Cultural Differences in Perceptions on the Convenience of Internet Shopping: Based on Transaction Process Model

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Abstract

Although the fast advancing information infrastructure makes the connectivity possible to reach almost anywhere, it does not ensure a successful development of e-commerce for every country. The challenge will not come only from the technology, but also from the people. To examine the effect of cultural differences on the perception for Internet shopping, shoppers from two different countries - the U.S. and Korea - were chosen, and the perception for Internet shopping from each is contrasted.

Ⅰ. Introduction

Internet shopping, which is a form of business to consumer†(B2C) e-commerce through the Internet, has grown substantially during the last decade. While the term e-commerce refers to all online transactions, B2C stands for "business-to-consumer" and applies to any business or organization that sells its products or services to consumers over the Internet for his or her own use (Patton, 2001). A tremendous amount of increase in the number of Internet access around the world has been the main drive force for the growth of Internet shopping. However, the latest estimated figures of the number of people online in each language zone shows that non-English online populations are taking greater part in global Internet society. According to the research by Commerce.Net (2001), 68% of online users will be outside of North America by 2005.

Although the fast advancing information infrastructure makes the connectivity possible to reach almost anywhere in the world, it does not necessarily ensure a successful development of e-commerce for every country. The challenge will not come only from the technology, but also from the people who do the business through the Internet and the cultural environment in which the businesses operate. The important factor that could deter the diffusion of e-commerce can be the difference of cultural background of each part of the world. Hofstede (1983) stated that people with one cultural background could react differently to the people with another cultural background for the same stimulus.

To examine the effect of cultural differences on the perception for Internet shopping, Internet shoppers from two markedly different countries in their cultural background U.S. and Korea - were chosen, and the perception for Internet shopping of U.S. Internet shoppers is contrasted with those of Korean shoppers. Using the variables identified by transaction process model (Liang & Huang, 1998), this study tried to find out the particular variables that facilitate or hinder the Internet shoppers in each country. Further more, based on the criteria developed by Charla Mathwick (Graphics, Visualization & Usability (GVU) Center at Georgia Tech, 1999), experienced Internet shoppers were distinguished and individual characteristics of experienced Internet shoppers, such as Internet use behavior and demographic characteristics were investigated.

Ⅱ. Theoretical Background

1. Model of National Culture

Culture is a shared system of meanings that dictates what we pay attention to, how we act and what we

value (Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner, 1998). National culture is collective programming of the mind that distinguishes one nation from another (Hofstede, 1998). In order to develop an appropriate cultural study model of user satisfaction for Internet shopping, Hofstede's model of national culture is used for applying the difference of subjective norm for Internet shoppers in different cultures.

The five dimensions from Hofstede (1980, 1991) is the most commonly used model in the field of international management and international marketing (Shackleton and Ali, 1990; Barkema and Vermeulen, 1997; Schuler and Rogovsky, 1998). Cultural dimensions are defined as follows.

1) Power distance: Power distance refers to the centralization of authority within the organization. Large power distance means that members on the organization accept the inaccessibility of their superiors. Small power distance means that members expect their leaders to be similar to themselves. Thus, the member of high power distance society would likely to follow the behavior of their superior.

2) Individualism/collectivism: Individualism refers to emotional independence from organizations and groups, while collectivism refers to a tight social framework. Individualist is prefer to act and work alone, while collectivists prefer to act and work as members of a group.

3) Masculinity/femininity: Masculinity refers to the extend that tough values, such as competition and assertiveness, prevail over tender values, such as nurturing and quality of life. In feminine societies both men and women have strong nurturing values.

In masculine societies, men are even more assertive, so that gender roles differ to a greater extent.

4) Uncertainty avoidance: Uncertainty avoidance refers to the degree that people are uncomfortable with ambiguity. People in high uncertainty avoiding societies are more nervous when faced with unstructured situations. They like to adhere to strict rules, safety and security measures and a belief in the absolute truth.

