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# Buying or browsing?

## An exploration of shopping orientations and online purchase intention

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Mark Brown  
*UQ Business School, University of Queensland, St Lucia, Australia*  
Nigel Pope  
*School of Marketing, Griffith University, Nathan, Australia, and*  
Kevin Voges  
*Department of Management, University of Canterbury, Christchurch, New Zealand*

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**Abstract** *Consumer selection of retail patronage mode has been widely researched by marketing scholars. Several researchers have segmented consumers by shopping orientation. However, few have applied such methods to the Internet shopper. Despite the widespread belief that Internet shoppers are primarily motivated by convenience, the authors show empirically that consumers' fundamental shopping orientations have no significant impact on their proclivity to purchase products online. Factors that are more likely to influence purchase intention include product type, prior purchase, and, to a lesser extent, gender.*

Literature examining electronic commerce tends either to discuss the size and potential of the phenomenon or to indicate problems associated with it. For example, Forrester Research recently reported that worldwide Internet commerce – both business to business (B2B) and both business to customer (B2C) – would reach \$6.8 trillion in 2004. At the same time, reports of business failures are increasing, as it is evident that the corporate sector is not satisfied with Internet performance (Wolff, 1998).

Despite these two apparently contradictory positions, many observers note an absence of research into consumer motivation to purchase via the Internet and other aspects of consumer behaviour with regard to the medium (Donthu and Garcia, 1999; Hagel and Armstrong, 1997; Korgaonkar and Wolin, 1999). Literature falls into two categories: usage – by which we mean rate, purpose or quantity bought – and advertising response (McDonald, 1993). Common to these two streams is the “flow” research of Hoffman and Novak (1996) which suggests that the Internet is a very different medium requiring new means of segmentation.

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## About the authors

### **Narciso Arcas-Lario**

Narciso Arcas-Lario is Assistant Professor of Marketing at the Polytechnic University of Cartagena, Spain. He received his PhD and master's degrees from the University of Murcia. He conducts research on integration and cooperatives in the agricultural sector. He has published in the top Spanish journals and consulted more than 100 agricultural companies on commercialization issues.

### **Gerry Batonda**

Gerry Batonda is a Lecturer of Marketing and Management at Higher Colleges of Technology, Sharjah, United Arab Emirates. He received his PhD in cross-cultural business networks from The University of Southern Queensland, Toowoomba, Australia. He has written and presented scholarly papers at international conferences, doctoral research colloquia and some of his work has been published in management and organizational behavior textbooks. Dr Batonda has also taught services marketing, international marketing, strategic marketing, international business and business management at several Australian universities. His research interests include services marketing, international marketing, tourism marketing and business management.

### **D. Ross Brennan**

D. Ross Brennan is a Principal Lecturer in Marketing and Chairperson of the Marketing Group at Middlesex University Business School, London, UK. Prior to entering the academic profession, he obtained industrial marketing experience with British Telecommunications plc. His research and teaching interests focus on business-to-business marketing, and on the application of academic research to marketing practice. Dr Brennan's work has appeared in *Industrial Marketing Management*, *Journal of Marketing Management* and *Journal of Euromarketing*.

### **Mark Brown**

Mark Brown is a Lecturer at the University of Queensland Business School in Australia. His primary field of expertise is in the arena of electronic commerce and he consults in this area. However, his other research interests include advertising and communication strategy, customer relationship management and sport marketing.

### **Rodney A. Carr**

Rodney A. Carr is a Teacher and Consultant in Information Systems and Statistics. He has been a statistical consultant in projects for honours, masters, and PhD students and many business and government clients. He has regularly



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management development workshops in Africa, Asia, Papua New Guinea, the United Kingdom and Australia, as well as doing occasional management consulting projects in some of those countries.

About the  
authors

**Nigel Pope**

Nigel Pope is a Senior Lecturer in Marketing at Griffith University in Australia. He is the author of three texts and many journal articles. His work has appeared or been cited in the *Journal of Advertising*, *Journal of Services Marketing*, *Psychology and Marketing*, *Sport Marketing Quarterly* and other journals.

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1847

**John A. Rickard**

John A. Rickard is Vice-Chancellor and President of the Southern Cross University. He has had previous appointments at the University of Melbourne, Deakin, Griffith and Monash Universities. He has been and is currently a board member of several private and public companies; is currently chairing, or a member of, a number of committees of the Australian Vice-Chancellors' Committee and the New South Wales and ACT Vice-Chancellors' Conference; and is also a director of a number of Southern Cross University-based companies.

**Fred Selnes**

Fred Selnes is Professor in Marketing at the Norwegian School of Management-BI, Oslo. His research interests are related to developing and managing relationships between suppliers and customers, both in industrial and consumer markets. This includes studies of factors creating customer satisfaction preferences and loyalty and also studies of how companies should be organised in order to be market oriented. He received his dr.oecon. from Norwegian School of Economics and Business Administration, holds a Master of Science degree in Marketing from Northwestern University, USA, and sivilokonom from Norwegian School of Management-BI.

**Dionisis A. Skarmas**

Dionisis A. Skarmas, MBA and PhD, Cardiff University, is a Lecturer in Global Marketing at Cardiff University, UK. He teaches marketing management, strategic management and international marketing at postgraduate programmes. His main research interests focus on cross-cultural buyer-seller relationship building, sales management and business-to-business marketing. His work has been published in *Industrial Marketing Management*.

