

# Chapter 18

## Experts vs. Novices: Influence of Promotional Benefit Type on their Online Purchase Intention

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### ABSTRACT

*As each year sees an increase in the number of Internet users, so too the percentage of purchases made online increases. It is for this reason that firms are showing a growing interest in designing effective communication strategies that help to achieve their online business objectives. Online sales promotion is one of the most widely used communication tools on the Internet. However, there is little research into its effect on purchase intention and how this effect may vary depending on the type of incentive offered and the consumer's level of experience in using the Internet. This chapter seeks to analyze which types of online sales promotions (utilitarian vs. hedonic) are most effective at triggering online purchasing and whether the user's past experience of the Internet is capable of moderating the effect of the type of incentive on online purchasing.*

### 1. INTRODUCTION

The Internet constitutes something of a revolution, both for its users and for firms. The resources it offers individuals and organizations facilitate communication and foster commercialization

between people and entities. Each year witnesses growth in the numbers of individuals and firms adopting the medium. Over 2,044 million people world-wide now use the Internet, or 29.7% of the world's population (ONTSI, 2011). For firms in the European Union (EU), online commerce rep-

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resents 14% of their billing. Over 40% of the EU's population uses the Internet to acquire products and services, representing a 3% increase on 2010, and 20% on 2004 levels (Eurostat, 2011). This growth is also reflected in the \$689,635 million generated by e-commerce (JP Morgan, 2011).

This scenario explains the extensive interest amongst researchers and the volume of research projects focusing on the Internet that are currently emerging.

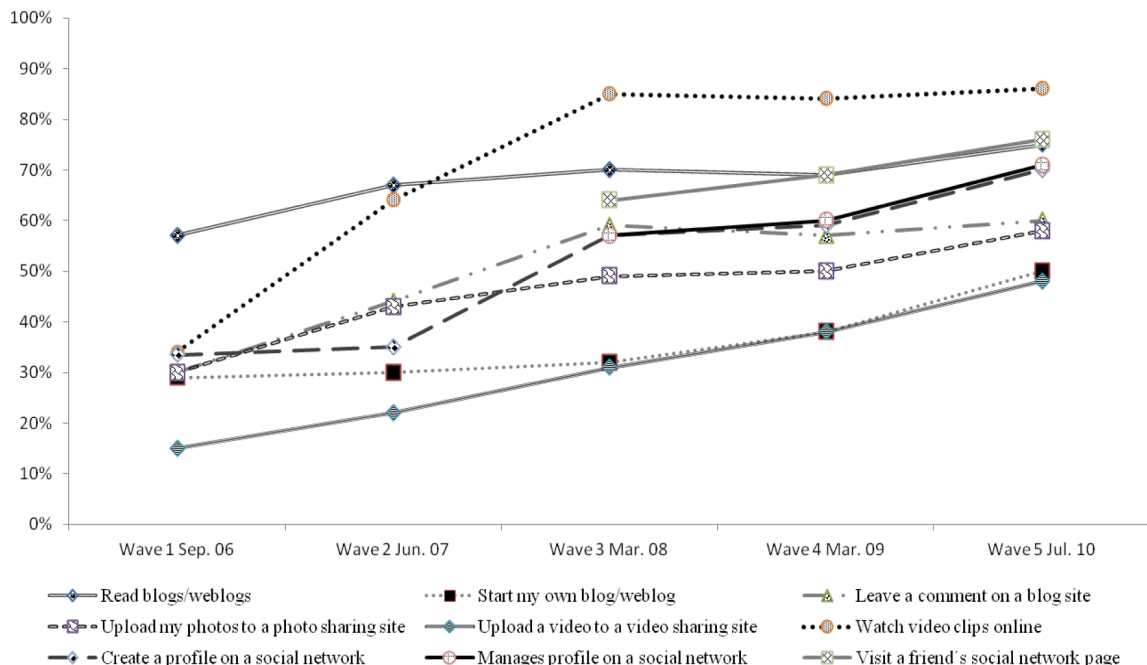
The Internet is being used for increasingly complex and sophisticated purposes, having evolved from being almost exclusively used as a messaging system (email), to now being used for keeping up to date with current affairs, instant messaging, social networks, videos, gaming, or as a shopping channel – to name but a few. In short, the Internet is used, above all, as an information source, a direct and instantaneous communication medium, and a shopping channel.

Figure 1 outlines the evolving percentage of individual users world-wide, by the type of activity they carry out online. In general terms, social networks are expanding in their reach and in fact represent one of the most rapidly growing online activities in terms of volumes of users.

Amongst the many activities that can be carried out over the Internet is the acquisition of products and services. In 2010, 40% of EU Internet users made some sort of purchase online (European Parliament, 2011). These data reveal that there is still a long way to go in terms of increasing confidence levels around electronic commerce and fostering online purchasing.

It would seem undeniable that the Internet is now a part of our everyday lives and that the benefits it brings to each user are increasingly regarded as essential. It also appears inevitable that people, regardless of who they are, what they do for a living or what age they are, will have some kind of contact with the Web. Yet the importance

Figure 1. Worldwide evolution of active use of the internet by activity undertaken. Sample: Active internet users (going online daily or every other day). Source: "The Socialisation of Brands: Social Media Tracker Wave 5," Universal McCann (2010).



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