5) Long-term orientation: Long-term orientation refers to a set of ethical values for daily life. Long-term orientation represents the values of persistence, perseverance, status and thrift, saving for the future and having a sense of shame. In contrarily, short-term orientation values personal steadiness and stability, protecting your image, respect for tradition, concern for the past and present, good manners and the trading of gifts, greetings and favors.

2. Transaction Process Model

Internet shopping is defined as the purchase of products and services over the Internet. Since there is a huge difference between a making purchase in traditional markets and in electronic markets, it is very important to know what differences the Internet can offer to the customer that is unavailable through

conventional means.

Electronic shopping shares important characteristics with traditional shopping. Some of the components categorized for traditional shopping were merchandise, service, promotion, and convenience (Lindquist, 1974-75). Among these, Arnold et al. (1997) extended their study to convenience component and identified convenient attributes such as a fast checkout and the ease of navigating through the store. Based on these researches, Liang and Huang (1998) developed seven variables, which measure the shopper's perception on the convenience of transaction in Internet shopping (Table 1).

Table 1: Seven-step Transaction Process Model

Seven Step Process	Definition
Search	Search for relevant product or service information
Comparison	Compare prices or other attributes
Examination	Examine the products to be purchased
Negotiation	Negotiate terms, e.g., price, delivery time, etc.
Order and Payment	Place an order and pay for it
Delivery	Delivery of products from the seller to the customer
Post-service	Customer service and support

Source: Liang, T., and Huang, J., An Empirical Study on Consumer Acceptance of Products in Electronic Markets: A Transaction Cost Model, *Decision Support Systems* No. 24 (1998): 29-43

In this research, a model was developed based on the seven-step process model to find factors that may affect a customer's decision to purchase from electronic stores. The transaction cost is decomposed to seven stage variables to measure the overall transaction in Internet shopping. These variables included: *Convenience of product search (SE), Convenience of product comparison (CP), Convenience of product examination (PE), Convenience of negotiating with vendor (NV), Convenience of order (PO) and payment (PA), Convenience of getting delivery (RP) and Convenience of getting post purchase service (AS).*

3. Research Hypotheses

Korea differs from the U.S. on all five of Hobstede's cultural dimensions (Hofstede, 1980, 1984, 1993). Because of these differences, there might be differences in how Internet shoppers of two countries perceive the convenience of Internet shopping process. As a result, eight major hypotheses were developed based on the seven steps in transaction process model.

H_1: There are no differences between experienced U.S. Internet shoppers and experienced Korean shoppers in terms of their perception on the convenience of product search in Internet shopping.

H_2: There are no differences between experienced U.S. Internet shoppers and experienced Korean shoppers in terms of their perception on the convenience of product comparison in Internet shopping.

H_3: There are no differences between experienced U.S. Internet shoppers and experienced Korean shoppers in terms of their perception on the convenience of the product examination in Internet shopping.

H_4: There are no differences between experienced U.S. Internet shoppers and experienced Korean shoppers in terms of their perception on the convenience of negotiating with the vendor in Internet shopping.

H_5: There are no differences between experienced U.S. Internet shoppers and experienced Korean shoppers in terms of their perception on the convenience of ordering product in Internet shopping.

H_6: There are no differences between experienced U.S. Internet shoppers and experienced Korean shoppers in terms of their perception on the convenience of paying for the product in Internet shopping.

H_7: There are no differences between experienced U.S. Internet shoppers and experienced Korean shoppers in terms of their perception on the convenience of receiving a product in Internet shopping.

H_8: There are no differences between experienced U.S. Internet shoppers and experienced Korean shoppers in terms of their perception on the convenience of getting after sale service in Internet shopping.

Ⅲ. Research Methodology

1. The Sample

Making a survey on the Internet users presents a unique problem. At the heart of the issue is the methodology used to collect responses from individual users. Since there is no central registry of all Internet users, to contact every user of the Internet is neither practical nor feasible financially. As such, surveys attempt to answer questions about all users by selecting a subset of users to participate in the survey.

In order to reach to a proper subset of Internet shoppers, more than 100 experienced and inexperienced Internet shoppers in the U.S. and Korea were chosen. University students in the college of business in

Mississippi State University were chosen for U.S. sample and several Korean universities for the Korean sample were chosen since they were thought to be as homogeneous groups of sample.