**Angela Tregear**

Angela Tregear is a Lecturer in Marketing in the Department of Agricultural Economics and Food Marketing, University of Newcastle, Newcastle upon Tyne, UK.

**Peter W. Turnbull**

Peter W. Turnbull is a Professor of Marketing at, and Head of, the Birmingham Business School, Birmingham University, UK. His areas of expertise include international marketing and purchasing, the management of customer relationships and portfolios and health care management and marketing. He is a member of a number of professional bodies, has had positions as the editor and associate editor of journals and is on a number of editorial boards. During his career he has acted as a consultant for a number of companies including HSBC Bank. His work has been published widely, including contributions to *Industrial Marketing Management*, *European Journal of Marketing*, and *Journal of Business and Industrial Marketing*.

**Manuel José Vilares**

Manuel José Vilares is presently Professor and Chairman of the scientific committee of the Higher Institute of Statistics and Information Management of the Universidade Nova de Lisboa (ISEGI/UNL) and Senior Adviser of the Bank of Portugal. He is also a member of the Portuguese Committees of the ECSI project and peer reviewer of the European Satisfaction Index System (ESIS) project. He graduated in economics from the University of Porto; "Doctorat D'Etat en Sciences Economiques" from the University of Dijon and "Agregado" in econometrics from the UNL. He has taught in several universities and is author of articles and books published in Portugal and abroad. The main scientific areas are econometrics, macroeconometrics, customer satisfaction and statistical information systems. As previous positions, he was the Director of ISEGI, President of Portuguese National Institute of Statistics and Senior Advisor of the European Commission.

**Kevin Voges**

Kevin Voges is a Senior Lecturer in Marketing at the University of Canterbury, New Zealand. He has taught research methods courses in psychology, education and business. His research interests include the application of concepts and techniques from complexity science to marketing theory and practice, research methods based on adaptive systems theory and sport marketing.

**David T. Wilson**

David T. Wilson is the Alvin H. Clemens Professor of Entrepreneurial Studies and Managing Director of the Institute for the Study of Business Markets at the Mary Jean and Frank P. Smeal College of Business Administration, Penn State University. Professor Wilson has published widely, in such journals as the *Journal of Marketing Research*, *Journal of Consumer Research*, *Decisions Sciences*, and *Journal of Purchasing*, and was the business marketing section editor for the *Journal of Marketing*. He was the founding editor of the *Journal of Business-to-Business Marketing*.

Use of the Internet for retail shopping has expanded immensely in recent years and has had a profound influence on the shopping process for many consumers. The medium functions as a novel retail patronage mode, wherein products can be sought, inspected, and in many cases sampled and purchased completely online. This unique ability has transformed the social and spatial aspects of shopping for many consumers. For example, it is possible to perform such a routine chore as grocery shopping from the convenience of one's desk. This is an important benefit to the many shoppers who possess a dislike of supermarkets or a penchant for trolley rage (Brown and Reid, 1997).

Another key feature of the Internet lies in its role of facilitating information search for consumers. The product acquisition process is enhanced by enabling consumers to access a greater amount of detailed information with regard to product attributes, comparative pricing, availability, and overall value proposition, particularly when the Internet is used in conjunction with a search through conventional retail channels. It is clear that such an important means of retail patronage requires detailed understanding, given its increasingly widespread use in many aspects of the shopping process.

In this paper, we report research that investigates a specific means of segmenting the Internet consumer developed from the shopping orientation literature, and examine the effect of these orientations on purchase intentions. We also place this within the context of other precursors to purchase intention, specifically gender, product type and prior purchase.

### **Conceptual background**

Research examining the Internet purchaser falls within the streams identified earlier. The Internet shopper has been found to be older and of higher income than the non-shopper (Donthu and Garcia, 1999; Korgaonkar and Wolin, 1999), slightly more likely to be a male (Korgaonkar and Wolin, 1999), and less risk averse (Donthu and Garcia, 1999; Korgaonkar and Wolin, 1999). There is also evidence that the Internet shopper is convenience-oriented (Donthu and Garcia, 1999; Korgaonkar and Wolin, 1999), innovative and variety-seeking (Donthu and Garcia, 1999). He or she does not appear to be brand- or price-sensitive (Donthu and Garcia, 1999). These described consumer characteristics borrow heavily from the concepts of shopper orientation and retail patronage mode.

Consumers' selection of retail patronage mode has been investigated in a variety of contexts. These include: department stores (Cassill *et al.*, 1994; Prasad, 1975); discount stores (Prasad, 1975; Schmidt *et al.*, 1994); mail and telephone order (Cox and Rich, 1964; Korgaonkar and Bellenger, 1983) and, more recently, electronic media (Comer *et al.*, 1998; Rowley, 1996; Shamdassani and Ong, 1995). The latter of these groups are non-store retailing activities, something that has been observed to be a continuing development within the retail industry (Darian, 1987; Gillett, 1976).

