advances, some others have to do with managers'

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perceptions of the Internet and the lifestyles of consumers. As Internet shopping becomes more of a popular activity among the Internet users, electronic commerce is growing day by day (Donthu & Garcia, 1999). Therefore, as Feinberg and Kadam (2002) stated, business is moving online, not as a matter of choice, but as a matter of necessity. This shift occurs because the Internet has very seriously altered the consumer-seller relationship and steered the balance of power in favor of consumers through interactive features such as personalization, customized content and virtual communities. The Internet creates an extreme competitive marketplace in which consumers have shopping choices that they have never had before (Kim & Kim, 2004). This e-market environment offers retailers special challenges and leads them to revise their marketing strategies to secure more targeted customers.

As businesses have conducted marketing activities over the Internet, the concept of e-marketing has emerged. E-marketing can be defined as the use of the Internet and information technologies in order to conduct marketing activities (Krishnamurthy, 2006). Jayawardhena et al. (2003), on the other hand, defined e-marketing as the use of computerized processes in an attempt to integrate consumer information related to customer features, their choices and operating records from the marketing database. Perner and Fiss (2002: 38) defined e-marketing as “the concentration of all efforts in the sense of adapting and developing marketing strategies into the web environment.” It is evident that e-marketing is not just a design of a web page set up by the business to advertise, as it can easily be misunderstood by many people. Strauss and El-Ansary (2004), on the other hand, describes e-marketing in a broader sense. According to Strauss and El-Ansary (2004), e-marketing is the application of a broad range of information technologies, such as transforming marketing strategies to create more customer value using the following strategies: more effective segmentation, targeting, differentiation, and positioning strate-

gies; more efficiently planning and executing the conception, distribution, promotion and pricing of products, services, and ideas; and creating exchanges that satisfy individual consumer and organizational customers’ objectives. E-marketing efforts have an impact on traditional marketing as well. While e-marketing efforts, on the one hand, enhance the efficiency of the traditional marketing functions, the e-marketing technologies have, on the other hand, transformed many of the marketing strategies.

Innovations in today’s business life do not only take place in the areas of technology and the Internet. In comparison to the past, business life has in recent decades grown away from being a male-dominated arena, and females have begun to take more a bigger part in it. While some professions, apart from those such as teaching, working as a secretary and nursing, were dominated by males in the past, today females have become involved in all kinds of jobs and professions. The fact that females are more educated today enhances their chance of being financially independent, and this independence offers more freedom to them in the area of spending as well (Ahlström et al., 2001). This freedom is one of the most important reasons for choosing females as the target market. Another reason why females are targeted is the dominant role of females within the family in decision making for purchases. Therefore, knowing the purchasing differences between the two genders is crucial in terms of whether traditional businesses and businesses operating some or all of their transactions online are successful. Essentially, the variable of gender is regularly used by firms’ marketing departments in segmenting consumers. However, marketing executives do not have comprehensive information on gender regarding the content of this segmentation. Therefore, knowing the role of the gender differences of the consumers in their purchasing behavior and developing appropriate marketing/e-marketing strategies for these differences and applying them are crucial in terms of the success of the businesses.

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