

# Hedonic Motivations for Online Shopping

Pui-Lai To, E-Ping Sung

**Abstract**—The purpose of this study is to investigate hedonic online shopping motivations. A qualitative analysis was conducted to explore the factors influencing online hedonic shopping motivations. The results of the study indicate that traditional hedonic values, consisting of social, role, self-gratification, learning trends, pleasure of bargaining, stimulation, diversion, status, and adventure, and dimensions of flow theory, consisting of control, curiosity, enjoyment, and telepresence, exist in the online shopping environment. Two hedonic motivations unique to Internet shopping, privacy and online shopping achievement, were found. It appears that the most important hedonic value to online shoppers is having the choice to interact or not interact with others while shopping on the Internet. This study serves as a basis for the future growth of Internet marketing.

**Keywords**—Internet Shopping, Shopping Motivation, Hedonic Motivation.

## I. INTRODUCTION

WITH the rapid increase of the online shopping population, the total amount of online consumption has grown dramatically. Online shopping has apparently become a new method of consumption for the whole population in Taiwan. Batra & Ahtola [1] point out that the satisfaction of consumption comes not just from the product purchased, but also the personal emotional rewards during the shopping process. Customers increasingly see shopping as a means to seek happiness, fantasy, sensual excitement and enjoyable experiences in both the offline and online environment. Childer et al. [2] believes that online shopping would be increased if online retailers could create an interactive and entertaining shopping environment to satisfy the emotional needs of shoppers. Providing hedonic shopping elements can increase purchases and enhance customer relationships with online retailers. Since online shoppers play the dual roles of traditional shoppers and Internet users, traditional hedonic shopping motivations and dimensions of flow exist in the online shopping environment. This study explores the hedonic motivations for online shopping from the perspectives of hedonic motivations and flow theory, and also tries to discover hedonic dimensions unique to online shopping.

## II. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The purpose of the study is to understand the hedonic attributes that contribute to consumers having a satisfying online shopping experience. This study adopts the focus group

interview method. Four focus groups of shoppers were undertaken. Each focus group is composed of 8 to 10 participants and a total of 36 people were interviewed. All participants had prior online shopping experience. Participants were recruited through publicly posted messages on the major shopping forums and bulletin boards of major universities. A semi-structured interview method was used. There are three steps in the interview: first, enquiring about each participants' hedonic motivations for online shopping; second, interactively discussing the hedonic motivations with participants; last, seeking comments on the hedonic motivations suggested by prior researches but not discussed in the interview.

A content analysis was used to analyze the data. The operational definitions of online hedonic shopping motivations were proposed. A total of eleven hedonic online shopping motivations are summarized from previous studies. Also, the transcripts of the interview were analyzed. Data units were organized into a category describing their respective hedonic motivation. Any data units that could not be categorized would be temporarily labeled in the category of "others" for further assessment and discussion. Two newly found hedonic motivations, privacy and online shopping achievement, were discovered during the process. A total of thirteen hedonic motivations are found.

## III. DATA ANALYSIS

### A. Demographics

All participants had shopped online within the past three months. A total of thirty-six shoppers participated in the focus groups interview. The age of participants ranged from 21 to 35, with half male and half female. Two-thirds of the participants had more than three years of online shopping experience.

## IV. HEDONIC MOTIVATIONS FOR ONLINE SHOPPING

The study has presented thirteen hedonic motivations for online shopping derived from the content analysis of the respondents' statements (see Fig. 1). Motivations related to pleasure only are social, role, self-gratification, learning trends, pleasure of bargaining, stimulation and diversion; related to flow only are enjoyment and telepresence; related to both hedonism and flow include status/control, and adventure/curiosity. Two newly found motivations, privacy and online shopping achievement, are also discussed in the following section.

