DO THE FACTORS OF ONLINE STORE IMAGE HAVE A PARALLEL RELATIONSHIP?

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ABSTRACT

Even if the online store image has recognized an important factor for e-commerce, there are not only rather little attention has been paid to the online store image (e.g., van der Heijden and Verhagen 2004), but also poorly to investigate its consequence. van der Heijden and Verhagen (2004) developed factors of online store image and regarded all factors as a parallel relationship. The purpose of this study is to provide a new insight into constitutes structural relationships among the factors of online store image and to explore how it influences attitude of online shopping. The results of study will benefit online store because it can operate or improve one of online store image to form another image and make clear priorities in the marketing budget.

van der Heijden and Verhagen (2004) argued that consumers perceive online store image on many factors, including usefulness, enjoyment, ease use, style, familiarity, trust and settlement performance, which collectively make up online store image. There are some online store images embedded in TAM in this study (e.g., usefulness and ease use). An online store is equal to a web site and the attitudes of online shopping similar to attitudes of web site usage and web site is, in essence, an information technology. Thus, as such, attitudes of online shopping should be explained in part by the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) (David 1989). Then, according to the instrumental conditioning of the behavioral learning theory (Skinner 1953), the image of enjoyment is similar to the positive reinforcement, it strengthen the frequency of web site usage, hence, foster perception of image of ease use. Based on the psychology mechanism of trust process, which includes capability process and intentionality process (Doney and Cannon 1997), the online shoppers can realize the target's behaviors further and attempts to determine its intentions of exchange. Inferences of benevolent intentions also enable online shoppers to understand the target's goals better (i.e., what drives their behavior). Furthermore, the better image of settlement performance is the more contribute to the built-up of image of trust because online shoppers believe that online store has the ability to meet its obligations. Finally, Social Exchange Theory (SET) (Blau 1964) could explain the relation between trust and usefulness. Only when an online store can be trusted, the online shoppers are able to successfully accomplish their tasks on the web site, that is, usefulness (e.g., search for product information and place an order). Conversely, doing business with an online store that cannot be trusted could result in detrimental consequences, i.e., reduced usefulness.

Based upon samples of 211 online users in Taiwan and all scales adapted from the study of van der Heijden and Verhagen (2004). The conceptual model was analysis by the two-step structural equation model (SEM) (Bollen 1989). The results of CFA and structural model showed a satisfactory fit. Composite reliability, convergent validity and discriminant validity was also supported. All of the hypotheses are supported except for H6, which the image of trust did not direct affect the attitude of online shopping. The results of study indicate that the image of enjoyment and familiarity are important antecedent of image of ease use and settlement performance, respectively. The image of settlement performance and usefulness are direct positive related to the attitude of online shopping.

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