

Use of, and Attitudes Towards Internet Shopping by Shopping Mall Shoppers

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Background

The pressure of time and consumers' consequent desire for convenience in our technology driven society promotes the search for new and more convenient ways of undertaking everyday activities. One major change currently occurring is in how the population shops. The use of technology to facilitate shopping both at home and in the workplace, is one of the major influences on electronic commerce that is expected to continue into the 21st century and is reflected in the growth of non-store alternative forms of retailing.

Retailers are moving from traditional in-store selling to an expanded arena of choice for the consumer. This is resulting in increasing numbers of consumers using and relying technology based services more than ever in our time-pressured society. Electronic shopping covers a wide range of options including the use of the WWW for purchases and/or seeking information, electronic banking over the telephone, electronic funds transfer, using ATM's, EFT at point of sale and even the use of mail and fax purchasing, in the evolution of electronic shopping. Moreover, increased competition and internationalisation are placing further pressures on companies to improve their performance and more efficiently serve their often demanding customers (Bellizzi, 1986; Bellenger, 1977; Benjamin, 1995; Gershuny, 1986; Gross, 1987; Porritt, 1993; Robin, 1995; Schneider, 1995).

The literature consistently identifies personal characteristics as being of particular importance in predicting technology usage patterns (Neumann, 1998; Kraut, Scherlis, Mukhopadhyay, Manning & Kiesler, 1996). This research project aims to examine the personal characteristics of users and non users of electronic shopping with the view to identify any differences that may exist in their respective personal characteristics and that give a clearer understanding of those consumers with a higher propensity to use technology for shopping. The need for research into the users of high technology is identified by Glazer (1995) who suggests that executives expect that high technology markets (and products) are where the majority of future sales and profits are to be found.

Method

A structured survey research questionnaire incorporating scales to identify personal characteristics, attitudes, behaviours as well as demographic details has been developed and trialed. The questionnaire will be distributed to a convenience sample of shopping mall shoppers at various large shopping malls around metropolitan Melbourne. Shopping malls were chosen as they are in widespread usage throughout much of the world as a means by which consumers traditionally shop. The introduction of an electronic alternative is likely to have a significant impact on this traditional shopping behaviour and on how consumers search for and purchase their everyday needs (Benjamin 1995, Rayport, 1995).

The pilot of the questionnaire for the project was undertaken in September 1998 and the full study will be completed during February/March 1999. The initial findings should be available in late April 1999. A final paper is expected in the second half of 1999.

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