The Internet is only one form of non-store patronage medium. As with catalogue shopping, it has been suggested that convenience is the main reason why consumers use the Internet for the purpose of purchasing (APT Strategies, 1998; Burke, 1998; Georgia Institute of Technology, 1999; Jarvenpaa and Todd, 1997). However, these assertions have been shown to be unfounded in connection with catalogue shopping (Gehrt and Carter, 1992), and little empirical evidence is available for their justification with regard to the Internet. Indeed, in catalogue – and other forms of outlet – shopping, many different shopping orientations are evident (Blakney and Sekely, 1994; Cox and Rich, 1964; Gehrt and Carter, 1992; Gillett, 1970; Korgaonkar, 1982). Shopping orientations refer to the general predisposition of consumers toward the act of shopping (Gehrt *et al.*, 1992). This predisposition may be manifested in varying patterns of information search, alternative evaluation, and product selection. The orientations are operationalised by a range of attitude, interest, and opinion statements related to the topic of shopping.

Lesser and Hughes (1986) and Westbrook and Black (1985) suggest that common segments can be found among the detailed descriptions of shopper types found across a range of earlier studies. Similarly, in our review of the literature, we identified six core shopper types in addition to other, less commonly found classifications. Some studies have clearly expanded upon Stone's (1954) original shopper typology (consisting of economic, personalising, ethical, and apathetic shoppers), while others have reduced the number of orientations.

Stone's economic shopper is the segment most frequently identified in the literature. Comparisons can be drawn with the price-bargain-conscious shopper (Stephenson and Willett, 1969), the special shopper (Moschis, 1976), the low-price shopper (Williams *et al.*, 1978), the economic-convenience shopper (Bellenger and Korgaonkar, 1980), the price shopper (Lesser and Hughes, 1986), and the price conscious, "value-for-money" consumer (Shim and Mahoney, 1992). These shoppers are essentially concerned with buying products at the lowest price or getting the best value for the money they spend.

The recreational shopper was first identified by Stephenson and Willett (1969). A similar type of shopper has also been labelled as active (Lesser and Hughes, 1986; Lumpkin, 1985) and shopping process involved (Westbrook and Black, 1985). Recreational shoppers enjoy the act of shopping regardless of whether a purchase is made or not. Bellenger and Korgaonkar (1980) contend that this group represents a sizeable proportion of consumers, a view supported by Gehrt and Carter (1992) in specific relation to catalogue shoppers.

The apathetic shopper – also referred to as the inactive shopper by Lesser and Hughes (1986) – has emerged in many shopper typologies as the single largest segment of consumers, yet it has been relatively under-explored by empirical researchers (Brown and Reid, 1997). Convenience-oriented shoppers have been identified in a number of studies, notably in those investigating the

shopping orientations of catalogue users (Gehrt and Carter, 1992). Convenience has often been conceptualised as a time-oriented construct, though there is evidence that it also involves space and effort dimensions (Gehrt *et al.*, 1996). Individuals may be motivated by only one of these dimensions or all simultaneously.

Two other major groups appear in the literature with some consistency. The ethical shopper is distinguished by loyalty, with studies investigating store loyalty, brand loyalty, or both. The dominant stream of research into this type has concentrated on store loyalty, often conceptualised as "loyalty to local merchants" in studies of in-home shopping behaviour. The personalising shopper orientation refers to consumers who demonstrate a propensity to value relationships with store personnel. These six orientations are relatively distinct from one another, reducing the potential for redundancy among consumer shopping characteristics.

We suggest that it is logical that consumers possess different shopping orientations and these will affect their purchase behaviours in Internet shopping. Similar behavioural differences exist across shopper types with other forms of non-store retailing such as catalogue shopping (Gehrt and Carter, 1992; Gillett, 1970). With that in mind we offer the following hypothesis:

*H1.* Multiple shopping orientations will exist among the population of Internet users who have made purchases via the Internet.

The existence of relationships between shopping orientations and online purchasing has been implied through anecdotal, proprietary, and scholarly evidence. For example, the ability to conduct price comparisons has been cited as a major reason why consumers use the Internet (Wallace, 1995). Some commentators have argued that people who enjoy the shopping process are unlikely to buy online and that purchasing via the Internet is a poor substitute for the leisure experience associated with conventional shopping (Rowley, 1996). Conversely, it is implied that individuals who dislike the shopping process (i.e. apathetic shoppers) may be more amenable to purchasing online.

In the current study, we examine such speculative arguments regarding online consumer purchase behaviour with particular emphasis on future purchase intentions. Purchase intention measures have been used frequently to identify buying likelihoods for products within defined time periods (Juster, 1966; Morrison, 1979; Whitlark *et al.*, 1993). Earlier research has shown that consumers who report intentions to purchase a product possess higher actual buying rates than consumers who report that they have no intention of buying (Berkman and Gilson, 1978). While it is accepted that purchase intention does not equate to actual purchase behaviour, it has been demonstrated that measures of purchase intention do possess predictive usefulness (Jamieson and Bass, 1989; Stapel, 1971). Such utility is likely to be of interest to online retailers. We suspect that there should be a relationship between shopping

orientation and intention to use the Internet as a means of retail patronage. We hypothesise that:

- H2.* An individual's shopping orientation will have a direct effect on that individual's stated intention to purchase products via the Internet.

