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An Experimental Study of Persuasion on the Internet: A Functional Approach to Attitudes Toward Internet Advertising

Chan-pyo Hong
The members of the Committee approve the dissertation of CHAN-PYO HONG defended on August 17, 2006.

_______________________________
Laura M. Arpan
Professor Directing Dissertation

_______________________________
Ronald E. Goldsmith
Outside Committee Member

_______________________________
Stephen D. McDowell
Committee Member

_______________________________
Arthur A. Raney
Committee Member

Approved:

_______________________________
Stephen D. McDowell, Chair, Department of Communication

_______________________________
John K. Mayo, Dean, College of Communication

The Office of Graduate Studies has verified and approved the above named committee members.
I dedicate this dissertation to Soon-kyom Hong, my late father as well as a life-long learner, who never failed to provide me with persistent support in my pursuit of learning.
It has been a long journey. During this voyage, numerous persons have helped me to find a light in the dark sea of uncertainty. I really feel fortunate to have an opportunity to work with the following great persons.

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I would like to thank Drs. Barry Sapolsky and Howard Goldstein for their generous support in allowing me to use computer labs for my dissertation research. Many instructors were also generous in helping me to collect data for this dissertation. I would like to sincerely thank Farhood Basiri, Maria Inglessis, Jason McKahan, Jason Smith, Shree Venkatachalam, Mr. Robert Aronoff, Mr. Hyunkak Cho, Mr. Barry Solomon, Mr. Ronald Thomas, Drs. Bok Baik, Daekwan Kim, and Carlos Valdez. I would also like to thank all the administrative staff in the department including Mrs. Mary Ealey, Tanla Bilir, Nathashia Hinson-Turner, and Sharon Lamb for their kind services and warm smiles.
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ABSTRACT

Consumers’ search for information on the Internet is predicted to become the most popular activity associated with commerce on the Internet. Recent studies have revealed a growing number of car buyers who research their automotive purchases on the Internet. However, little knowledge about Internet advertising related to online consumer information search has been accumulated in the area of Internet advertising research. To date, we have rarely seen studies, specifically experimental ones, of attitudes toward Internet advertising using attitude function theory, although this is a recently re-highlighted research approach to persuasive communication. Hence, the main purpose of this dissertation study was to advance the understanding of consumers’ attitudes toward Internet advertising as persuasive communication by the extension and the application of attitude function theory to the new medium.

On the basis of a comprehensive literature review, the analysis of recent research on Internet advertising as persuasive communication identified a knowledge gap in Internet advertising research: Previous studies have virtually ignored the effects of advertising messages in terms of consumers’ psychological needs and associated attitudes in order to understand persuasive communication effects on the Internet. Attitude function theorists predict that the effectiveness of persuasive communication messages will be greater when the messages match attitude functions of message recipients than when the messages do not match such attitude functions. Thus, applying attitude function theory to Internet advertising research area, this study tested functional matching hypotheses in relation to a new media context such as the Internet. Following a growing, alternative approach to the study of Internet advertising, this dissertation examined the persuasive communication effects of commercial websites as a format of Internet advertising.

A focus group discussion and two pilot studies were conducted as the preliminary research for this dissertation. Two main experiments were performed to test research hypotheses and answer the research question for this study. Attitude function-based websites related to car
information search were constructed as the stimulus materials for the main experiments. Experiment 1 tested functional matching hypotheses. Experiment 2 replicated Experiment 1 and also manipulated corporate credibility as a special case of source credibility in a form of publicity. Attitude function was measured via the attention-to-social-comparison-information (ATSCI) scale as the revised self-monitoring scale in both experiments. Multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) tests were conducted for the statistical analysis of data, mainly because previous traditional and Internet advertising research suggested empirical evidence that attitude toward the site, attitude toward the brand, and behavioral intention to revisit the site as the dependent variables in this study are significantly correlated.

