When the Wait Isn’t So Bad: The Interacting Effects of Web Site Delay, Familiarity, and Breadth

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Abstract

Although its popularity is widespread, the World-Wide Web is well known for one particular drawback: its frequent delay when moving from one page to another. This experimental study examined whether delay and two other Web site design variables (site depth and content familiarity) have direct and interactive effects on user performance, attitudes, and behavioral intentions. An experiment was conducted with 160 undergraduate business majors in a completely counterbalanced fully factorial design that exposed them to two Web sites and asked them to browse the sites for 9 pieces of information. Results showed that all three factors have strong direct impacts on user attitudes and performance, leading to behavioral intentions, as predicted. A significant 3-way interaction was found between all three factors on attitudes and performance, and strong 2-way interactions were found between all pairs of factors on performance, also as predicted. The negative attitude and performance effects of delay appear to be reduced by breadth and familiarity together, but only performance is enhanced by all possible two-way interactions. Additional research is needed to discover other factors interacting with delay, other effects of delay, and under what amounts of delay these effects occur.

Keywords: electronic commerce, response time, web site design, attitudes, performance
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