Not only may an individual's shopping orientation influence purchase intention, but it is likely that intention to purchase online will vary for different products. Economists have often distinguished between search, experience, and credence goods (Darby and Kami, 1973). Search products are those that can be evaluated from externally provided information. Experience products, on the other hand, require not only information, but also need to be personally inspected or tried. Credence products are those that are difficult to assess, even after purchase and use. In their incisive discussion of whether search, experience, or credence products are more prone to online purchase, Alba *et al.* (1997) argue that quality of information and a consumer's ability to predict post-purchase satisfaction with products will be more accurate predictors of a product's suitability for online purchase. Although they offer a more complex product classification alternative, their message is clear – certain products are more likely to be bought online than others. Very few studies of Internet purchase have empirically examined the role of product type in online purchasing. We therefore hypothesise that:

- H3.* There will be a significant relationship between product type and intention to purchase via the Internet.

Similarly, little account has been taken of prior purchase of a product on future purchases – an effect established by Biehal and Chakravarti (1982) – nor of the effect of prior use of a medium for purchase – inferred by Pope *et al.* (1999). We therefore also suggest:

- H4.* Prior purchase of products via the Internet will have a direct effect on an individual's future online purchase intentions.

It has also been suggested that there is an element of perceived risk in purchasing via the Internet (Pope *et al.*, 1999), and we have already noted evidence of gender differences in online purchasing. Darley and Smith (1995) in their study found differences in female response to advertising across different levels of perceived risk. As risk increases, these authors argue that women will change their response pattern to take in more objective information rather than subjective. Males, however, do not change their favourability of response between risk conditions. Consequent to this argument, therefore, we also suggest that:

- H5.* An individual's gender will have a direct effect on that individual's propensity to purchase via the Internet.

## Research methodology

### *Measures and design*

The survey instrument contained multi-item measures of shopping enjoyment (Bloch *et al.*, 1986), the personalising shopper (Hawes and Lumpkin, 1984), convenience (Shamdasani and Ong, 1995), loyalty to local merchants (Hawes and Lumpkin, 1984), price consciousness (Tat and Schwepker, 1998) and purchase intention (Baker and Churchill, 1977). Each of these scales has previously demonstrated acceptable levels of reliability. Table I shows previous findings of Cronbach's alpha and the levels found in this study. All achieved a Cronbach's alpha of at least 0.70 and no modifications were made.

Respondents were asked to rate their online purchase intention for a list of products and to state whether or not they had ever made a purchase of any kind via the Internet before. Six diverse product categories were selected based on the following criteria:

- (1) they should include both service and physical goods;
- (2) they should include both large and small ticket items;
- (3) they should be widely familiar products about which knowledge should vary; and
- (4) they should possess search, experience, and credence attributes to a greater or lesser degree.

The selected products were clothing, travel services, automobiles, insurance services, sporting equipment, and entertainment tickets. These products are all available for purchase online. The intention was to test for differences in purchase intention between product categories *per se*, as opposed to between specific products.

Data were collected through a questionnaire posted on the World Wide Web for a two-week period commencing on 15 January 1999. In that way only active users of the Internet were able to respond. The sampling frame consisted of a consumer panel of 9,640 US Internet users owned by an online market research

Scale	Number of items	Original study (Cronbach's $\alpha$ )	Current study (Cronbach's $\alpha$ )
Purchase intention (Baker and Churchill, 1977)	3	0.81	0.95
Shopping enjoyment (Bloch <i>et al.</i> , 1986)	5	0.84	0.79
Convenience (Shamdasani and Ong, 1996)	3	0.86	0.70
Personalising shopper (Hawes and Lumpkin, 1984)	3	0.84	0.87
Loyalty to local merchants (Hawes and Lumpkin, 1984)	3	0.76	0.80
Price consciousness (Tat and Schwepker, 1998)	4	0.71	0.74

Note:  $n = 437$

**Table I.**  
Reliability coefficients  
of scales used in  
research

firm. A total of 964 users – or 10 per cent of the sampling frame – were randomly selected, then contacted by e-mail and asked to participate in the research. The e-mail recipients were requested to visit a Web page containing the questionnaire. A total of 440 responses to the online questionnaire were received, of which 437 responses were useable. This represented an overall response rate of 45.64 per cent, which is favourable by comparison with mail surveys (Yu and Cooper, 1983).

Respondents were primarily male (69 per cent) with at least some college education (87 per cent). The majority of respondents (75 per cent) fell between the ages of 25 and 54. Almost half of all respondents ( $n = 219$ ) reported having made at least one purchase via the Internet. To assess potential non-response bias, we compared respondents with non-respondents on the following dimensions: gender, age, income, education, and prior online purchase experience. The only statistically significant difference between the groups was for gender, with a greater proportion of males responding than represented among non-respondents. However, estimates of the gender ratio vary widely across studies of Internet users, with the percentage of female users as low as 35.8 per cent (Georgia Institute of Technology, 1999). Although the effect of non-response bias cannot be discounted entirely, it appears to be minimal.

#### *Analysis*

*H1* was tested using both factor and cluster analysis to estimate whether multiple shopping orientations existed among the sample of Internet shoppers. Principal components factor analysis was used to assess the dimensionality of the shopping orientation scales. This is consistent with similar studies (Darden and Ashton, 1974; Lumpkin, 1985; Stephenson and Willett, 1969; Stone, 1954; Williams *et al.*, 1978).

