

Rural Consumers' Attitudes Toward Television and Internet for Information Search and Product Purchase

Consumer technology exposure experiments were conducted in six states. Consumers who had never shopped using the Internet or a home shopping network were given a pre-assessment, exposed to the technology, then given a post-assessment. A positive change in attitudes toward Internet shopping was found.

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The growing importance of electronic shopping is evident in the U.S. economy. Little has been known about how rural consumers incorporate alternative formats and technologies into their shopping habits and patterns. It was unclear whether rural consumers are using alternative formats for shopping. If they are using alternative shopping formats, what is their satisfaction with availability and access to goods via electronic means? It was also unknown whether rural consumers would be more likely to adopt alternative shopping modes if they knew more about how to access and use them. The purpose of this study was to gain an understanding of rural consumer shopping patterns and emerging attitudes toward use of television and Internet shopping.

Procedure

Consumer technology-exposure experiments were conducted in multiple states. Criteria for participation in this study included: (1) residing in or around communities with populations of 10,000 or less, (2) being 18 years of age or older, and (3) never having shopped or obtained purchase information from either the Internet or a home shopping network. Participants represented a variety of ages, occupations, income levels, and both males and females. Participants were asked to complete a pre-assessment instrument determining demographic characteristics, attitudes toward use of technology for shopping and information search, and attitudes toward use of the Internet and television for information search and purchase of clothing, carpet and drapery, food, furniture, and bed and bath products. Following the initial measure of attitudes, participants were exposed to various electronic media including retail web sites and a television shopping videotape. After exposure, attitudes were re-assessed. Addresses and telephone numbers were collected as consumers participating in these experiments will be contacted again in two years as a follow-up to their use of technology for shopping and information search.

Results

Based on preliminary findings, results indicate positive changes in consumer attitudes toward purchases via Internet shopping. Attitudes toward purchases via television remained unchanged after the consumer technology exposure experiments. Preliminary consumer post-test beliefs toward shopping via the internet were more positive than were beliefs toward shopping via television. The measured beliefs included the usefulness, risk, convenience, expense, difficulty, and enjoyment of both shopping methods. Consumers reported greater intention to purchase clothing, carpet and drapery, food, furniture, and bed and bath products via the Internet.

Endnotes

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