Selecting sample out of university students were used since it is relatively convenient to collect sample in any classroom environment in both countries. Also, the statistics by GVU Center at Georgia Tech. University suggested that the most experienced Internet users were between 21 and 30 years old, which was the age range of most college students.

Subjects were all volunteers who were interested in Internet purchase and they were clearly told that their response to these questions would be kept strictly confidential.

2. Research Instrument

The questionnaire consisted of three parts. First, the seven questions in the first part were designed to ask users' opinion on the variables in the Internet shopping environment. A five-point Likert scale was employed, with Strongly disagree on one extreme and Strongly agree on the other. The second part included the questions for dividing experienced and inexperienced Internet buyers. These questions were modified from the questionnaire developed by Charla Mathwick (GVU Center, 1999). The third part included the questions describing Internet shoppers. It examined Internet shoppers' characteristics with a semantic differential scale (Appendix).

3. Data Analysis

Three steps were involved in the data analysis for this study. The first step was for distinguishing experienced and inexperienced Internet shoppers. The respondents who show more than 50% percentile on the questionnaires from GVU study were classified as experienced Internet shoppers and were used for further analysis. Out of the 621 questionnaires collected in Mississippi State University, 106 usable samples were selected for the U.S. samples as experienced Internet buyers. The rate for the experienced buyers was 17%. For the Korean samples, total of 735 samples were collected. Among them, 107 samples were selected as experienced Internet buyers. The rate for experienced Korean Internet buyers out of the total sample size was 14.6%.

In the second step, descriptive statistics for Internet shoppers were analyzed. Demographics of experienced Internet shoppers in the U.S. and Korea (Table2) and Internet usage characteristics of experienced Internet

shoppers in the U.S. and Korea (Table 3) were measured.

1) Demographics of experienced Internet shoppers

(1) Year: The respondents of U.S. buyers were composed of 50 juniors (47.2%) and 54 seniors (50.9%) whereas those of Korean buyers were composed of 9 freshmen (9.2%), 29 sophomores (29.6%), 25 juniors (25.5%), and 33 seniors (33.7%).

(2) Gender: Both respondents from U.S. and Korea included a higher percentage of male than female. The respondents of the Korean college students were composed of 67 men (68.4%) and 31 women (31.6%) whereas those of U.S. college students were composed of 78 men (73.6%) and 28 women (26.4%).

(3) Employment: Among the Korean respondents, 75.7% showed that they are not employed by any means. In contrast to that, 55.5% of U.S. respondents were employed by part time or full time.

(4) Availability of local retail stores: Fifty seven percent (n=62) of the Korean participants had enough retail stores in their town. In contrast to that, only 26% of the U.S. participants had enough retail stores around where they live.

2) Internet usage characteristics of experienced Internet shoppers

(1) Prime Internet access location: Both U.S. and Korean Internet buyers showed that they mostly did internet shopping in their home. 77.4% of U.S. Internet buyers used their home computers for shopping and 55.1% of Korean shoppers used their home computers for Internet shopping. Only 8% of Korean participants used their school facility for accessing to the Internet. In contrast to that, 29% of U.S. counterparts used their school facility to access to the Internet.

(2) Internet access speed for Internet shopping: Significantly more Korean shoppers (78.6%) than U.S. shoppers subscribed to faster on-line services such as T1, T3, ADSL and Cable Modem. Only a small portion of U.S. shoppers (19.0%) subscribed to such services. For U.S. shoppers, 56.6K Modem was the major way to access to the Internet for shopping.

(3) Years on the Internet: The majority of Korean shoppers (73.5%) had been shopping through the Internet less than two years. In contrast to that, almost all of the U.S. shoppers (80%) had been shopping through the Internet at least for more than two years.

(4) Average number of hours staying on line for shopping: The average number of hours each participant staying on line for Internet shopping was somewhere between less than an hour and one to three hours. 45.3% of U.S. buyers were staying on line for less than an hour and 45.9% of Korean counterparts were staying on line respectively. 43.4% of U.S. buyers were staying on line for one to three hours once they get

on the Internet, and 41.8% of Korean buyers were staying on line.