A non-hierarchical cluster analysis of the entire sample was undertaken based on responses to the core shopping orientation scales. Factor scores, calculated for each of the five shopping orientation scales, were used as the input. The stability of the solution was tested by splitting the sample into two. A *k*-means analysis provided five separate cluster solutions to the first sub-sample, ranging from four to eight clusters. Using the cluster centroids obtained from the five initial solutions, cases from the second sub-sample were classified according to each solution by their Euclidean distance from the cluster centroid vectors. The second sub-sample was then subjected to *k*-means cluster analysis, again extracting five different solutions.

Each of the five solutions was compared to those obtained from the previous classification by cross-tabulation to determine the chance-corrected coefficient of agreement (kappa) between the corresponding solutions. The optimal number of clusters was selected based on the largest value of kappa.

After choosing the most appropriate number of clusters, the entire sample was then subjected to *k*-means analysis to obtain a final solution. These

clusters were interpreted according to the centroids of the shopping orientations within each cluster. A centroid of zero represented a neutral position towards a shopping orientation. Positive centroids were considered to be indicative of the nature of a cluster. The higher the centroid, the more a cluster was interpreted as being oriented towards that construct. Conversely, negative centroids indicated the degree to which a construct was unimportant to members of that cluster.

*H2-H5* were tested in a four-way analysis of variance using repeated measures. Independent variables were gender, prior purchase via the Internet and the cluster solutions derived from the testing of *H1*. The summated scores for intention to purchase each of the product offerings formed the dependent variable. These were treated as repeated measures and the resulting six-level factor was identified as product type. Due to the number of levels involved (i.e. more than two) and the varied nature of the product offerings, we anticipated that the analysis would violate the assumptions of sphericity and compound symmetry. Significant findings in the univariate analyses that involved within subjects measures were therefore subjected to multi-variate tests of significance, specifically Wilks' Lambda, Rao's *R*, Pillai-Bartlett Trace and *V*.

## Findings

*H1* suggested that multiple shopping orientations exist among the population of Internet users who have previously made purchases via the Internet. Results of the principal components factor analysis indicated the dimensionality and discriminant validity of the shopping orientation scales employed. Cluster analysis was performed to determine whether multiple shopping orientations existed among the entire sample of Internet users. Five cluster solutions were tested and the chance corrected coefficient of correlation (kappa) used to determine the optimal number of clusters. The values of kappa for the four, five, six, seven, and eight cluster solutions were 0.56, 0.69, 0.79, 0.9, and 0.64 respectively.

The closer the value of kappa to one, the more reliable the cluster solution. Hence, the seven-cluster solution was preferred. The suitability of the seven-cluster solution was confirmed through a check for face validity. It provided the most efficient and interpretable results. Cluster membership was then determined for those respondents who had made a prior purchase via the Internet. Descriptive statistics of the analysis, showing the number of online purchasers belonging to each cluster, is shown in Table II.

As expected, multiple shopping orientations are identifiable and *H1* is therefore accepted. Results compare favourably with those from prior, non-store shopping orientation studies (Gehrt and Carter, 1992; Shim and Mahoney, 1996) wherein several orientations were also found, of which convenience clusters did not form the largest group.

Members of Cluster 1 revealed moderately high values on the personalising shopper dimension. However, responses to the remaining items were mostly either neutral or negative. Consumers falling into this category were interpreted as personalising shoppers, who ostensibly prefer shopping at places where they are known by staff or receive personalised service. Cluster 1 comprised some 11.87 per cent of Internet shoppers used in the sample ( $n_1 = 26$ ).

High values on the shopping enjoyment factor characterise Cluster 2. Consumers affiliated with this cluster take pleasure in shopping around for their purchases. These individuals are apparently not driven by any shopping motivation other than the pleasure of shopping itself. For these people, shopping is a recreational pursuit. They make up 16.89 per cent of the sample and, along with economic shoppers, form the largest group of Internet shoppers identified in the study ( $n_2 = 37$ ). A suitable description of these consumers would be recreational shoppers.

Price consciousness was the overriding factor in Cluster 3. Consumers belonging to this group are primarily interested in getting the best possible value for their money. They are prepared to forego convenience in order to get a bargain and feel no obligation to shop locally. In describing this cluster, the label "economic shopper", initially used by Stone (1954), could be applied. Cluster 3 comprised 16.89 per cent of the sample ( $n_3 = 37$ ).

Cluster 4 is unique in that values are moderate to high on nearly every core shopping orientation. Such a result indicates that consumers belonging to this group are highly involved in most aspects of the shopping process. They did not attain the highest scores on the shopping enjoyment scale, but could be considered to generally enjoy the shopping process. They also appear to consider personal service an especially important part of the shopping experience. The cluster comprises 12.79 per cent of the sample ( $n_4 = 28$ ) and is described as the involved shopper group.

Cluster 5 is distinguished by its similar values on the convenience, shopping enjoyment, and price dimensions. The cluster suggests that these consumers have a relatively strong preference for acquiring purchases in a convenient manner. However, they also enjoy shopping around to find the best prices.

