UTILITARIAN OR HEDONIC? A CROSS CULTURAL STUDY IN ONLINE SHOPPING

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Abstract. *With the irreversible effect of globalization, a growing number of websites today sell their products to more than one country. The effects of cross cultural differences on buying behaviors are widely acknowledged. Therefore, a consideration about attracting and retaining online consumers from different countries and cultures is gaining importance. This paper examines the roles of hedonic and utilitarian values in online shopping by comparing cross culturally the Turkish and US consumers. A total of 264 students from Turkey and USA participated in the survey. The findings showed that the online shopping behaviors of Turkish and USA consumers differ according to their hedonic and utilitarian values. While Turkish consumers use online retailers to socialize with others, the USA people use online shopping for relaxation purposes.*

Key words: *Online shopping, hedonic value, utilitarian value, Turkey, USA.*

Introduction

The tendency to shop online is increasing rapidly among buyers across the world, and online sales enable the Internet as a global marketing tool. By using credit cards, it is possible to buy products around the globe (Lightner et al., 2002). The advantageous properties of the Internet motivate e-commerce marketers to seek and attract customers to their websites and to sell a wide variety of goods and services worldwide (Kuhlmeier & Knight, 2005). For this reason, the Internet has become an important tool for the internationalization of the firms, and the antecedents of online purchasing like hedonism and utilitarianism hold implications for the success of the internet-based international marketing.

An online shopper could be motivated simply to find the products s/he needs. But this motive may not be consistent for all shoppers across the spectrum of online market-

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ing. Online shopping may be used to attract other people's attention, to find time to be with peers, or just simply to kill time. Generally speaking, people shop not only for the utilitarian value of the products, but also for pleasure, feeling, aesthetics, emotion, and enjoyment (To, Liao & Lin, 2007). Thus, some people engage in online shopping due to the functionality of the Internet while other shoppers may use it for fun purposes.

Online sales in 2010 generated $200 billion annual sales volume in the US, but this number is only 22.9 billion TL ($13 billion) in Turkey (Bloomberg HT News Site, 2011). This indicates that, while USA is a mature country in terms of e-commerce, Turkey is still at the introductory stage of e-commerce. In this study, the effects of hedonic and utilitarian values in online shopping are expected to differentiate between Turkish and US consumers.

Conceptual Background

Utilitarian and Hedonic Shopping Values

According to Babin et al. (1994), many consumption activities produce both hedonic and utilitarian outcomes. For this reason, there is an increasing need to assess consumers' perceptions of both utilitarian and hedonic shopping values. Some consumers see shopping as work and do not consider the entertaining aspect of shopping. Other consumers, however, view shopping as fun. These consumers shop because they enjoy the activity. Such perspectives reflect utilitarianism and hedonism.

The utilitarian perspective assumes the buyer as a logical problem solver (Sarkar, 2011). According to To et al. (2007), utilitarian motivation shows that shopping starts from a mission or task, and the acquired benefit depends on whether the mission is completed or not or whether the mission is completed efficiently during the process. It is described as critical, rational, decision effective, and goal oriented (Hirschman & Holbrook, 1982; Batra & Ahtola, 1991).

In contrast to the utilitarian perspective, hedonic shopping value is viewed as a positive experience where consumers enjoy an emotionally satisfying experience related to the shopping activity, regardless of whether or not a purchase is made (Kim, 2006). In other words, hedonic shopping value differs from utilitarian value (Fiore et al., 2005). The hedonic aspect of shopping includes happiness, fantasy, awakening, sensuality, and enjoyment. If a consumer has a hedonic motivation, s/he receives benefits from the experiential and emotional aspects of shopping. The underlying reason for why hedonic consumers love to shop is not about gaining the physical object or completing the mission, it is the enjoyment acquired from the shopping process itself.

Hirschman and Holbrook (1982) suggest that the utilitarian and hedonic buying models differ in four main areas: mental constructs, product classes, product usage and individual differences. This idea is the starting point of this study in which the differences between the US and Turkish students are analyzed according to hedonism and utilitarianism in online shopping.

