

THE EFFECT OF WEBSITE APPEAL ON BEHAVIORAL INTENTION IN ONLINE SHOPPING AND THE MEDIATING ROLE OF EMOTIONAL APPEAL¹



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ABSTRACT | This article analyzes the effect of the visual and emotional appeal of the online web page on the behavioral intentions of the consumers. Furthermore, the role of emotional appeal in mediating the effect of visual appeal on behavioral intention was tested. The survey method was used to reach 208 participants who shopped in online retailing for the study. The validity of the research model and the testing of the hypotheses were made with process macro analysis. According to the findings, visual appeal has a positive and significant effect on emotional appeal and behavioral intention. The emotional appeal was shown to have a positive and significant impact on behavioral intention. In addition, it has been observed that emotional appeal has a mediating role in the indirect effect of visual appeal on behavioral intention.

Keywords: Online shopping, web design, behavioral intention

JEL Codes: M10, M30, M31

Scope: Business Administration

Type: Research

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¹ It has been declared that the relevant study complies with the ethical rules.

ONLINE ALIŐVERIŐTE WEB SİTESİ ÇEKİCİLİĐİNİN DAVRANIŐSAL NİYET ÜZERİNDEKİ ETKİSİ VE DUYGUSAL ÇEKİCİLİĐİN ARACILIK ROLÜ



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ÖZ | Bu makale, çevrimiçi web sayfasının görsel ve duygusal çekiciliğinin tüketicilerin davranışsal niyetleri üzerindeki etkisini analiz etmektedir. Ayrıca duygusal çekiciliğin görsel çekiciliğin davranışsal çekicilik üzerindeki etkisinde aracılık rolü de test edilmiştir. Araştırma amacı doğrultusunda online perakendecilikte alışveriş yapan 208 katılımcıya anket yöntemi kullanılarak ulaşılmıştır. Araştırma modelinin geçerliğı ve hipotezlerin test edilmesi process macro analizi ile yapılmıştır. Araştırma sonuçlarına göre görsel çekicilik, duygusal çekicilik ve davranışsal niyet üzerinde olumlu ve anlamlı bir etkiye sahiptir. Duygusal çekiciliğın davranışsal niyet üzerinde olumlu ve anlamlı bir etkisi bulunmuştur. Ayrıca, görsel çekiciliğın davranışsal niyet üzerindeki dolaylı etkisinde duygusal çekiciliğın de aracı bir role sahip olduğı görülmüştür.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Online alışveriş, web tasarımı, davranışsal niyet

JEL Kodları: M10, M30, M31

Alan: İşletme

Türü: Araştırma

1. INTRODUCTION

Online shopping is a type of electronic commerce in which consumers use an internet tool to purchase goods and services directly from a seller. Online shopping is a common occurrence in people's daily live for a variety of products and services. Many consumers prefer this way of shopping rather than regular shopping (Bourlakis, Papagiannidis & Fox, 2008). Consumers have recently adopted internet shopping as one of the most convenient and cost-effective methods of purchasing goods and services. Unlike traditional shopping, online shopping facilitates the shopping process between sellers and customers and provides a good atmosphere for customers to emerge from a wide range of products to choose from (Farah, 2020).

With their continually expanding inventive features, online shopping sites are also important for businesses and retailers. Online shopping sites are used to expand into wider markets, adapt products and services according to customer expectations, and develop business models that will increase the efficiency of commercial activities.

The rapid growth of online retailers along with increases in online shopping has made the market extremely competitive (Yang, Lin & Chen, 2007). An e-commerce company's success is determined by its ability to attract new customers while also retaining existing customers. It is critical at this point to have a well-designed and functional website (Kwaku & Antwi, 2021).

The online website serves as a meeting point for a seller and an online shopper. Consumers' perceptions of web pages are influenced by the visual appeal of online shopping sites (Peng, Peak, Prybutok & Xu, 2017). When customers use web pages, they do so through a technical interface, not with any employee. Customer satisfaction will be affected by the design, visual appeal, and features of the website, which serves as an interface (Wolfenbarger & Gilly, 2003). Using internet tools, many successful firms are able to establish strong relationships of trust with their clients (Wang, Gu, An & Zhou, 2014).

