Effect of Website Features on Online Relationship Marketing in Digikala Online Store (Provider of Digital Products and Home Appliances)

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Abstract

This aim of this study was to investigate the effect of the website features on the online relationship marketing in the Digikala online store. For this purpose, a standardized questionnaire was given to customers of Digikala online store via e-mail and finally 384 questionnaires were used in the analysis of hypotheses. Data obtained from customers were analyzed using the confirmatory factor analysis and structural equation. This study was a survey research in terms of data collection and correlational in terms of examining relationships between variables. All hypotheses other than the hypothesis “the effect of the utilitarian features on the calculative commitment” were confirmed. In general, it can be concluded that more works on providing sales services can lead to the good results for the marketing relationships. In addition, the firms can maintain customer loyalty and are introduced by other customers and increase the market share. The findings of this study can be beneficial for all companies and organizations that use Internet sales and those which decide to start Internet sales.

Keywords: Website features; e-commerce; relationship marketing; structural equation modeling
Introduction

Nowadays, many companies use e-commerce for marketing and selling their products. These companies have come to the conclusion that they need to create a website for the marketing and sale of their products. The managers of these companies have found that marketing and selling products via the Internet are much easier than traditional methods because it requires less time and the cost is much less.

Today, we cannot ignore the growth of online stores and the culture of online shopping in Iran. Research and experiences of the last few years have experimentally and theoretically shown that some companies carry out their processes, such as marketing, using the Internet network. Thus, they benefit from higher operating profit, lower processing costs, and more satisfied and loyal customers.

According to this issue and the extent to which a company uses the advantages of the Internet technology, it is necessary to consider the quality and the use of the Internet and websites. Hence, this study aims to investigate the website features in terms of two aspects in relationship marketing, including building trust and customer loyalty, and affective and calculative commitment, in the Digikala online store.

Theoretical Foundations

Thematic Literature

Due to the increasing development of technology, the numbers of people who use the Internet are increasing day by day in the world. Also, due to the many benefits of ecommerce for customers, enterprise, and society, including speed and ease of performing trade operations, and organizations providing products and services companies should seek to create an appropriate atmosphere in this regard and marketing will play a significant role in this market. Therefore, special features are needed to attract the attention and trust of the customers. Studies to identify the effect of website features on the way of marketing can assist companies and institutions to plan for marketing their goods and services.

Philip Kotler in his book entitled “Marketing Management” suggests factors affecting consumer behavior. Figure 1 shows the factors affecting consumer behavior from the perspective of Philip Kotler. As is evident, the place of supplying goods is one of the factors driving marketing. The website features are considered important as the place of supplying goods. Thus, the present study investigates the effect of the website features on the online relationship marketing.
Figure 1: Model of buyer behavior proposed by Kotler (Kotler, 2006)

**Literature Review**

**National Literature Review**

Ameri (2010) conducted her master’s thesis and proposed a framework to identify and prioritize the factors affecting online shopping with an emphasis on e-commerce and analytic hierarchy process.

Izadpanah (2010) conducted her master’s thesis and investigated the role of moderating factors on consumer trends towards online shopping by considering retails. According to her research, the most important factor is the trust for people's willingness for online shopping. After the factor “trust”, performance expectations and social influence and expected efforts are considered important as the factors affecting consumer trends towards online shopping.

**International Literature Review**

Customer satisfaction with information is considered as an evaluation mechanism. According to the studies conducted by Lyos et al. (1983), customer satisfaction with information is defined as the extent to which the user believes that existing information systems can fulfill their needs.

The intention of customers’ buying is very important, because customer behavior is predictable through intention. For understanding customer loyalty, a purchase intention is considered as an integral part of the structure of customer loyalty (Jacobi and Chestnut, 1978).

**Conceptual Definition**

Trust: firm belief in the reliability, truth, ability, or strength of someone or something. Confidence placed in a person by making that person the nominal owner of property to be held or used for the benefit of one or more others.
Customer loyalty: according to Oliver, Richard L. (1999), customer loyalty can be said to have occurred if people choose to use a particular shop or buy one particular product, rather than use other shops or buy products made by other companies. Customers exhibit customer loyalty when they consistently purchase a certain product or brand over an extended period of time. As an example, many customers stick to a certain travel operator due to the positive experiences they have had with their products and services.

According to Caroline (2002), customer loyalty is associated with three factors:

1) Customer buying behavior is considered as the repeat of the same action.
2) Consumer attitude is considered as the consumer commitment and trust.
3) The availability is considered as having many options to choose and do the shopping.