**Table II.**  
Clusters of online purchasers by shopping orientation

Core shopping orientation	Cluster 1	Cluster 2	Cluster 3	Cluster 4	Cluster 5	Cluster 6	Cluster 7
Enjoyment	-0.629	0.987	-1.088	0.209	0.601	-0.153	-0.139
Loyalty	-0.274	-0.216	-0.210	0.622	-0.085	1.234	-1.329
Price	-1.604	-0.095	0.527	0.551	0.537	-0.447	0.189
Convenience	0.085	-1.083	-0.865	0.458	0.709	0.148	0.930
Personalising	0.407	0.077	-0.224	1.221	-0.873	-0.688	0.086
Number of cases	26	37	37	31	28	33	27
Proportion of sample (%)	11.87	16.89	16.89	14.16	12.79	15.07	12.33

**Note:**  $n = 219$

Cluster 5 constituted 12.79 per cent of Internet shoppers ( $n_5 = 28$ ) and could be called convenience-oriented, recreational shoppers.

Cluster 6 comprised 15.07 per cent of the sub-sample of prior purchasers ( $n_6 = 33$ ). This group is characterised by their preference for patronising local merchants. Associated with this local focus is a desire for convenience, although not a particularly strong influence. In describing this cluster, the label community-oriented shopper could be applied.

Finally, Cluster 7 was characterised by its high scores on the convenience orientation and low scores on virtually every other item. Individuals belonging to this cluster clearly do not enjoy the shopping process and may be considered apathetic towards shopping in general. They are not especially price conscious, although a positive score on the price consciousness scale suggests that they may take it into consideration. Cluster 7 represents 12.33 per cent of the sample of Internet shoppers ( $n_7 = 27$ ). Due to the strong convenience focus and the relative unimportance of most other shopping orientation variables, this cluster was labelled as the apathetic, convenience-oriented shopper.

Results of the univariate analyses to test *H2-H5* are presented in Table III. In *H2* we suggested that an individual's shopping orientation would have a direct effect on that individual's intention to purchase products online. No such effect was found, and the hypothesis is rejected ( $F = 1.28$ ;  $df = 6, 405$ ;  $p > 0.05$ ). *H3-H5* were, by contrast, accepted, with product type having a main effect on purchase intention ( $F = 119.62$ ;  $df = 5, 2,025$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ) as did prior purchase via the Internet ( $F = 17.96$ ;  $df = 1, 405$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ) and gender ( $F = 11.64$ ;  $df = 1, 405$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ). The product most likely to be purchased by

Effect	df	MS effect	MS error	F	p
<i>Main effect</i>					
Prior purchase	1, 405	45.13	2.51	17.96	0.00
Gender	1, 405	29.26	2.51	11.64	0.00
Shopping orientation	6, 405	3.22	2.51	1.28	0.26
Product type <sup>a</sup>	5, 2,025	94.47	0.79	119.62	0.00
<i>Interactions</i>					
1 × 2	1, 405	7.61	2.51	3.03	0.08
1 × 3	6, 405	3.63	2.51	1.44	0.20
1 × 4 <sup>a</sup>	5, 2,025	2.78	0.79	3.52	0.00
2 × 3	6, 405	2.43	2.51	0.97	0.45
2 × 4 <sup>a</sup>	5, 2,025	2.49	0.79	3.16	0.01
3 × 4 <sup>a</sup>	30, 2,025	0.92	0.79	1.17	0.24
1 × 2 × 3	6, 405	2.30	2.51	0.91	0.48
1 × 2 × 4 <sup>a</sup>	5, 2,025	0.55	0.79	0.70	0.62
1 × 3 × 4 <sup>a</sup>	30, 2,025	0.85	0.79	1.08	0.36
2 × 3 × 4 <sup>a</sup>	30, 2,025	0.96	0.79	1.21	0.20
1 × 2 × 3 × 4 <sup>a</sup>	30, 2,025	0.48	0.79	0.60	0.96

**Table III.**  
Univariate results of four-way analysis of variance to examine main effects of gender, prior purchase, product type and shopping orientation on purchase intention

Notes:  $n = 437$ , <sup>a</sup>Mauchly's  $W = 0.048$  ( $df = 14$ ,  $p < 0.01$ )

respondents was entertainment tickets (4.36 on a scale of 1-7) and the least was insurance (2.92). Those who had previously purchased goods or services via the Internet were more likely to have a future intention to purchase than those who had not (3.61 as opposed to 3.30), and men were more likely to state a purchase intention than women (3.58 as opposed to 3.33).

However, as we had anticipated, the model violated the assumptions of sphericity and compound symmetry (Mauchly's  $W = 0.048$ ;  $df = 14$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ), so  $H3$ , relating to product type, and any interactions involving product type, were subjected to multivariate tests of significance. The results of those tests appear in Table IV.

Results of the multivariate tests confirmed the effect of product type on intention to purchase via the Internet (Rao's  $R = 167.19$ ;  $df = 5, 401$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ). We therefore accept  $H3$ . Two interactions were significant in the univariate (between subjects) tests. These were between gender and product type and prior purchase and product type. When subjected to multivariate tests only one of these was significant, that of the interaction between the product type and prior purchase on intention to purchase online (Rao's  $R = 3.40$ ;  $df = 5, 401$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ). For each product type, those who had previously made a purchase via the Internet were more likely to state a future purchase intention than those who had not made such a purchase.