The results of the MANOVA test for Experiment 1 did not find empirical evidence suggesting a significant functional matching effect on the combination of three dependent variables. On the other hand, the MANOVA results for Experiment 2 found empirical evidence that there was a significant multivariate main effect of corporate credibility on the combination of three dependent variables even though there were no significant interaction effects among attitude function (as measured by the ATSCI scale), attitude function-based website appeals, and corporate credibility on the combination of the dependent variables. Discussion of results provided theoretical explanations for inconsistent findings from the experiments. Limitations of this study are discussed, and several suggestions for future research are provided.
CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

The Growth of the Number of U.S. Consumers on the Internet

The last decade has witnessed an explosion in the use of the Internet with the advent of the World Wide Web (WWW or the Web), “a hypertextual, multimedia interface to the Internet” (Adams & Clark, 2001, p. 4). The Internet’s global and versatile nature has attracted people worldwide. People communicate with each other across the nations, search for a variety of information, get news fast, find entertainment, build online communities, and buy products without leaving their homes (Colby & Parasuraman, 2002; Flanagan & Metzger, 2001; Horrigan & Rainie, 2002; Karson & Korgaonkar, 2001; Lebo, 2003).

According to Ramsey’s (2003) report, 162 million people were estimated to be Internet users in the United States in 2003, and Internet users comprised 61.1% of the U.S. population over 14 years old in the same year. In 2004, the number of U.S. Internet users was estimated to be 168 million, and the online penetration was estimated to be 62.7% of the population aged 14 or over in the United States. Among U.S. Internet users in 2003, 101.7 million people were online shoppers “who browse, research or compare products online” (Ramsey, 2003, p. 11), and in 2004, the number of the online shoppers was projected to increase to 108.4 million people. In 2003, 81.2 million consumers in the United States had made at least one purchase on the Internet within the last year, and the number of people in this group was projected to rise to 86.5 million in 2004 (Ramsey, 2003, pp. 10-11).

The number of online buyers in the United States is projected to grow steadily in the future, and this growth projection can also be translated as the continuous growth of business-to-consumer (or B2C) e-commerce in the United States. Further, the growth of business-to-consumer e-commerce can be seen as the basis for the possible growth of Internet advertising targeted to online consumers. Based on these assumptions, this dissertation study aims to increase understanding of consumers’ attitudes toward Internet advertising.

The Growth of Internet Advertising Budgets and Revenues by Type

Each year more brick-and-mortar businesses use the Internet as their advertising medium. A recent American Advertising Federation survey of advertising industry leaders showed that a
relatively small but steadily growing amount of money is allocated to Internet advertising. In 2004, 8.53% of overall media budget was allocated to Internet advertising, and it is projected that 17% of the budget will be used for Internet advertising in 2007 (Atlantic Media Company, 2004, November, p. 9). In addition, according to a recent report by Nielsen/NetRatings, the number of the “traditional business model companies” increased from 48 in 2000 to 71 in 2002 among the top 100 online advertisers, and those 100 companies paid 63.4% of all Internet advertising expenses during the fourth quarter of 2002 (Buchwalter & Martin, 2003, February 3, p. 6).

Based on aggregated industry data compiled by PricewaterhouseCoopers, the Interactive Advertising Bureau (IAB) reports quarterly Internet advertising revenues in the United States. The IAB report found that 51% of all revenues came from consumer brand advertisers as the growth leader in the Internet advertising industry (Interactive Advertising Bureau, 2006, April, p. 10). Within the consumer category, retail (47%) followed by the automotive industry (20%), was the industry spending the most on online ads in the United States. In terms of Internet advertising type, “search” advertising using search engines and “display” advertising or banner ads became the growth leaders of 2005 Internet advertising, commanding 41% and 34%, respectively, of revenues (see Table 1 for the details). It has been suggested that car buyers tend to conduct intensive product information searches and that the new information environment shaped by the Internet helps consumers to search for automotive information with ease and with less or virtually no cost. Thus, this dissertation will study consumer responses to Internet automotive advertising related to their online information search. In the next section, automotive websites and advertising on the Internet will be discussed.
Table 1
Internet Advertising Revenues by Advertising Types
Source: Interactive Advertising Bureau (2006, April)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Advertising Types</th>
<th>2004</th>
<th>2005</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Search Ads</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Display Ads (Banners)</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classifieds</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E-mail</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lead Generation/Referrals</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total revenues</td>
<td>$9.6 billion</td>
<td>$12.5 billion</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Automotive Websites and Automotive Advertising on the Internet

A recent report by Media Audit (2003) identified AutoTrader.com and Cars.com as the major players in the surveyed markets. According to the survey, 2.4 million visitors searched automotive information at AutoTrader.com, while 1.3 million people visited Cars.com, which is run by six newspaper organizations. However, research by Borrell Associates Inc. (2003, October) provided a different but comprehensive picture of top automotive web sites. The major portal websites including eBay Motors attracted more visitors to their websites in terms of unique visitor numbers or the possible audience size for advertising, while AutoTrader.com was the first from “the all-important listings and dealer-relationship perspective” (Borrell Associates Inc., 2003, October, p. 1). In 2003, AutoTrader.com, a single website, was expected to earn
$120 million in revenues, whereas newspapers as a whole category were expected to earn only $150 million.