Utilitarian and Hedonic Values for Online Shopping Behavior

Two basic formats of shopping exist in today's shopping environment: store format and non-store format. The internet has become a significant means for carrying out commercial transactions (Sarkar, 2011). Online shopping represents a new way of shopping in comparison to brick and mortar stores. The main motivations for consumers to shop online are diversified selection, convenience, information, customization, interaction and time efficiency (Alba et al., 1997; Ghosh, 1998, Morganosky & Cude, 2000). Understanding the nature of these motivations is critical given the promise that electronic commerce will increase price competition and reduce seller monopoly power through a reduction in buyer search costs (Childers et al., 2001).

When shopping online, consumers may seek both utilitarian benefits, such as ease-of-use and satisfactory outcome, and hedonic benefits, which provide enjoyment of the online experience (Bridges & Florsheim, 2008). According to Blake et al.'s study (2005), almost all of the characteristics referred to earlier are utilitarian based. On the other hand, in terms of hedonic motivation, researches showed that sensual stimulation and the freedom to search are the main shopping motivations for consumers whether for traditional shopping or online shopping (To et al., 2007). Initially, online shoppers were shopping via this new channel because they thought it was more appropriate for meeting their utilitarian needs, such as purchase of commodities where competition was based on price and availability. But in recent years, the utilitarian aspects of online shopping have made way for hedonic value in the online shopping process (Bridges & Florsheim, 2008).

Culture

On a global basis, culture is considered one of the most influential factors that affect consumer motives, attitudes, intentions, and purchases (Jarvenpaa & Tractinsky, 1999). Samiee (2001) stated that "the single most important factor that influences international marketing on the Internet is culture" (p. 297). For this reason, an understanding of the underlying reasons why members of different cultures have different motivations for online shopping should be crucial considering the rapid globalization brought by the Internet.

In most previous cross-cultural researches, cultural differences were analyzed by a number of cultural dimensions identified by Hofstede (1991). The four underlying dimensions of cultural values are: power distance, uncertainty avoidance, individualism/collectivism, and masculinity/femininity. Among these dimensions, individualism/collectivism is thought to be the most important cross-cultural perspective of online shopping motivations as people's motivations are affected by their cultural values.

Individualism-collectivism refers to the extent to which members of a culture tend to have an independent versus interdependent construal of the self (Hofstede, 1980). These cultural values influence consumption related behaviors (Wang, 1999). Collec-

tivism is defined by Triandis (1995, cited in Kacen & Lee, 2002, p. 165) "as a social pattern that consists of individuals who see themselves as an integral part of one or more collectives or in-groups, such as family and co-workers." The heart component of collectivism lies on the assumption that groups tie and commonly obligate behaving as an individual (Oyserman et al., 2002).

Norms and duties imposed by the group often motivate people who belong to collectivist cultures. For these people, the goals of the group have *a priori* importance. They try to emphasize their connectedness with the in-group (Kacen & Lee, 2002). On the contrary, individualism is described by Kacen and Lee (2002) as a social model made up of individuals who see themselves as independent and free. The heart component of individualism lies in the assumption that individuals are independent of one another (Oyserman et al., 2002). For people who belong to more individualist cultures, individual preferences, needs, and personal goals come first, and they highlight rational analysis of their relationships with others (Triandis, 1994). In collectivist cultures, people have the skill of ignoring inner (personal) traits in certain settings due to the propensity to center on group favorites and group harmony.

Consequently, people in collectivist cultures often change their behaviors according to the circumstance or what is "right" for the situation (Kacen & Lee, 2002). In collectivist cultures, a person who puts aside personal feelings and does something in a socially proper behavior is generally seen as more mature (Triandis, 1995). As a result, researchers have found that attitude-intention (Bagozzi et al., 2000; Lee, 2000) and attitude-behavior relationships (Kashima et al., 1992) are weaker in collectivist cultures than in individualist cultures. The management and control of a person's emotions are emphasized more in collectivist cultures than in individualistic cultures (Tsai & Levenson, 1997). For example, member capability to control individual feelings makes certain the continuation of harmony within the group (McConatha, 1993, cited in Kacen and Lee, 2002).