Affective commitment: it includes affective bond of consumers with the organization in a way that people introduce themselves as a member of the organization.

Calculative commitment: the need to maintain a relationship given the significant anticipated termination or switching costs associated with. This type of commitment is different from affective commitment, because it considers the calculation of the cost and ignores the affective relationships.

Hedonic features: they are features that help the user enjoy the use of the source. These features are operationally reflected in the pleasure, satisfaction, recreation and entertainments in web-based transactions.

Utilitarian features: they help the user evaluate and conclude with regard to the use of the source (such as online shopping of a product) which include achieving the goals specified in the purchase such as comparing the prices, reviewing desired products, pictures and videos of products and ...

Conceptual Model of Research
Research Hypotheses

1) Hedonic features of the website have a positive effect on affective commitment.

2) Hedonic features of the website have a positive effect on calculative commitment.

3) Utilitarian features of the website have a positive effect on affective commitment.
4) Utilitarian features of the website have a positive effect on calculative commitment.

5) Affective commitment has a positive effect on building trust in online shopping.

6) Affective commitment has a positive effect on building loyalty in online shopping.

7) Calculative commitment has a positive effect on building trust in online shopping.

8) Calculative commitment has a positive effect on building loyalty in online shopping.

9) Trust has a positive effect on loyalty in online shopping.

**Methodology**

Forasmuch as the aim of this study was to investigate the effect of the website features on the online relationship marketing in the Digikala online store, the method was correlational. According to the main purpose of the present study, it was an applied research and on the basis of the descriptive survey method. The statistical population consisted of users of the Digikala online store who did their shopping online in the entire country in 2014. The total population was unknown. Morgan table was used to determine the sample size. Due to the limited number of sample, sample size was 384 according to Morgan table. The sampling method was based on random and convenience sampling. In this study, the model used in this study was selected using secondary sources, including books, articles and dissertations and use of Internet resources and library studies and consultation with experts. For this purpose, questionnaire was designed in the form of a 5 point Likert scale based on reviewing the literature and the opinions of professors and advisors. Using the results of the pilot study, the questionnaire was localized and in accordance with the industry conditions, the final questionnaire was prepared. In order to assess the construct validity, a pre-test consisted of 30 items was taken. Then, the final questionnaire was distributed among all participants. In this study, the test-retest method (Cronbach's alpha) was used to evaluate the reliability. For the analysis of data, two statistical methods were used: 1. Descriptive Statistics: Using statistical characteristics such as frequency, percentage, drawing diagrams, and data analysis. 2. Inferential statistics: include structural equation modeling and confirmatory factor analysis using SPSS and LISREL software.

**Data Analysis**

**Descriptive Analysis of Research Data**

**Gender**

As can be seen, 56.5% of respondents were female and 43.5% of them were male (Table and Figure 1).
Table 1: the frequency of respondents in terms of gender

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Valid percentage</th>
<th>Cumulative percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>174</td>
<td>43.5</td>
<td>43.5</td>
<td>43.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>226</td>
<td>56.5</td>
<td>56.5</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>400</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Diagram 1: Gender of respondents

Age

As can be seen, 8.3% of respondents were lower than 20 years. 74.8% of them were between 20 and 30 years. 13.8% were between 30 and 40 years. 2.8% of them were between 40 and 50 years and 0.5% were 50 years and higher (Table and Figure 2).
Table 2: The frequency of respondents in terms of age

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Valid percentage</th>
<th>Cumulative percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lower than 20 years</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>8.3</td>
<td>8.3</td>
<td>8.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20-30 years</td>
<td>299</td>
<td>74.8</td>
<td>74.8</td>
<td>83.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-40 years</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>13.8</td>
<td>13.8</td>
<td>96.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40-50 years</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>99.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50 and higher</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>400</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Diagram 2: Age of respondents
Level of Education

As can be seen, 21.0% of respondents had diploma and associate's degrees, 65.5% of them had bachelor’s degree and 13.5 percent had master's degree or higher (Table and Figure 3).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level of Education</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Valid percentage</th>
<th>cumulative percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lower than Diploma</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diploma and Associate’s Degree</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>21.0</td>
<td>21.0</td>
<td>21.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor’s degree</td>
<td>262</td>
<td>65.5</td>
<td>65.5</td>
<td>86.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Master’s degree and more</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>13.5</td>
<td>13.5</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>400</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Frequency of using online shopping system

