The Influences of E-service Quality according to Image Interactivity Technology on Customer Loyalty and Purchasing Involvement

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Abstract This study investigates the differences of e-service quality depending on image interactivity technology and the influences of e-service quality on purchasing involvement and customer loyalty. Online shopping malls have made toward satisfying customers’ shopping experience owing to the advance of technology. Above all, it is important to prove effectiveness of this technology to introduce it. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to test effectiveness of Image Interactivity Technology (IIT) which has been introduced by some shopping malls. For this study three shopping malls were designed as stimuli that have the different level of IIT. The women of 20-30 who have bought fashion products in online shopping malls participated in the quantitative research. Total 592 were used for the statistical analysis. Descriptive statistics, cross tabulation analysis, factor analysis, reliability analysis, one-way ANOVA, and multiple regression were implemented. Four factors of e-service quality were extracted. The 3D avatar shopping mall was higher than the others in these factors. Besides, e-service quality factors influenced purchasing involvement and customer loyalty. Therefore, online shopping malls are advised to introduce IIT and improve e-service quality.

Key words Image Interactivity Technology, E-service Quality, Purchasing Involvement, Customer Loyalty

Introduction

Over the last half a century, the development of online and web technology has transformed the global logistics market. Online shopping malls have become the main pillar of the consumer market along with offline, whereas only physical and offline markets were the mainstream in the past. The overall Korean online market topped a growth rate of 20 percent in 2008. Among the market players, the scale of online clothing and fashion businesses totaled at 726 billion won in the first quarter of 2008, jumping by 13.4 percent year on year. Furthermore, clothes are the most commonly traded item online(Hansen & Jensen, 2009). However, clothes are experience goods(Peterson et al., 1997),

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and their fits and colors are critical factors in purchasing decisions. Unlike in the offline markets, consumers are highly aware of risks of online shopping since they are not able to physically contact with products but have to rely on the information provided by the website where they make a purchase. Accordingly, e-retailers should provide useful information for consumers by introducing appropriate methods to post information and thus help them make a reasonable decision. Although studies have been conducted on online shopping as more consumers have shifted to online, they have yet to identify what characteristics attract more people to online and produce loyal customers. In particular, fashion items of which fits and colors are important factors have limits to showing their exact properties online. Against this backdrop, e-retailers have tried to adopt new technologies to provide detail information and boost customer satisfaction by offering offline purchase experience. A prime example of such effort is the image interactivity technology or IIT. IIT is a distinct characteristic of website which enables the creation and manipulation of product images on a retailer’s website in order to affect experiential and instrumental value(Fiore et al, 2002). The technology allows altering the feature, background context, and/or viewpoint of a product design, activates product operation on the web and provides more detail information about products via visual clues. In addition, it render a feeling of life-like environment where consumers walk around to enrich their experience and stimulate a sense of navigation. While advanced technology has made such online experience possible, few e-retailers have adopted it so far and the effect has to be verified. In order words, even though IIT does appeal to consumers, it is still in question whether their interest and visits will continue. Another critical aspect is how the information provided by IIT is recognized by customers. Therefore, this study is to investigate how IIT, an important characteristic of web design, affects consumers’ perceived quality of clothes sold in the online shopping mall, to empirically examine the influence of service quality on customer loyalty and purchasing involvement, and to propose a new strategy to help e-retailers provide a useful shopping environment for consumers.

**Literature Review**

**Image Interactivity Technology (IIT)**

Society has reached the experience economy beyond the industrial economy and the most recent service economy(Pine & Gilmore, 1999). Accordingly, companies have made ceaseless efforts such as customizing information and manipulating images when providing information on their websites in order to maximize interactive communication with their customers. Interaction with customers may encourage purchasing intention and positive attitude of customers towards the companies or shops(Fiore et al, 2002; Li et al, 2001). In addition, Hogue and Lohse(1999) found that interaction with customers was critical to their repeated visits. According to Li et al.(2001), IIT is a common feature of most visited shopping malls, a stimulant to shopping experience and thus expected to frequently appear in online marketing activities.

Meanwhile, e-retailers are able to closely interact with customers when providing product information by IIT images and the interaction may be divided into three levels. The lowest level is represented by a 2D image picture. With such picture, customers simply experience the visual, but fail to involve in manipulation. In fact, 84 percent of online retailers rely on those flat images(Fiore