### Discussion

Although the retail literature has produced several studies of in-home shoppers in terms of their shopping orientations (Gehrt and Carter, 1992; Lumpkin, 1985), no prior research has specifically examined shopping orientations among Internet users. This study indicates seven discernible clusters of Internet users on this basis. The seven clusters were represented by either a single orientation or combinations of specific orientations. They are:

- (1) personalising shoppers;
- (2) recreational shoppers;
- (3) economic shoppers;
- (4) involved shoppers;

**Table IV.**  
Results of multivariate tests of significance (within subjects design)

Effect	df	Wilks' Lambda	Rao's $R$	Pillai-Bartlett trace	$V$	$p$
<i>Main effect</i>						
Product type	5, 401	0.32	167.19	0.68	167.19	0.00
<i>Interactions</i>						
Gender $\times$ product	5, 401	0.98	1.37	0.02	1.37	0.23
Prior purchase $\times$ product	5, 401	0.96	3.40	0.04	3.40	0.01

- (5) convenience-oriented, recreational shoppers;
- (6) community-oriented shoppers; and
- (7) apathetic, convenience-oriented shoppers.

Buying or  
browsing?

These findings are consistent with much of the retail literature that suggests consumers may be segmented into relatively heterogeneous groups according to their shopping orientation. The results are, however, in apparent contradiction to other studies (APT Strategies, 1998; Burke, 1998; Georgia Institute of Technology, 1999; Jarvenpaa and Todd, 1997), which suggest that convenience is the primary shopping motivation of those who use the Internet for purchasing. Although a convenience-related dimension was observed, it did not form the largest cluster of respondents.

The significance of such a finding lies in exposing the possibly erroneous assumption that consumers who purchase products online are primarily convenience-oriented shoppers. As the two largest clusters of shoppers identified were recreational shopping-oriented and price-oriented respectively, it appears that online retailers whose primary strategy is based on appealing to consumers' perceptions of convenience may be misguided.

Of the seven groups that emerged from the cluster analysis, the personalising, recreational, economic, community-oriented, and apathetic/convenience shopper groups have all been described in earlier research. Involved shoppers have also been found in some studies (Darden and Ashton, 1974; Williams *et al.*, 1978). These consumers exhibited a positive score on many of the shopping orientation dimensions measured, indicating that they are concerned with most aspects of shopping examined in this research.

Cluster 6, the community-oriented shopper group, is of particular note. It might be construed that there is an inconsistency between consumers' preference to patronise local merchants and their propensity to use online shopping, with its connotations of global access and time and place independence. This apparent contradiction may be reconciled in two ways. First, the diversity of consumer groups suggests that people may intend to use the Internet for purchasing regardless of their fundamental shopping orientation. This is no different from a predominantly economic shopper buying from a catalogue. Second, it is possible that members of this cluster intend to use the Internet to purchase products from local merchants or organisations. The distinction was not made in this case and may represent an avenue for further research.

Cluster 5 was unique to the study. This group demonstrated moderate cluster centroid scores on the convenience, shopping enjoyment, and price-consciousness dimensions. Its fundamental shopping orientation therefore deserves further discussion. It is suggested that these Internet users generally enjoy the shopping process and are prepared to engage in comparison-shopping to find the best bargains. Nevertheless, they have a preference for obtaining their purchases in a convenient manner. Possibly, these

shoppers might limit their browsing activities to shopping areas that are in a convenient location or that have a number of stores in close proximity, such as shopping malls. They may balance the desire to shop around with the practical consideration of making an expedient purchase. Convenience-oriented, recreational shoppers may even prove to be an attractive market segment for firms specialising in in-home shopping, with catalogue, direct mail or Internet offerings providing another purchase option, but with the added convenience of ordering from home.

Several studies have examined the relationship between shopping orientation and purchase frequency (Gehrt and Carter, 1992; Lumpkin and Hawes, 1985; McDonald, 1993; Shim and Mahoney, 1992). No prior research has specifically addressed the relationship with purchase intention via the Internet. We hypothesised that consumers with a stated high intention to purchase products via the Internet will differ from those with a low purchase intention on the basis of shopping orientation. The results of this analysis indicated no significant relationship between any of the shopping orientation clusters and online purchase intention. So, although different orientations exist among Internet users, these do not translate into purchase intention.

Factors that did have an effect on purchase intention were product type, prior purchase via the Internet and gender. While product type is a significant element in this, we do not draw any specific conclusions regarding the differences between individual product categories. Simple classification schemes such as the search-experience-credence model are clearly not satisfactory predictors of online product saleability. It is likely that these factors, although important, interact with other variables, including individual shopping preferences, to determine which products are more prone to online purchase by different groups of consumers.

Furthermore, due to the nature of our selection of product types and our failure to examine purchase intention for these products generally, we are unable to make generalisations from our findings about which products are more suited to Internet retailing than others. What we found is of interest due to the similarity it bears to catalogue shopping research. Although differences in purchase frequencies have been noted, catalogue researchers have been unable to make significant claims about whether one type of product sells better than another in this type of retail buying situation (Lavin, 1992).

The effect of prior purchase on intention to purchase was very strong and also interacted with the product type. This may well be an experience factor related to the uptake of new technology. Just as confidence in the use of automatic teller machines, credit cards and telephone ordering took time to accrue among the public, it seems that this may also be the case with the Internet as a purchasing medium. Our finding with gender and purchase intention confirms earlier studies. It may be related to access, innovation or security concerns. There was no interaction with prior purchase, so we suggest that it may be reduced by experience with this means of buying.