Briefly, culture influences both "feeling rules," how an individual interprets the environment, and "display rules," which emotions are expressed and how they are expressed (Ekman, 1972, cited in Kacen and Lee, 2002). For instance, people from Asian (collectivist) cultures have been found to control negative emotions and only display positive emotions to acquaintances (Gudykunst, 1993). According to Hofstede (2012), Turkey is high on collectivism (34/110) relative to the USA, which is high on individualism (92/110). Thus, it is expected that consumers from these countries will have different hedonic and utilitarian motivations for online shopping (Hofstede, 2012).

The research model in Figure 1 shows that culture is a factor that discriminates utilitarian and hedonic value perceptions of Turkish and American online consumers. For this reason, the following research hypothesis is proposed:

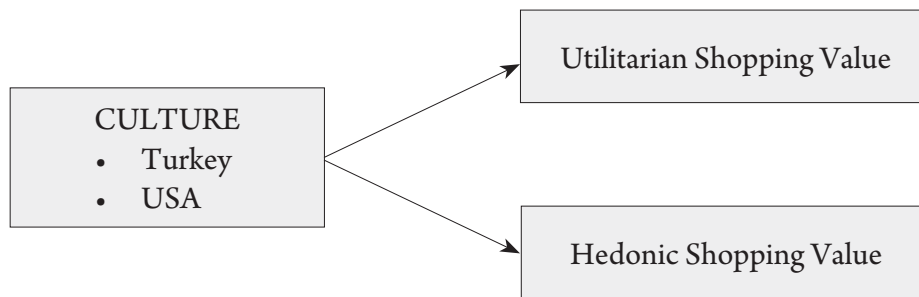H1: Turkish consumers and American consumers will differ based on their online shopping motivations.

FIGURE 1. **Research Model**

Data and Analysis

Sample

To test the hypothesis, a survey was conducted. Students from universities in Turkey and the USA were asked to participate in a paper-based questionnaire. The 264 respondents were undergraduate students from the business administration departments; 121 of those students were from the USA (Chicago), a country embracing individualism, and 143 were from Turkey (Istanbul), a country Hofstede deems as collectivistic.

Given the nature of the study topic, only those students who indicated they had used the web for shopping were allowed to participate in the survey. University students comprised the sample group since they exhibit relatively homogeneous characteristics and because they are more likely to shop on the Internet (Browne et al., 2004). The participants were young college students with similar fields of study. Thus, we expected less variation in their age and education relative to the general public. This ensured the added benefit of reducing alternate sources of variance, thus minimizing noise.

Demographics of the respondents revealed that 87 of 143 Turks were male, as were 66 of the 121 Americans. Almost all of the respondent ages ranged between 18 and 25. In order to test if there is a significant difference in demographic profiles of the two groups, a Mann-Whitney U test was used. The genders were equally distributed and were similar across contexts (sig.: 0.303). Also, the average age of the respondents appeared similar across contexts (sig.: 0.545).

Measures

Multiple items were used to measure hedonic and utilitarian values. The items of utilitarian and hedonic values were from the scale developed by To et al. (2007). The hedonic value scale has 18 items and the utilitarian value scale has 19 items. Hedonic value is used in this study with its five dimensions and utilitarian value with six dimensions. Those 37 items were measured using a five point Likert scale (1 = strongly agree, 2 = agree, 3 = neither agree nor disagree, 4 = disagree, 5 = strongly disagree). The questionnaire also included topics related to the individual profiles of the participants (i.e., gender, age), Internet usage patterns (e.g., duration of the Internet usage, how frequently the consumer obtains information on products he/she plans to buy, how much the consumer spent on e-shopping in the last six months).

To ensure that the questionnaire was understood, it was tested on a small number of respondents to assess the possibility of misinterpretation as well as any spelling or grammatical errors. The suggestions were subsequently incorporated into the final questionnaire.