(5) Average amount of money spent for shopping through Internet: The average amount of money spent by shoppers was between \$10 and \$99 for both countries. 67.9% of U.S. buyers and 77.6% of Korean buyers were answered for spending between \$10 and \$99 per transaction. Significantly more percentage of U.S. respondents (30.2%) 18.4% for Korean respondents - were answered that they are spending more than \$100 per shopping.

Table 2: Demographics of Experienced Internet Shoppers

Demographics	U.S.		Korean	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Year				
Freshman	1	.9	9	9.2
Sophomore	1	.9	29	29.6
Junior	50	47.2	25	25.5
Senior	54	50.9	33	33.7
Graduate	0	0.0	2	2.0
Gender				
Female	28	26.4	31	31.6
Male	78	73.6	67	68.4
Employment				
Full Time	10	9.4	17	16.5
Part Time	45	42.4	8	7.8
Not Employed	51	48.2	78	75.7
Availability of Local Retail Outlets				
Yes	28	26.4	62	63.3
No	78	73.6	36	36.7

3) Factor Analysis

Before comparing the variables explaining the differences of the perceptions of Internet shoppers in the U.S. and Korea, factor analysis was utilized. The objective of factor analysis is to determine if the variables could be grouped or reduced to fewer factors. A principal axis factoring with varimax rotation extracted the underlying dimensions of variables. To determine the optimum number of factors, the scree plot test was used.

The scree plot of common factor analysis extracted three factors from U.S. data and four from Korean data with the criteria of minimum eigenvalue of 1.0. About 63% percent of total variance for U.S. data and 70% of Korean data were attributable for these factors. Table 4 and 5 presents the Varimax rotated factor

matrix identifying the three factors identified by U.S. and Korean data. However, the results of factor analysis tended to show no possible groups in the variables of U.S. and Korean data.

Table 3: Internet Usage Characteristics of Experienced Internet Shoppers

INTERNET USAGE	U.S.		Korean	
	Frequency	Percent (%)	Frequency	Percent (%)
Prime Internet Access Location				
Home	82	77.4	54	55.1
School	8	7.5	29	29.6
Work	7	6.6	3	3.1
Friend's	5	4.7	1	1.0
Other	4	3.8	11	11.2
Access Speed for Internet Shopping				
T1	5	4.8	10	10.2
T3	5	4.8	3	3.1
ADSL	1	1.0	46	46.9
SDSL	0	0	0	0
ISDN	1	1.0	4	4.1
Cable Modem	8	7.6	14	14.3
56.6K	67	63.9	6	6.1
Other	5	4.8	4	4.1
Don't Know	13	12.4	11	11.2
Years on the Internet				
Not At All	1	1.0	3	3.1
Less than a Year	20	18.9	69	70.4
1 to 3 Years	77	72.6	22	22.4
More than 3 Years	8	7.5	4	4.1
Number of Hours Online				
Don't Know	4	3.8	8	8.2
Less than an Hour	48	45.3	45	45.9
1 to 3 Hours	46	43.4	41	41.8
More than 3 Hours	8	7.5	4	4.1
Spending for Internet Shopping				
Zero	1	1.0	1	1.0
Less than $10	1	1.0	3	3.1
$10-$99	72	67.9	76	77.6
$100-$499	27	25.5	14	14.3
$500 or More	2	1.9	4	4.1
Don't Know	3	2.8	0	0.0

Table 4: Factor Loadings of the convenience of transaction variables

(U.S.)