**Managerial implications**

There are challenges to online retailing and profitable Internet retailers are said to be among the minority. Rather than conceptualising the Internet as a purely convenience-oriented patronage mode, retailers may be better served by taking a more holistic approach with their marketing strategies. By acknowledging that multiple groups of Internet shoppers exist and appreciating that they are driven by fundamentally different shopping motivations, online vendors can employ tactics that meet the needs of each of these consumer groups. For example, although convenience is clearly important to many Internet shoppers, the design of a Web site might also incorporate elements that enhance the enjoyment of the product acquisition process or the ability to compare prices with other firms. Given that the two largest groups of online purchasers were recreational shopping-oriented and price-oriented, such an approach could be justified. Some practical suggestions for online retailers to cater to consumers with diverse shopping orientations are outlined in Table V.

Shopper type	Practical strategies
Personalising shoppers	Provide customised home page for each individual E-mail updates on product developments or specials Offer loyalty programs or club memberships
Recreational shoppers	Design visually attractive pages Provide full online version of catalogues or product range Include entertainment such as competitions, sweepstakes, chat rooms, noticeboards Offer product samples
Economic shoppers	Provide up-to-date price comparisons with other retailers (both online and offline) E-mail notification of current offers, specials, or sales Display current offers, specials, or sales on home page Offer discounts to online purchasers
Community-oriented shoppers	Try to overcome obligation to local merchants Highlight advantages of buying online rather than at local stores Divert attention with other moral issues, e.g. donate proportion of sales to charity Create a sense of community by encouraging participation in chat/discussion
Apathetic, convenience-oriented shoppers	Minimise number of pages/clicks needed to order product Include product search function Store personal details in database to make next order easier Offer several delivery options
Involved and convenience-oriented, recreational shoppers	Offer all of the services and features suggested above

**Table V.**  
Practical strategies for  
online retailers

Overall, our findings – which indicate the existence of similar shopping orientations as in other retail spheres and a possible experience relationship with the intention to purchase – suggest that the Internet is very similar to other forms of non-store retailing. This is in direct contrast to the suggestions of other authors, notably Hoffman and Novak (1996), that this is a totally different market with different segments. If we are correct, then it would seem reasonable to expect that the phenomenon of online retailing is best examined within the context of all non-store retailing and should not be treated as a special case. Rather, both management and theorists should treat it as an extension of the existing practice and one that should be absorbed into the mainstream activity.

#### *Limitations and future research*

Some limitations of this study are worth noting. Only Internet users from the USA were recruited for testing, so generalisations about the entire population of Internet users are inappropriate. It would be of value to conduct similar research on other nationalities to obtain a clearer picture of online consumer behaviour via what is, essentially, a global medium. However, the USA comprises the single largest national group of Internet users in the world and is the source of considerable Internet-based technology and practice. As a consequence, the use of such a sample would appear to be justified. In addition, extrapolations from the research are only intended to apply to the population of US Internet users.

We did not use an itemised scale to measure shopping apathy specifically. As mentioned earlier, apathetic shoppers were identified by low scores on multiple shopping orientations rather than by using a direct multi-item measure. The apathetic shopper segment has been frequently ignored in the studies of shopping orientation and the only reliable scale we found that directly measured the construct was a five-item instrument used by Darden and Ashton (1974). However, some of the items used to measure this orientation were made redundant by items contained in the other scales. For example, the response to "... shopping is a terrible waste of time" is largely encompassed by shopping enjoyment and convenience-oriented items.

The select group of products used in the study also limits the degree to which these findings can be generalised. The selection we made was somewhat subjective, albeit wide-ranging. We acknowledge that no one set of products can adequately capture the full range of effects associated with all online product purchases. However, six product categories was deemed the maximum to prevent the questionnaire from becoming too lengthy. Future studies should examine other products to determine if our conclusions are supported across an even broader range of categories.

In addition, we measured online purchase intentions for these products without measuring purchase intent *per se*. To test the strength of our

conclusions, researchers might specifically measure the online purchase intentions of only those consumers who actually intend to purchase the product itself within a future specified time period. With such a limitation, these findings must be interpreted with caution, particularly when drawing managerial implications. Nevertheless, some preliminary conclusions appear warranted.

Finally, general shopping orientations were measured rather than orientations specifically targeting Internet users. The choice was deliberate, with the intention being the identification of fundamental shopping motivations of Internet users regardless of whether they use the Internet during the purchase process. It is possible that different clusters of shoppers would have been found if consumers' orientations were measured in terms of Internet shopping, product categories available online, or different online purchase situations. This is likely to be a rich area for future research, even to the extent of examining specific Internet retailers and products. One approach might be to collect qualitative data through the use of focus groups or depth interviews to identify issues that are of particular relevance to the Internet shopper. Given the relative newness of the Internet as a retail patronage mode, it may be that there are distinctive concerns that should be considered when examining the shopping orientations of online consumers.

However, it has been suggested that retail research should investigate the existence of retail shopping types that can be generalised across retail institutions (Darden and Ashton, 1974). Research that is too specific may suffer from the inapplicability of results to a wider range of circumstances. By treating the sample as consumers first, and as Internet users who use or intend to use the Internet for purchasing second, online retailers can make assumptions about the types of consumers they should be targeting with their marketing efforts.

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