Results

First, the validities and reliabilities of the scales were tested for both data. In order to validate the measurement properties of the hedonic and utilitarian shopping value scale, confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was conducted. The model was refined by eliminating the items exhibiting the largest standardized residuals (Broekhuizen, 2006). A total of three items were removed from the hedonic motives scale. The fit of the confirmatory factor analysis models is assessed on a number of fit indices, including chi-square, relative chi square, goodness of fit (GFI), comparative fit index (CFI), normed fit index (NFI), Root Mean Square of Approximation (RMSEA) (Hair et al., 2010; Kline, 2005; Raykov & Marcoulides, 2006). The results of the CFA are shown in Table 1. All measures exceeded the recommended levels, and the root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) was less than 0.08 (Hair et al., 2010). Overall, the measurement model represents a good fit with the data.

TABLE 1. **CFA for Hedonic and Utilitarian Motives on Both Datasets**

		X2/DF	CFI	RMSEA
HEDONIC	Turkey Dataset	1.868	0.931	0.078
	USA Dataset	1.870	0.950	0.085
UTILITARIAN	Turkey Dataset	1.686	0.909	0.070
	USA Dataset	1.613	0.949	0.071
	Recommended Level	< 2.00	> 0.90	< 0.08

The reliability of each construct scale was assessed by computing Cronbach's alpha coefficient. The Cronbach's alphas for hedonic values were found to be 0.873 for Turkey and 0.913 for the USA sample. The Cronbach's alphas for utilitarian values were found to be 0.811 for Turkey and 0.922 for the USA. All of them were over 0.70, the generally accepted Cronbach's alpha coefficient (Hair et al., 2010).

Cultural Differences in Hedonic and Utilitarian Values

The main objective in the data analysis was an examination of the responses so as to discern possible patterns. In an effort to explain the differences between sample subjects who had made online purchases in Turkey and those who had purchased in the USA, a discriminant analysis of hedonic and utilitarian values according to nationality was attempted using the five hedonic value dimensions (Adventure, Value, Idea, Social, Gratification) and six utilitarian value dimensions (Cost Saving, Convenience, Selection, Information Availability, Lack of Sociality, Customized Products/Service). The

discriminant function was significant based on the Wilks' lambda test. As seen in Table 2, Wilks' lambda for function 1 is significant with a value of l= 0.717; p< 0.00 and displays a canonical correlation of 0.532. Therefore, H_1 is accepted.

TABLE 2. **Summary of Discriminant Analysis Results**

Function	Wilks' Lambda	Eigenvalue	% of Variance	Canonical Correlation	Chi-square	df	Sig.
1	0.717	.394	100	0.532	85.199	11	0.000

a. First 1 canonical discriminant functions were used in the analysis.

Table 3 shows the mean values of the Turkish and American students, and the significant differences between the hedonic and utilitarian value dimensions. Five of the eleven dimensions were found insignificant: "Adventure" and "Idea" from hedonic value, "Convenience", "Information Availability" and "Customized Products/Services" from utilitarian value.

TABLE 3. **Mean Comparison of Variables**

Hedonic and Utilitarian Items	Turkey Mean	USA Mean	p
Adventure (H.V.)	3.08	3.08	0.993
Value (H.V.)	**1.96**	**2.37**	**0.000**
Idea (H.V.)	3.22	3.08	0.243
Social (H.V.)	**3.30**	**3.66**	**0.000**
Gratification (H.V.)	**3.87**	**3.38**	**0.000**
Cost Saving (U.V.)	**2.22**	**2.49**	**0.004**
Convenience (U.V.)	1.93	1.94	0.954
Selection (U.V.)	**1.70**	**1.95**	**0.007**
Information Availability (U.V.)	1.92	1.95	0.743
Lack of Sociality (U.V.)	**2.80**	**2.43**	**0.001**
Customized Products/Services (U.V.)	2.53	2.55	0.743

* Respondents evaluated the hedonic and utilitarian values on a five-point Likert scale (1: strongly agree; 5: strongly disagree), H.V.: Hedonic Value U.V.: Utilitarian Value

According to the group means, Turkish students have higher mean values for value, social, cost saving, and selection dimensions. The US students have greater mean values for gratification and lack of sociality dimensions. Those results indicate that Turkish students use the Internet for shopping when there are sales and they enjoy hunting for bargains most of the time. They also see Internet shopping as a kind of socialization, since they exchange information and share experiences with their friends while shopping. Turkish students think that they save money when they use the Internet for shopping and also they think that they can access to many merchandisers and brands by

using the Internet for shopping. On the other hand, US students think that Internet shopping is a way to relieve stress and it makes them feel good when they are in a down mood. Contrary to Turkish students who see the Internet shopping as a tool for socializing, US students see this kind of shopping as a way to avoid social interaction with others.