In terms of car advertising dollars spent on the medium to date, automotive advertising on the Internet still gains a small portion of overall spending on automotive ads, even though more consumers visit websites for their cars. Borrell’s report indicated that only 4.5% of automotive advertising money went to Internet advertising and websites, while the number of automotive information seekers is growing rapidly (Borrell Associates Inc., 2003, October; Jupiter Research, 2004; Shields, 2005). So, there is a demand for increased automotive advertising on the Internet. Recently, Jupiter Research projected the annual growth of automotive ad spending on the Internet. According to Jupiter Research’s projection, U.S. online automotive ad spending by automakers will reach $231 million in 2007 (Elkin, 2002, December 18). It should be noted that there is a considerable growth possibility for advertising budgets on automotive advertising on the Internet because the automotive industry, including manufacturers and dealers, is the leader in U.S. advertising spending in general. In the first half (from January to June) of 2005, three automotive companies were listed in top 10 advertisers, and the automotive industry was the number one in the top 10 product categories in U.S. advertising expenditures (Nielsen Monitor-Plus, 2005, August 30).

The selection of the automobile as the product category for this study is based on the following assumptions: Automobiles are expensive for most consumers, and potential buyers will try to search for automotive information to ease their purchase decision of a product with a high financial risk. Many car buyers will research their auto purchase on the Internet. In the next section, the growth of automotive information searches on the Internet will be discussed.

The Growth of Automotive Information Search on the Internet

Studies have revealed that a growing number of car buyers research their automotive purchases on the Internet. According to a survey by Forrester Research, the Internet has become the most important source of car information for new automobile buyers. In 2003, new car buyers in the U.S. considered non-car company websites (68%) and car company websites (59%) to be the most important sources of automotive information (Berkowitz, 2004, January 9). Another survey by Media Audit (2003) reported that more than 20% of the

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* The first part of this assumption is partially supported by the findings of a focus group discussion that was a preliminary study for this dissertation. See Chapter 3 for the details of focus group findings. The second part of this assumption is supported by studies examined in this section.
Internet users in 49 U.S. metro markets searched automotive websites. According to a report by Jupiter Research (2004), 82% of online car shoppers visited more than one website in the research process for car shopping. Recently, a Keynote Systems study also reaffirms the increasing use of auto-related websites as a research tool among car shoppers. Seventy-six percent of the respondents in the study visited automotive manufacturers’ sites while 35% of them showed “a potential interest in purchasing a car via the Web” (Shields, 2005, para. 6).

**Problem Statement and Justification of Study**

Several trends in Internet advertising seem to provide information leading to the justification for this dissertation: The continuous growth in the number of U.S. online consumers and the growth of Internet advertising industry have led to the increasing need to understand consumers’ attitudes toward Internet advertising. However, little knowledge about Internet advertising related to online consumer information search has been accumulated in the Internet advertising research area, mainly because it is a fairly new field even within the developing Internet advertising research. Consumers’ search for information on the Internet will become the most popular activity associated with commerce on the Internet, because information searches are “an essential tool in navigating the virtual marketplace” (Choi, Stahl, & Whinston, 2003, p. 32). In other words, the Internet can be also considered a pull medium “where potential customers are pulled by the information on Web store fronts and advertisements” (Shim, Qureshi, Siegel, & Siegel, 2000, p. 37). In addition, “the interactive, ‘pull’ nature” of Internet advertising that can deliver in-depth information searched by consumers “makes it less irritating to consumers than the ‘push’ nature” of advertising that can be found in the other media (Ducoffe, 1996; Schlosser, Shavitt, & Kanfer, 1999, p. 51). As discussed before, studies have indicated the growing number of people searching for information about automobiles on the Internet (Berkowitz, 2004; Borrell Associates Inc., 2003; Media Audit, 2003). Consumers searching for auto information online prior to purchase can be considered a possible target audience of automotive advertising on the Internet. Thus, the growing number of car information seekers on the Internet increases the need to study automotive advertising on the Internet, which is projected to grow gradually (Elkin, 2002, December 18).