### A. Social

Social shopping refers to the enjoyment of shopping with friends, communicating with others who have similar shopping interests, and affiliating with reference groups [3], [4]. With the emergence of the virtual community, shoppers with similar

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interests could contact each other in chat rooms, user groups, clubs, or interest groups. Online shopping could enhance the social experiences of participants outside their social circles and form a new way of interaction, bypassing traditional social etiquette and expanding online social networks quickly.



Fig. 1 Hedonic Motivations for Online Shopping

#### B. Role

Role shopping reflects the enjoyment that shoppers derive from shopping for others, the influence that this activity has on the shoppers' feelings and moods, and the excitement and intrinsic joy felt by shoppers when finding the perfect gift for others [4].

#### C. Self-Gratification

Self-gratification involves shopping as a special treat to oneself [4] and shopping to heighten positive mood. Parsons [5] suggests that self-gratification for a shopper is very much an instant goal. Internet shopping falls short because delivery time imposes a delay.

#### D. Learning Trends

Learning trends refer to visiting and shopping at online stores in order to discover new trends and the symbols that support them [5]. Participants indicate that the ability to access interesting information and to view objects from remote locations is one of the major advantages of online shopping.

#### E. Pleasure of Bargaining

Pleasure of bargaining refers to shopping for the enjoyment of bargaining or haggling [5]. Many participants enjoyed hunting for bargains, sales and discounted items online. Prior researches suggest that consumers may obtain hedonic benefits through bargain perceptions which provide increased sensory involvement and excitement [4], [6].

#### F. Stimulation

Stimulation refers to novel and interesting stimuli encountered while shopping. Such stimulation might include sensory, emotive, and cognitive faculties [7]. Participants indicate that attractive online messages or advertisements catch their attention and can even cause impulsive buying behaviors.

#### G. Diversion

Diversion refers to shopping for divergence from the routine of daily life and thus represents a form of recreation [3], [5]. Most participants believe that diversion allows social escapism and thus is regarded as a motivation.

#### H. Status/Control

Status/Control refers to exercising control over the interaction taking place through the Internet and an opportunity to command attention and respect while shopping [5], [8]. Some participants do feel the sense of control and superiority through online shopping; however, with the prevalence of Internet usage, the sense of superiority is less prominent.

#### I. Adventure/Curiosity

Adventure refers to shopping for exploration and adventure in another world. Prior research indicates that consumers go shopping to seek adventure [4]. Most participants enjoy exploring and even experience sensations of adventure and excitement while browsing on the Internet.

#### J. Enjoyment

Enjoyment refers to experiencing pleasurable aspects of interaction while shopping [8]. The combination of appealing messages and entertaining features can lift one's spirit and offer immediate pleasure. The enjoyment and entertainment features of online shopping helps people relax and immerse themselves in an enjoyable shopping experience.

#### K. Telepresence

Telepresence is the perception that the virtual environment with which one is interacting is real or dominant [9]. Almost all of the participants agreed that most interfaces of shopping websites are like e-catalogues, providing sufficient information without feeling presence.

#### L. Privacy

Privacy is the interest that individuals have in sustaining a personal space, free from interference by other people. Shoppers are able to search for or purchase unusual products without worrying the issue of privacy, i.e. the attention from sales personnel or other customers in physical stores.

#### M. Online Shopping Achievement

Online shopping achievement refers to the sense of achievement consumers get when they acquire unique/limited or bargain items from the Internet. Some participants state that finding special or value products on the Internet is like accomplishing a challenge or winning a game.

### V. CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

Summarizing the online hedonic motivations discussed by the focus groups, the results indicate that the most frequently mentioned hedonic motivations are pleasure of bargaining, privacy, social, learning trends and online shopping achievement accordingly. It appears that consumers fully enjoy having the choice to interact with someone (pleasure of bargaining and social) or not interact with anyone (privacy) on

the Internet. Consumers seem to appreciate being able to learn things (learning trends) and hope to be competitive achievers online (online shopping achievement). Telepresence, status/control and role, on the other hand, are apparently considered to be insignificant in terms of hedonic values. The results imply that shopping websites nowadays lack these hedonic values.

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