Website Design Elements and Online Shopping Behavior of Korean Consumers: An Exploration Based on the S-O-R Paradigm

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Introduction. In recent years, online shopping is on the rise (Farber, 2016). Consumer shop online, both for goal-oriented as well as experiential reasons (Wolfinbarger & Gilly, 2001). More specifically, reports (e.g., PR Newswire, 2016) noted the specific role of Internet and shopping in the context of South Korea. Also, the same report noted that online shopping in the context of apparel is the fastest growing market in South Korea. Given South Korea's Internet penetration rate [touted to be the best in the world] and technological advancement, online shopping for apparel is quite pervasive. To date, to our knowledge, no study has focused on South Korean consumers' response to website design and their online shopping behavior. Therefore, the present study explored the relationship between aforementioned constructs.

Theoretical Background and Hypotheses. The Stimulus-Organism-Response (S-O-R, Mehrabian & Russell, 1974) paradigm was used as a conceptual framework in the present study. Per the S-O-R paradigm, website eleme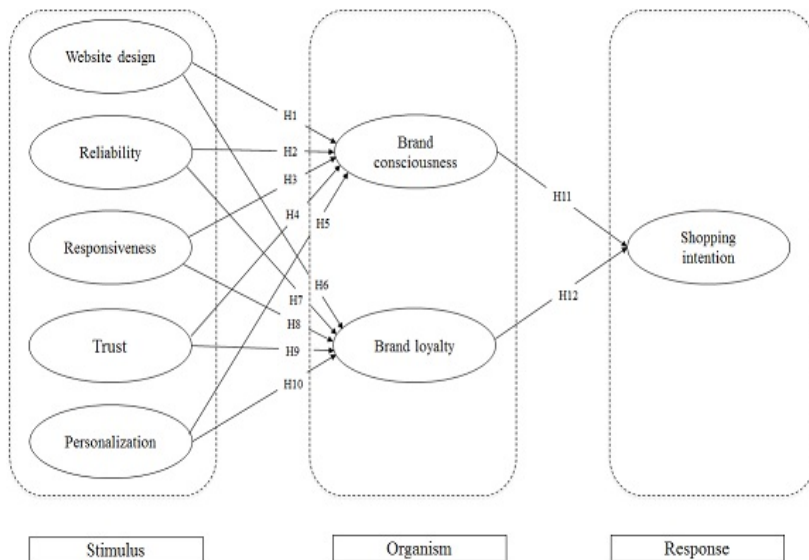nts (e.g., design, trust) served as *stimuli*; brand consciousness and loyalty served as the constructs inherent in an *organism* (i.e., human); and website shopping intention was construed as *response*. Based on extant literature related to the S-O-R and online shopping (e.g., Kawaf & Tagg, 2012), the following conceptual framework was proposed, which has 12 hypotheses that are positively related.

Figure 1. Conceptual framework based on the S-O-R paradigm.

Methods. A total of 601 participants attending universities located in Seoul, South Korea were recruited by visiting both undergraduate and graduate level classes. The questionnaire consisted of questions related to: web design (3 items), web reliability (4 items), web responsiveness (3 items), web trust (2 items), web personalization (2 items), brand

consciousness (7 items), brand loyalty (3 items), and shopping intention (8 items), which were adopted from existing literature (Lee & Lin, 2005; Parasuraman et al., 2005). All items were measured on a seven-point-scale anchored by values ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). Statistical analyses were conducted using SPSS 22 and Mplus 7.

Results. After eliminating 63 missing data cases, a total of N=538 (female =407 and male =131) usable data were employed for the purpose of statistical analyses. The majority of the students were in sophomore (33.5%) or freshmen (32.5 %) year. All the employed scales demonstrated adequate reliability (i.e., Cronbach's α>.70). To test the model, structural equation modeling (SEM) technique was employed. First, confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was conducted, which had adequate model fit indices; followed by causal model testing. The fit indices as per SEM were deemed adequate (χ2= 1667.45, *df* = 434, CFI = .88, TLI =.86, RMSEA = .07). Of the 12 proposed hypotheses, 6 hypotheses were supported at various p-values of statistical significance. In total, the model explained 14% of the variance in the terminal construct (i.e., R^2=.14; *p*<.001).

Conclusions. The present study has some implications as well as limitations. The results of this study showed that brand loyalty is strongly associated with brand's web design elements than the former construct between brand consciousness and brand loyalty. Furthermore, brand consciousness is a strong driver of shopping intentions, which was not so in the case of brand loyalty. The findings of the study are interesting. Some limitations of the study include: specific population (e.g., Koreans and college students), and cross-sectional nature of the study, among others.

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