

The influence of emotion and cognition on buying behavior in the online store: *a benchmark against different product types.*

Much research has been done on rational decision making in the online store setting (Beaudry & Pinsonneault, 2010; Lee et al., 2009). This research focuses mainly on rational website elements (e.g. trust, product descriptions, pricing, and company image) and rational decision making models. Even though cognitive aspects of behavior in online stores have been investigated thoroughly, emotional aspects of behavior in online stores have not. Recently, however, more and more studies on emotions and their impact on behavior seem to appear in the e-commerce and the marketing literature (e.g. Ethier et al., 2006). Even so, no study exists on the relative importance of emotion versus cognition when considering their effect on behavior. Furthermore, the relative impact of cognition and emotion on behavior for different product groups has to our knowledge not been studied at all. This research contributes to the literature by empirically testing the relative effects of emotions and cognition on buying behavior in an online store. Furthermore, it adds to our understanding of the effect of our beliefs about website elements on emotion and vice versa. In addition, this study provides us with practical insights on what elements of a website best to use for which product groups.

The theoretical framework for this research is composed of three hierarchies of effects. First, the rational hierarchy of effects was studied. In this hierarchy of effects cognition is posited as the driver of emotion, and through emotion behavior. A well-known psychological model in this area is the cognitive-affective model by Lazarus (1984). Another hierarchy of effects, referred to as the emotional hierarchy of effects, posits that emotion is the driver of cognitive processes, which in turn affects behavior. The psychological models that support this hierarchy of effects are those proposed by Zajonc (1981; 1984) and Berkowitz (1993). A third hierarchy of effects that is studied is the mutual association hierarchy of effects. This hierarchy of effects proposes that both emotion and cognition, either together or separately, act as driving processes in driving behavior.

For this study the relative effects of emotion and cognition on behavior when benchmarked against product groups were studied. Five product groups were identified: 'goods vs. services' (Forsythe & Shi, 2003), 'experience versus search' (Girard & Dion, 2010), 'hedonic versus utilitarian' (Chiou & Ting, 2011), 'business versus consumer' (McKnight et al., 2002), and 'sensory versus non-sensory' (Pauwels et al., 2011). These groups were identified by their usage in the literature and by applicability to the studied online store.

An online survey will be used for data gathering. The gathered data from the survey will be integrated with website data, and then analyzed according to the research model.

The gathered data will provide insights into which grouping can best be used in the online store setting. Furthermore, it will provide insights in the relative importance and the relative effects of rational website elements and emotions on behavior, thus enabling online stores to adapt their website elements to better suit their online strategy.

Literature

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