As can be seen, 12.3% of respondents used the online shopping system once, 59.0% of respondents used it 2-10 times, 16.8 percent of them used it 11-50 time, 12.0 % of respondents used more than 50 times (Table and Figure 4).
Table 4: The frequency of respondents in terms of using online shopping system

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Valid percentage</th>
<th>Cumulative percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 time</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>12.3</td>
<td>12.3</td>
<td>12.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-10 times</td>
<td>236</td>
<td>59.0</td>
<td>59.0</td>
<td>71.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-50 times</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>16.8</td>
<td>16.8</td>
<td>88.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than 50 times</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>12.0</td>
<td>12.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>400</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Diagram 4: Frequency of using online shopping system by respondents
inferential statistics

Investigating the main hypotheses of the research

Testing research hypotheses by structural equation modeling

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 5: Results of confirming or rejecting the hypotheses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>research hypotheses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H1 The effect of hedonic features on affective commitment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H2 The effect of hedonic features on calculative commitment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H3 The effect of utilitarian features on affective commitment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H4 The effect of utilitarian features on calculative commitment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H5 The effect of affective commitment on building trust</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H6 The effect of affective commitment on building loyalty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H7 The effect of calculative commitment on building trust</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H8 The effect of calculative commitment on building loyalty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H9 The effect of trust on loyalty</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In testing hypotheses by structural equation modeling, software output indicates that the fitted structural model is appropriate to test hypotheses (the ratio of $\chi^2$ to df is lower than 3). RMSEA= 0.071 indicates that the fitted structural model is appropriate. In other words, to a large extent the observed data are consistent with the conceptual model. The value for GFI, AGFI, and NFI was 0.94, 0.95, and 0.97, respectively, representing a high fit.
Figure 3: The research model in standard mode of the estimated coefficients
Figure 4: The Research model in terms of significant coefficients

Conclusion

Results of hypotheses testing

Hypothesis 1: Hedonic features of the website have a positive effect on affective commitment. Impact factor was obtained by 0.25 for the effect of hedonic features on affective commitment and because the t-value was positive and higher than 1.96, the effect of hedonic features on affective commitment was confirmed. Hence, hedonic features have a positive effect on affective commitment.

According to the confirmation of this hypothesis and the importance of customer retention, we suggest that online sellers should use psychological factors that stimulate the affective sense of customers to increase their affective commitment and retain them.

Hypothesis 2: Hedonic features of the website have a positive effect on calculative commitment.
Impact factor was obtained by 0.36 for the effect of hedonic features on affective commitment and because the t-value was positive and higher than 1.96, the effect of hedonic features on calculative commitment was confirmed. Hence, hedonic features have a positive effect on calculative commitment.

Forasmuch as the customers pay a special attention to the affective needs as well as the economic and material needs, taking into account factors such as special discounts, free after-sales service, etc., can be effective in attracting new customers and retain old customers.

Hypothesis 3: Utilitarian features of the website have a positive effect on affective commitment.

Impact factor was obtained by 0.75 for the effect of utilitarian features on affective commitment and because the t-value was positive and higher than 1.96, the effect of utilitarian features on affective commitment was confirmed. Hence, utilitarian features have a positive effect on affective commitment.

Considering the economic conditions for customers leading to failure to pay some of the costs and remaining in the household account will result in creating an affective sense of belonging to the store. Thus, users feel that the purchase from this store would help the family economy and the affective sense of belonging. Therefore it is recommended that specific purchase plans are offered such as shopping with special discounts for special occasions like Mother's Day, reopening of schools, etc. Such activities provide the positive economic sense and the sense of the shopping memory on affective occasions.

Hypothesis 4: Utilitarian features of the website have a positive effect on calculative commitment.

Impact factor was obtained by 0.11 for the effect of utilitarian features on calculative commitment and because the t-value was positive but lower than 1.96, the effect of utilitarian features on calculative commitment was rejected. Hence, utilitarian features do not have a positive effect on calculative commitment.

Rejection of this hypothesis indicates that mere utilitarian and economic issues cannot logically make a commitment to the customer.

Hypothesis 5: Affective commitment has a positive effect on building trust in online shopping.

Impact factor was obtained by 0.62 for the effect of affective commitment on building trust and because the t-value was positive and higher than 1.96, the effect of affective commitment on building trust was confirmed. Hence, affective commitment has a positive effect on building trust in online shopping.

Creating an affective sense in customers will cause them to consider themselves as a member of the organization, resulting in building trust. Given the novelty of online purchases in our country,
creating a sense of entertainment and satisfaction in online shopping can increase the affective commitment and build trust.