In this study, the effect of website appeal on users' behavioral intentions in online shopping is analyzed. In addition, whether emotional appeal, one of the website's content aspects, has a mediating role in the effect of visual appeal on behavioral intention is investigated. The results of this study are expected to conduce to both literature studies and e-retail management in revealing the effectiveness and importance of website design in online shopping.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW AND DEVELOPMENT OF HYPOTHESES

2.1. Visual Appeal

Perceived visual appeal is defined as the degree to which an individual believes that the website is aesthetically pleasing to the eye. The visual appeal of the website describes many aspects of the website, including its visual design, colors, fonts, shapes, animations, and layout (Van der Heijden, 2003; Li & Yeh, 2010).

A consumer shopping on a visually appealing website has a more positive evaluation than shopping on a poorly organized website (Liu, Li & Hu, 2013). It can be concluded that the visual characteristics of the website affect the evaluation of site visitors, this indicates that online businesses must pay attention to the aesthetic value of the website, because it deals with communication and information exchange (D'Angelo & Little, 1998). According to previous studies, the visual design of a shopping website influences a variety of characteristics of online purchase behavior, including perceived ease of use, perceived usefulness, perceived enjoyment, and eventual acceptance of online shopping (Kim & Stoel, 2004; Prashar, Vijay & Parsad, 2017; Jones & Kim, 2010). There are also studies showing that the visual appeal of the website directly affects the behavioral intention to purchase (Tseng & Lee, 2019).

Aesthetic appeal serves to give a positive impression to website visitors while exploring the website, such as seeking information or transacting (Lee & Jeong, 2012). The website's visual appeal has the potential to influence customers' emotional appeal (Garrett, 2003). According to Tractinsky and Lowengart (2007), the appeal of the web page also activates the emotions that affect purchasing decisions. Hopkins, Grove, Raymond and LaForge (2009) showed that all dimensions of the electronic service environment affect customers' attitudes towards the website, but visuality and aesthetics have the greatest impact. The following hypotheses are proposed based on these findings.

H₁: Website visual appeal has a positive and significant effect on the intention to use the website.

H₂: Website visual appeal has a positive and significant effect on emotional appeal to the website.

2.2. Emotional Appeal

Emotional appeal refers to the psychological, social, or symbolic feelings that motivate consumers to purchase the product (Kotler & Armstrong, 2010). People often show their emotions by their sentiments, states of mind and affections. In marketing, it is commonly accepted that emotion stimulates the intention to buy (Xie, Donthu, Lohtia & Osmonbekov, 2004). The website's

perceived emotional appeal is defined as a web design that takes into account the users' interpersonal psychological factors, defines positive attitudes, and directs the requirements of others (Kim, Kim & Nam, 2010). Website design is an activity that facilitates purchasing activities. It is said that experiencing negative impressions in the provision of this service can reduce the willingness of customers to purchase (Douglas, Muir & Meehan, 2003). Retailers are trying to make their online stores more fun and enjoyable. To this end, retailers try to encourage customers to stay longer or visit more often. This approach also affects repeat buying behavior and finally brand loyalty (Soltani & Gharbi, 2008).

Attractive and interesting content on e-commerce websites motivates consumers to participate in online shopping activities (Ganesh, Reynolds, Luckett & Pomirleanu, 2010). Consumers' psychological motivations such as enjoyment, excitement, and dominance are related to the atmosphere of the web portal. These motivations also affected the attitudes of shoppers and their participation in online shopping sites, various offers, and purchase intentions (Mazaheri, Richard & Laroche, 2011). Customers' purchasing decisions, according to Holbrook and Hirschman (1982), are affected by their emotional experiences while shopping. Hedonic customers don't just look at features on their websites that provide security, privacy, interactive control, and instant access to large amounts of data. They also consider websites that provide sensual stimulation, emotional value, and aesthetic experience that increase the enjoyment of online shopping. The results of the study from Ansari and Joloudar (2011) found that advertising with emotional appeal is still effective in growing consumer interest in buying or using a product and feeling satisfied. Mattila (1999) proved that emotional appeal is more effective than rational attraction in creating positive attitudes. According to Cyr, Head, Larios and Pan (2009), a shopping web site's visual appeal increases users' excitement and emotional appeal. They also stated that visual appeal mediated more satisfaction. Considering these evaluations, the following hypotheses are proposed.