In order to determine the differences between the Turkish and the US students on the function, group centroids of the discriminant function were noted (Table 4). Centroids are defined as discriminant scores for each group (Turkish and the US) on a function and indicate the distance of the group in standard deviation units from the zero mean of the discriminant function (Ahmed, 1991). If there is a great difference between the centroid of one group and the centroid of another along a discriminant function axis, then the discriminant function separates the two groups. In Table 4, American students' centroid (0.680) is the strongest on discriminant function 1, followed by Turkish students (-0.575).

The discriminant function, also known as a classification criterion, was estimated by measuring generalized squared distance. Table 5 below shows that 76.5 percent of subjects were classified correctly by the discriminant function. When comparing the correct classification assignments of 76.5 percent with the expected classification of 50 percent, the function demonstrates adequate prediction (Hair et al., 2010). This means that the hedonic and utilitarian value dimensions used in the study successfully discriminated Turkish and American students.

TABLE 4. **Functions at Group Centroids**

Functions at Group Centroids	
Nationality	Function
	1
Turkey	-.575
USA	.680

Unstandardized canonical discriminant functions evaluated at group means

TABLE 5. **Classification Results**

Classification Results					
		Gender	Predicted Group Membership		Total
			Turkey	USA	
Original	Count	Turkey	113	30	143
		USA	32	89	121
	%	Turkey	79.0	21.0	100.0
		USA	26.4	73.6	100.0

a. 76.5% of original grouped cases correctly classified.*

* "The classification accuracy should be at least one-fourth greater than that achieved by chance. For example, if chance accuracy is 50 percent, the classification accuracy should be 62.5 percent (62.5%=1.25x50%)" (Hair et al., 2010, p. 366).

Conclusions and Recommendations

This study was conducted in order to explore the differences between Turkish and US internet shoppers' hedonic and utilitarian values. The results of the study confirmed differences between the two groups. Turkish participants had higher hedonic value perceptions in general. The utilitarian value dimensions were also higher for Turkish participants when compared to the US participants.

The Turkish online shoppers who participated in this research shop from the Internet when there are sales; they enjoy looking for discounts while shopping online and enjoy hunting for bargains when shopping online. They think that this way of shopping is valuable for them. So, online websites allowing for price negotiations may provide a more satisfying shopping environment for them (Lightner et al., 2002).

While interactions in the real world shopping are mainly based on face to face activities between consumers and service personnel, interactions in electronic commerce take place mainly through the retailer's website (Park & Kim, 2003). This makes the channel asocial in terms of social interaction with others. But, on the other hand, in some websites consumers could take the recommendations of others or chat with the personnel to ask questions about the products they consider buying. This feature of online shopping is also perceived different across Turkish and US students. Turkish participants think that they could develop friendships and extend personal relationships by this way. So, they see this channel as a way to socialize more than the US online shoppers. But, US participants use online shopping to avoid social interaction with others. This way of shopping is also more cost saving and provides more selection for Turkish participants. But, the US online shoppers use this channel because it makes them to feel better and to relieve their stress.

The findings of this paper show that different cultures have different motives for shopping online. As known, Turkish culture is a collectivist culture, whereas the US culture is an individualistic culture (Hofstede, 2012). This distinction could be seen in this study. While Turkish participants see online shopping as a way to socialize, US participants use it to avoid social interaction. So, the findings indicate that the online retailers selling products/services to Turkish consumers should take actions to increase social interaction between people. They may provide their consumers the opportunity of speaking and discussing with other consumers who are shopping at the same time with them. So, those people who are planning to buy products could share their experiences with each other by this way. This could be made by using social media channels. As the US online shoppers see this kind of shopping as a way to relax and to avoid interaction with others, online retailers selling products/services to them should make online shopping more entertaining. They could add new features to their websites, so that their customers have a good time during their shopping trip.

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