Hypothesis 6: Affective commitment has a positive effect on building loyalty in online shopping. Impact factor was obtained by 0.48 for the effect of affective commitment on building loyalty and because the t-value was positive and higher than 1.96, the effect of affective commitment on building loyalty was confirmed. Hence, affective commitment has a positive effect on building loyalty in online shopping.

Sense of belonging to the organization can lead the customer to building loyalty and repurchasing. Naturally, the sense of satisfaction with online shopping increases the probability of repeating the purchase behavior and this leads to building loyalty to the online store.

Hypothesis 7: Calculative commitment has a positive effect on building trust in online shopping. Impact factor was obtained by 0.14 for the effect of calculative commitment on building trust and because the t-value was positive and higher than 1.96, the effect of calculative commitment on building trust was confirmed. Hence, calculative commitment has a positive effect on building trust in online shopping.

Making calculative commitment in the customer through the provision of goods and desired services can be effective in building trust. In addition, the implementation of policies such as the 7-day replacement guarantee if the product is defective has a profound effect on the calculative commitment and increase trust in the online store, resulting in increasing loyalty.

Hypothesis 8: Calculative commitment has a positive effect on building loyalty in online shopping.

Impact factor was obtained by 0.18 for the effect of calculative commitment on building loyalty and because the t-value was positive and higher than 1.96, the effect of calculative commitment on building loyalty was confirmed. Hence, calculative commitment has a positive effect on building loyalty in online shopping.

The desirable services and privileges rationally approved can lead to building trust and repurchasing which are considered as loyalty. It is evident that the profitable sense in the customer leads to increasing the loyalty and repurchasing. Therefore, it can be suggested that programs such as the sale with special discounts or a guaranteed minimum price in the entire market can increase customer loyalty.

Hypothesis 9: Trust has a positive effect on loyalty in online shopping.

Impact factor was obtained by 0.30 for the effect of trust on loyalty and because the t-value was positive and higher than 1.96, the effect of trust on loyalty was confirmed. Hence, trust has a positive effect on loyalty in online shopping.
As mentioned above, trust leads to repurchasing which is considered as loyalty. Specifically, if the users see the features on the website that increase their trust in the website, their loyalty to the website and the online store will increase. In this regard, in addition to previous suggestions mentioned, it also can be stated that each user has his / her own profile on the website and tracks records of his / her purchase as well as sharing the purchase experiences with others.

Discussion and Conclusion

The results of this study had several theoretical and practical concepts. A comprehensive theoretical model of the relationships between the features of the website, trust, and loyalty were developed. This model showed that Internet advertising and online services of websites should focus on utilitarian and hedonic features in order to increase the customer loyalty. In the online environment, social relationships create a sense of belonging to a community. In this virtual community, the marketing features of a real community are important to a large extent.

Practical Suggestions

According to the confirmation of the effect of hedonic features on the affective commitment, we suggest that everything making the websites hedonic is used to design them; such as using colors, loading website fast, interactive icons, etc. Thus, the affective commitment of the customers to website will increase.

Moreover, forasmuch as the effect of hedonic features on the calculative commitment was confirmed, we can use these features to enhance the calculative commitment.

According to the confirmation of the effect of utilitarian features on the affective commitment, we suggest that websites internalize this concept that their goods or services are economically efficient. Activates which help this issue include a full review on the product with guaranteed price or replacement during a particular period after purchasing in case of defect. Preparing a video of the goods can give a better sense of understanding the product for the customers. Furthermore, it is necessary to use features of the three-dimensional technology and introduce the products as well as rotate three-dimensional images to view all of their components similar to the physical buying mode can enhance the utilitarian and hedonic features.

Free shipping to buyers’ home can also enhance the sense of trust and customer loyalty. Ensuring product replacement in case of defect will be very effective in building trust in websites. Putting news and content related to products on the website can also enhance customer loyalty and the utilitarian and hedonic features.

According to the confirmation of the effect of the affective commitment on loyalty and trust, it can be stated that increasing the affective commitment leads to the loyalty and trust in the website. The same is true of calculative commitment, leading to increasing the loyalty and trust in the website.
Considering the effect of the variable sequence, we find that utilitarian and hedonic features lead to the affective and calculative commitment and loyalty and trust in the website. Hence, it is seriously suggested that the websites of online shopping are equipped with utilitarian and hedonic features and the sense of loyalty and trust are built in their customers.
References