H3: Emotional appeal towards the website has a positive and significant effect on the intention to use the website.

H4: Emotional appeal mediates the indirect effect of visual appeal on the intention to use the website.

2.3. Behavioral Intention

The first study on the concept of behavioral intention is based on the Rational Action Theory developed by Fishbein and Ajzen (1975). In this theory, the authors examined the relationship between beliefs, attitudes, intentions, and behaviors. According to the authors, behavioral intention is a measure of the probability or strength of a person's intention to perform a particular behavior.

Smith, Bolton and Wagner (1999) examined behavioral intention under two headings as economic and social behaviors. In economic terms, behavioral intentions are consumer behaviors that affect businesses financially, such as repurchasing, willingness to pay more, and firm loyalty. Social behavioral intention is positive or negative attitudes that affect the behavior of current and potential customers, such as complaints and verbal communication.

It is the individual willingness to continue using technology and the factor that determines the use of the technology (Venkatesh, Thong & Xu, 2012). The consumer's tendency to repeat the previous e-commerce website access intention is measured by behavioral intention (Chang, Wang & Yang, 2009). In technology adoption, behavioral intention, which is a combination of one's attitude and perceived usefulness, plays an important role (Davis, 1993).

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1. Ethical permissions for the research

All of the rules outlined in the "Higher Education Institutions Scientific Research and Publication Ethics Directive" were observed in this work. None of the activities listed in the directive's second section, "Actions Against Scientific Research and Publication Ethics," were carried out.

3.2. Purpose and Importance of Research

The purpose of this study is to investigate how website appeal affects users' behavioral intentions. It's also expected to see if the emotional appeal has a role in mediating the influence of visual appeal on behavioral intention. In online shopping, website design has the potential to influence general customer satisfaction and perceived service quality (Lee and Lin, 2005), and consumers' behavioral intentions (Ranganathan & Ganapathy, 2002). In this respect, it is expected that the website, which has an impressive design, will increase the efficiency of e-commerce activities. It is thought that this study is important in terms of better understanding the theoretical framework of website design and providing a new perspective to managers in e-retailing activities.

3.3. Research Model

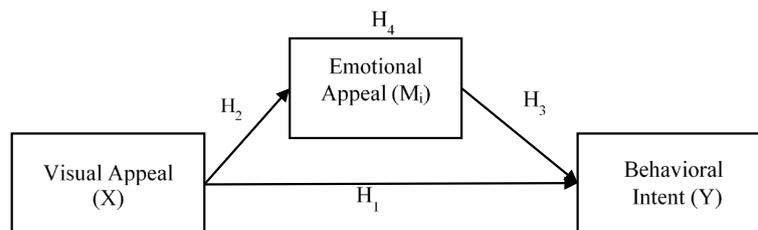


Figure-1: Research Model

3.4. Population, Sample, Data Collection Tool and Participants

The research universe consists of a group of consumers who shop in online retail. In this study, the method developed for list-based surveys was used to collect data. Sampling for Internet-based surveys using a list-based sampling frame can be conducted just as one would for a traditional survey using a sampling frame. Simple random sampling in this situation is straightforward to implement and requires nothing more than contact information (generally an e-mail address for an Internet-based survey) on each unit in the sampling frame (Fricker, 2008). The online survey was shared with people in the universe via WhatsApp and Instagram social media tools. In this study, data were collected from 208 individuals. At least 10 times as much data was collected for the 11 scale items used in the study (Hair, Black, Babin & Anderson, 2009, p. 329). Considering the independent variables in the study, the total sample size of 208 people was calculated as $n > 15M$ or $n > 50 + 8M$ (M =number of arguments). Among the total of 208 participants, 52.4% of the participants were female ($n=109$) and 47.6% were male ($n=99$). The number of male and female participants appears to be almost equal.

