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The Function of Dominance and Arousal in Consumer Resonance with Fashion Brand Website and Store

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A strategy essential to the sustaining consumer resonance transforms a brand website to the main source for consumers to gather product/shopping information and to the catalyst enriching brand experience. Well-structured brand websites can develop consumer purchase confidence and positive emotions with the brand (Park & Stoel, 2005) and further develop consumer resonances (Huang et al., 2015). The function of emotion conveyed through website attributes has received increasing attention in studying different affective states that drive consumer footprints across channels. As consumers tend to respond their emotions first before logic comes into consideration in their purchase decision (Hunt, 2011), it is timely to examine the function of emotion at a brand website that takes consumer to lead the next call to action. As the function of emotion, Pleasure-Arousal-Dominance (P-A-D) affective state model (Mehrabian & Russell, 1974) suggests that pleasure, arousal and dominance states mediate actual consumer behavior such as desire to affiliate with others in the setting, desire to stay in or escape from the setting, willingness to spend time and money, and to consume. Focusing on arousal and dominance emotional state at a brand website, this study examined which website features induce consumer's emotional state and how the emotional state influences consumer resonance, triggering the intention to purchase at the brand website or the intention to visit the brand store.

Impact of Arousal and Dominance with Facilitation of S-O-R Model: To understand how shopping experiences in brand websites evoke emotions of dominance and arousal, in turn lead consumer resonance across channels, the S-O-R model (Mehrabian & Russell, 1974) was adapted to examine the effects of the brand website attributes (S) on emotional states (O) and its function to drive consumer resonance (R) between store and its website. Fashion brand website attributes identified for this study are (a) product presentation, (b) personalization, (c) security/privacy, and (d) on-site search (i.e., searchandising). Arousal denotes a combination of physical activity and mental alertness ranging from sleepy to frantic. The dominance dimension ranges from extreme feelings of lack of control or influence upon one's surroundings to feelings of being influential and powerful, or in control. While pleasure and arousal have been considered different emotional states in the study, it was often addressed as unidimension unless people's beliefs are not elicited by direct questioning about the degrees of different emotional intensities (Reisenzein, 1994). In examining emotional intensities that are related to shopping experience influenced by a brand website attributes, arousal is more appropriate than pleasure to measure the extent to which a consumer feels excited or stimulated by the brand website attributes along with dominance relating to control over the retail environment. Arousal can create consumer positive desire to interact with the brand and likelihood to return to the same environment (Donovan & Rossiter, 1994). Dominance is related to functional aspect of website attributes,

which ultimately affect arousal state that lead to positive responses toward the brand (Ha & Stoel, 2006).

Hypotheses: Reviewing fashion brand website features from literature (Jin & Park, 2006; Ha & Stoel, 2009; Silva & Awli, 2008; Mathwick & Rigdon, 2004; Wolfinbarger & Gilly, 2003), this study hypothesized that product presentation and personalization are directly related with arousal state of emotion, whereas security/privacy and on-site search are directly related with dominance and indirectly related with arousal through dominance state of emotion. Arousal state of emotion was hypothesized as positive direction to purchase intention at the brand website and store visit intention. The following hypotheses were examined: H 1 a & b-Product presentation (a) and personalization (b) are positively related with arousal; H 1 c & d-Security/privacy (c) and on-site search (d) are positively related with dominance; H 2-Dominance is positively related with arousal; H 3-Arousal is positively related with purchase intention at the brand website; and H 4-Arousal is positively related with intention to visit the brand store.

Methods: Fifteen multi-items adapted from previous studies (Jin & Park, 2006; Ha & Stoel, 2009; Silva & Awli, 2008; Mathwick & Rigdon, 2004; Wolfinbarger & Gilly, 2003) were used to measure website attributes and arousal and dominance were measured with 3 items respectively (Mehrabian & Russell, 1974). Purchase intention and store visit intention were measured with 3 items respectively (Zarantonello & Schmitt's, 2010; Danaher et al., 2003). Among total of 220 usable responses, the mean age was between 18-21 years old, consisting of majority of females (n=197) and Caucasian (n=93). The two steps of structural equation modeling were used to validate measurement model and to test hypotheses using AMOS 20.0.

Findings: The measurement model showed a good model fit ($\chi^2 = 560.356$ with 341 df at p-value <.001, CFI of .934, and RMSEA of .054). All the scales showed good internal consistency and met the requirements for testing the structural model. The model fit of the structural model indicated good fit to the data ($\chi^2 = 643.060$ with 356 df at p-value <.001, CFI of .913, and RMSEA of .061). The results of hypothesis test supported that all hypotheses were significant with standardized coefficients-H1a ($\Gamma = .156$), H1b ($\Gamma = .156$), H1c ($\Gamma = .188$), H1d ($\Gamma = .323$), H2 ($\beta = .653$), and H3 ($\beta = .594$), and H4 ($\beta = .606$).

Conclusion: Consumer interaction with a brand website creates emotional ties and further generates consumer resonance with the fashion brand across channels (Thomas, 2001). Product presentation and personalization are key attributes directly generating consumer arousal state, consequently increasing conversion across the fashion brand channels. In addition, privacy/security and searchandising dynamics excel the dominance emotion state, mediating arousal state and finally consumer resonance in store visit and brand website shopping.

Selected References

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