Variable	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3
SE	.134077	1.556031	.043526
CP	.367039	.046163	-.221697
PE	-.063850	.253387	.230653
NV	-.116820	.050924	.823023*
PO	.847437*	.025698	-.070681
PA	.816344*	.079037	.082061
RP	.722182*	.795830*	.198304
AS	.329862	.528686	.692284
Expl.Var	2.185339	.753220*	1.311923

Expl. Var: Explained Variances

Table 5: Factor Loadings of the convenience of transaction variables

(Korea)

Variable	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	FACTOR 4
SE	.818746*	.013139	1.239925	.113830
CP	.705973*	-.054208	.856993*	.134149
PE	.646190	.092308	.318136	.235821
NV	.117866	.137021	.043869	.893459*
PO	.003736	.828578*	-.074454	.029063
PA	-.025707	.760349*	.085589	.184378
RP	.359850	.425026	.334839	.362000
AS	-.221230	-.115987	-.318040	.151681
Expl.Var	1.779306	1.489179	-.094678	1.073725

4) Lambda Statistics

The first test performed were the lambda statistics that test whether any of the dependent variables vary significantly according to country. The implication of the lambda statistic was that the smaller the value of the lambda statistic, the greater the implied statistical significance between the group centroids. Wilks' Lamda test, Rao R test, Pillai-Bartlett Trace test, and V agree test with appropriate degrees of freedom and p-level indicated that the null hypothesis of the equality of the group means had been rejected at the 0.05 level of significance (p-value > 0.001). These results of MANOVA indicated that U.S. and Korean Internet buyers are significantly different in their perception on each variable in the group (Table 6). U.S. and Korean Internet shoppers were significantly different in their perception on the convenience of Internet shopping.

Table 6: Results of the Lambda Statistics

Test	Value	p−level
Wilks' Lambda	.54491	
Rao R	21.29671	.000000
Pillai-Bartlett Trace	.45509	
V	21.29671	.000000

5) ANOVA

Analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used to examine whether there were significant differences between these two groups in terms of their perception on convenience of transaction in Internet shopping. Thus, one-way ANOVA for single non-metric independent variable and two metric dependent variables were performed for those three groups. The two countries represented the non-metric independent variable, and convenience of transaction variables represented metric dependent variables for each analysis. Each of ANOVA tested the null hypothesis that there were no differences in a perception.

The results of ANOVA tests (Table 7) except that of SE variable showed that the null hypothesis of no differences among group means is rejected at the 0.05 level of significance (P-value > 0.0001). These indicate that there are differences between the Internet shoppers in the two countries in all variables except SE variable. Compare to Korean shoppers, U.S. Internet shoppers were more likely agree with the idea that comparing, examining, ordering, paying, receiving and products on the Internet were easy compared to the traditional way of shopping. Compared to Korean shoppers, U.S. Internet shoppers were also more likely agree with the idea that negotiating with vendors and getting after sale service from vendors through the Internet was easy.

Table 7: ANOVA Results

DEPENDENT VARIABLE	MEAN SQR EFFECT	MEAN SQR ERROR	F(DF1,2)	P−LEVEL
SE	5.29625	1.148564	4.61120	.032904
CP	10.37319	.856029	12.11781	.000607
PE	12.64016	1.112112	11.36590	.000890
NV	25.89250	.907036	28.54629	.000000
PO	55.60292	.706018	78.75565	.000000
PA	58.49899	.831536	70.35053	.000000
RP	20.23063	.818256	24.72408	.000001
AS	38.02107	.710712	53.49719	.000000

Ⅳ. Findings

The results of ANOVAs indicated that U.S. and Korean experienced Internet buyers were significantly different in their perception on every group of variables (Table 8). Each F-value on the ANOVA table indicated there were differences between the Internet shoppers in the two countries in all variables except searching effort for the merchandise through the Internet. Compared to Korean shoppers, U.S. Internet shoppers were more likely to agree with the idea that the convenience of transaction in Internet shopping is easy compared to the traditional way of shopping.

As Straub, et al. (1997) indicated that; 1) those in high power distance may avoid media that do not allow face-to-face contract 2) those in more individualistic cultures are more likely to use electronic media

3) those in high uncertainty avoidance cultures should

use electronic media less favorably. Based on the research, subjects from the more individualistic, low power distance, and low uncertainty avoidance culture of the U.S. were expected to view Internet shopping more favorably than those from Korea. These expectations were found to be generally true in the case of U.S. and Korean experience Internet buyers.