3.5. Research Scales

For this study, the three-question visual appeal scale and the three-question emotional appeal scale was taken from the study of Loiacono, Watson and Goodhue (2007). The behavioral intention scale, which consists of five questions, was adapted from Ahn, Ryu and Han (2007). The study used 5-point Likert-type scales. The scales (1 = strongly disagree and 5 = strongly agree) were included in the statements.

4. RESULTS

4.1. The Research’s Factor and Reliability Analysis

Table-1 shows the findings of factor and reliability analyses.

Table-1: Results of the Reliability and Factor Analysis

Factor	Item	Standard Loading	Variance Explained(%)	Cronbach's Alpha
Behavioral Intent	Intent 3	,974	54,145	,908
	Intent 2	,880		
	Intent 4	,845		
	Intent 1	,762		
	Intent 5	,753		
Visual Appeal	Visual2	,932	12,278	,828
	Visual1	,857		
	Visual3	,768		
Emotional Appeal	Emotional3	,952	9,437	,663
	Emotional2	,512		
Total			75,860	
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin(KMO) Measure of Sampling Adequacy				,882
			Chi-Square	1219,554
Bartlett’s Test of Spheritic			Df	45
			P	,000

Note: The emotional factor expression was excluded from the factor and reliability analysis.

Since the KMO value is $\geq .50$ and the p value is $\leq .005$, it is possible to apply the data set to factor analysis (Field, 2000). In addition, in social sciences, each factor expression is accepted as $\geq .50$ and the total variance explained is $\geq 60\%$ (Hair et al., 2009). Finally, the reliability values of behavioral intention and visual appeal factor dimensions are $\geq .70$ (Nunnally, 1978) and the reliability value of the emotional appeal factor $\geq .60$ (Sipahi, Yurtkoru and Çinko, 2008) were accepted as safe.

4.2. Testing the Research Model with Process Macro

The research model (Figure-1) is compatible with Model 4 developed by Hayes (2018, p. 585). As a result, the structural validity of the study model was tested with process macro analysis. The predicted solutions are evaluated as significant when a zero "0" value is not calculated between the lower bound confidence interval (BootLLCI) and the upper bound confidence interval (BootULCI) as a result of the tests using the process macro (Hayes, 2018). The results of the process macro analysis of the research model are shown in Table 2.

Table-2: Process Macro Analysis Results Regarding the Research Model

Model 4	Visual Appeal (X)		Emotional Appeal (Mi)			Behavioral Intention (Y)	
Model Summary	R	R-sq	MSE	F	df1	df2	p
	,5163	,2666	,8194	74,8886	1,0000	206,0000	,0000
Dependent Variable Emotional Appeal		coeff	se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
Fixed Term		1,0167	,2537	4,0068	,0001	,5164	1,5169
Visual Appeal		,5805	,0671	8,6538	,0000	,4482	,7127
Model Summary	R	R-sq	MSE	F	df1	df2	p
	,6468	,4184	,4660	73,7314	2,0000	205,0000	,0000
Dependent Variable Behavioral Intention		coeff	se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
Fixed Term		1,2201	,1987	6,1416	,0000	,8284	1,6117
Visual Appeal		,3592	,0591	6,0811	,0000	,2427	,4756
Emotional Appeal		,3080	,0525	5,8615	,0000	,2044	,4115
Model Summary	R	R-sq	MSE	F	df1	df2	p
	,5665	,3209	,5414	97,3426	1,0000	206,0000	,0000
Dependent Variable Behavioral Intention		coeff	se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
Fixed Term		1,5331	,2062	7,4335	,0000	1,1265	1,9398
Visual Appeal		,5380	,0545	9,8662	,0000	,4305	,6455
Independent Variable: Visual Appeal (X)							
Mediator Variable: Emotional Appeal (Mi)		Effect	se	t	P	LLCI	ULCI
Dependent Variable: Behavioral Intention (Y)							
Total effect of X on Y		,5380	,0545	9,8662	,0000	,4305	,6455
Direct effect of X on Y		,3592	,0591	6,0811	,0000	,2427	,4756
Indirect effect of X on Y		Effect	Boot SE			Boot LLCI	Boot ULCI
		,1788	,0409	,1028	,2621	,1788	,0409

Visual appeal has a direct positive and significant effect on emotional appeal (coeff=,5805; p=,0000; LLCI=,4482 and ULCI=,7127) as well as behavioral intention (coeff=,3592; p=,0000; LLCI=,2427 ve ULCI=,4756). Emotional attraction, on the other hand, has a direct and significant positive impact on behavioral intention (coeff=.3080; p=.0000; LLCI=.2044 and ULCI=.4115). Furthermore, the indirect influence of visual appeal on behavioral intention is mediated by emotional appeal (Effect=,1788; BootLLCI=,1028 and BootULCI=,2621). Because of the mediating role of emotional appeal, there is a positive significant increase in the overall effect of visual appeal on behavioral intention (coeff=,5380; p=,0000; LLCI=,4305 and ULCI=,6455). As a result, considering that all hypotheses are supported, it is possible to say that the research model has structural validity.

5. CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

This research was conducted to analyze the effect of website appeal on behavioral intention and the mediating role of emotional appeal in online shopping. The hypotheses produced with the research model created based on the theoretical framework were tested using process macro analysis. Based on the findings, it was shown that perceived visual appeal had a direct positive and significant effect on perceived emotional appeal as well as behavioral intention. On the other hand, emotional appeal has a direct positive and significant effect on behavioral intention. Furthermore, the emotional appeal has been found to play a mediating role in the indirect effect of visual appeal on behavioral intention. This study contributes to the existing online shopping literature by looking at how website design influences emotional and cognitive reactions, which in turn affects behavioral intention.

Previous research on the effect of perceived visual appeal on behavioral intention (Jones and Kim, 2010; Tseng and Lee, 2019) and emotional appeal (Tractinsky and Lowengart, 2007) has come up with similar findings. Consumers' positive emotions and behavioral intentions are affected by the effective use of visual elements in the design of an online shopping site. In this context, the development of various strategies for the development of website design and visuality, as well as the support of an expert team, are seen to be beneficial to e-commerce activities.

Results regarding the effect of emotional attraction on behavioral intention are similar to other existing studies (Soltani & Gharbi, 2008; Mazaheri et al. 2011; Holbrook & Hirschman, 1982). Previous research also indicates that emotional appeal plays a mediating role in the indirect influence of visual appeal on behavioral intention, which is the research's final hypothesis (Mattila, 1999; Cyr et al., 2009). In this respect, it is necessary to develop emotional features that

will increase users' interactions with websites (Bonnardel, Piolat & Le Bigot, 2011).

As a result, online shopping sites have become an important business model for retailers with their rapidly growing innovative features. The web page, which can come to the fore with its design, visuality, aesthetics, and appeal, is thought to contribute to the practitioners' success in this competitive market. Therefore, in order to attract new customers or retain existing ones, e-retailers must create high-quality websites that offer a superior online experience. The appeal of a website can be improved, particularly by using emotions to guide the selection of language and colors. The ease of use of the site can be considered as another feature that contributes to its appeal. It may be possible to make the purchasing and payment systems simpler and easier using this method.

In this study, the inclusion of only visual and emotional appeal of the website content in the research model is one of the limitations of the research. The research was conducted with a limited number of consumers who shop online retail. It may be possible to test different results in a study that will take into account larger participants and different locations. Another study limitation is that it only examined the effect of visual and emotional appeal on behavioral intention. In future studies, the effectiveness of these contents in online shopping can be tested by considering different website contents. It is especially recommended that variables from the technology acceptance model (Davis, 1993), such as perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use, and attitude, be tested in the study model. Furthermore, the content of the study can be extended by analyzing whether the content of the website affects various behaviors such as brand loyalty and word-of-mouth communication.

6. CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT

The authors do not have any competing interests.

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8. AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

BD: Idea;

BD: Design;

BD: Supervision;

BD: Collection and/or processing of resources;

BD: Analysis and/or interpretation;

BD: Literature review;

BD: Written by;
BD: Critical review

9. ETHICS COMMITTEE STATEMENT AND INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY COPYRIGHTS

Ethics committee rules were followed in this work, and appropriate rights were obtained in compliance with intellectual property and copyright principles.

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