There are also a number of reasons to expect the transaction process in Internet shopping to be viewed more favorably by U.S. subjects. For example, there had been more distance buying experience in U.S. buyers than there had been in Korea. It would be reasonable to believe that U.S. Internet shoppers were fairly open-minded about the lack of face-to-face contact to the vendors in Internet shopping.

Individualist societies place greater emphasis on being independent, self-motivated, and self-interested (Elashmawi and Harris, 1993). Since individualist like U.S. Internet shoppers are more comfortable with the impersonal mode of communication and information gathering that is associated with the Internet, the expectation was that individualism is positively related to perceived usefulness of the Internet and subsequent use of the Internet. As anticipated, the results of this study on the perception of Internet shoppers in two different countries showed that U.S. Internet shoppers indicated more favor to the most of variables for convenience of Internet shopping.

Masculine society is more concerned with the usefulness of given technology, regardless of whether it is easy or difficult to use (Straub and Gefen, 1997). The expectation that masculine society such as U.S. society would show more concern on the usefulness of the Internet shopping was satisfied in this study.

Larger power distance implies that followers respect authority figures and prefer clear rules and directions

from above (Hofstede, 1997). Small power distance implies that followers related to their leaders as equals and are more involved in decision making, Due to the heavy reliance on clear rules and directions in large power distance societies, perception of Internet shopping for Koreans were expected to be negative on each variables presented in this study and turned out to be in the way expected.

Table 8: Summary of Research Findings

Research hypotheses	Expected results	Findings
There are no differences between U.S. Internet shoppers and Korean shoppers in terms of their perception on the convenience of product search in Internet shopping.	Not Supported	Supported
There are no differences between U.S. Internet shoppers and Korean shoppers in terms of their perception on the convenience of product comparison in Internet shopping	Not Supported	Not Supported
There are no differences between U.S. Internet shoppers and Korean shoppers in terms of their perception on the convenience of the product examination in Internet shopping.	Not Supported	Not Supported
There are no differences between U.S. Internet shoppers and Korean shoppers in terms of their perception on the convenience of negotiating with the vendor in Internet shopping.	Not Supported	Not Supported
There are no differences between U.S. Internet shoppers and Korean shoppers in terms of their perception on the convenience of ordering product in Internet shopping.	Not Supported	Not Supported
There are no differences between U.S. Internet shoppers and Korean shoppers in terms of their perception on the convenience of paying for the product in Internet shopping.	Not Supported	Not Supported
There are no differences between U.S. Internet shoppers and Korean shoppers in terms of their perception on the convenience of receiving a product in Internet shopping.	Not Supported	Not Supported
There are no differences between U.S. Internet shoppers and Korean shoppers in terms of their perception on the convenience of getting after sale service in Internet shopping.	Not Supported	Not Supported

The use of the Internet creates with high uncertainty. In cultures with high uncertainty avoidance, people are more nervous about learning new skills (Hofstede, 1991). Since the nature of the Internet could appeal to the potential Internet shoppers in more ambiguous and uncertain way, the prediction was that uncertainty avoidance was negatively related to the perception on Internet shopping. As predicted, Korean shoppers who

are very high in uncertainty avoidance showed low level of Internet preference for every variable presented for this study.

V. Conclusions

Internet shopping provides consumers with opportunities to search products without time and location constraint. Therefore, Internet shopping can have a significant impact on traditional shopping environment. The future success of retailing will depend on recognizing the multiplicity of consumer shopping behaviors, as well as identifying methods of satisfying the consumer's needs in an Internet shopping environment. Through an analysis of Internet shoppers in two different countries, this study can provide Internet marketers a better understanding on how they are able to meet consumer's needs and to develop markets in different cultural backgrounds.

The results of the study were expected to show how some of verified variables would affect the user perception in Internet shopping. Therefore, the findings of this study can provide useful insights for both the academic and practitioner community. For the IS research community, this study may suggest several opportunities for further research into the variables which impact Internet user satisfaction. For practitioners, this study can help Internet shopping firms to develop better marketing platforms and strategies, which promote Internet shopping for customers with different cultural backgrounds.

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