As Thomson, Kruglanski, and Spiegel (2000) acknowledged, “the lion’s share of current persuasion work has been inspired” by the theoretical approach emphasizing the cognitive aspects of persuasion such as the heuristic-systematic model (HSM) and the elaboration
likelihood model (ELM) (p. 62). Thus, a number of researchers have employed this cognitive process-centered approach to understand attitudes. There have been few exceptions to this research trend, even in the study of attitudes toward Internet advertising (e.g., Cho, 1999; Hershberger, 2003; Karson, 1998; Karson & Korgaonkar, 2001; Shamdasani, Stanaland, & Tan, 2001; Singh & Dalal, 1999). Research efforts made by the process-centered approach such as the ELM or the HSM tend to focus mainly on answering “how” questions about persuasion as attitude change, thus oftentimes neglecting “why” questions about our understanding of human attitudes. This neglect may keep us from understanding attitudes in a broad scope and in balance. Therefore, this dissertation will contribute to “a better balance between cognitive and motivational themes” in contemporary attitude theory (Eagly & Chaiken, 1993, p. 694) by applying attitude function theory to the study of persuasive communication in the new media context and by dealing with motivational underpinnings in persuasion research trying to answer the “why” and “when” questions about attitude change (Lavine & Snyder, 1996, p. 581).

Furthermore, to date, we have rarely seen studies, specifically experimental ones, of attitudes toward Internet advertising using attitude function theory as a recently re-highlighted research approach to persuasive communication (Shavitt, 1989), even though some recent studies have used attitude function theory either to investigate the relationship between perceived product categories and consumers’ choice of advertising media including the Internet (Yoon & Kim, 2001) or to analyze the content of automotive company websites in cross-cultural research context (Hong, Park, & Kim, 2005). Therefore, employing the methods suggested by attitude function theory, which have been less often applied in Internet communication research, this dissertation will contribute to a better understanding of consumers’ attitudes toward Internet advertising and will attempt to augment knowledge in the area of contemporary attitude theory.

To summarize, this dissertation will address the following problems: the paucity of academic knowledge about Internet advertising related to online consumer information search despite recent industry data indicating the remarkable growth of Internet advertising related to online information search and the growing number of car information seekers on the Internet; the current emphasis in persuasion research on cognitive approaches, which tend to neglect motivational underpinnings of attitudes; and the limited number of experimental studies of attitudes toward Internet advertising using attitude function theory.
Purpose of the Dissertation

The main purpose of this dissertation study is to advance the understanding of consumers’ attitudes toward Internet advertising as persuasive communication by the extension and the application of attitude function theory to the new medium. More specifically, there are two purposes of the dissertation study: 1) At the theory application level, this dissertation study is designed to assess the applicability of the functional approach to persuasion in a new media context such as the Internet. 2) From the practical perspective, this investigation is aimed to provide suggestions about targeted Internet advertising message strategies based on consumers’ psychological needs.
CHAPTER 2
LITERATURE REVIEW

Internet Advertising

On October 27, 1994, the Internet, which was originally built as a research network, found its commercial potential when HotWired (http://www.hotwired.com), the online alter ego of Wired magazine, signed up 14 advertisers for the first advertising on the Internet (Barnes, 2003; Kaye & Medoff, 2001). Since then, advertisers have noticed the remarkable growth of the online consumer population and have begun to consider seriously the Internet as one of the important marketing communication channels through which advertising or promotional messages are delivered to their target audience (Bush, Bush, & Harris, 1998).

The Definition of Internet Advertising

Several terms have been coined and used to describe advertising on the Internet. Among them, some terms have been used more than others in academic literature as well as in trade publications. They include interactive advertising, Internet advertising, online advertising, and Web advertising. This diversity of the term that denotes advertising on the Internet seems to reflect the dynamically evolving nature of the Internet as a nascent marketing communication medium. So, even the definition of Internet advertising follows a similar path (I will use the term Internet advertising hereafter to denote advertising on the Internet in general).

Internet advertising has been defined in diverse ways by advertising researchers as follows: “any form of commercial content available on the Internet that is designed by businesses to inform consumers about a product or service” (Schlosser et al., 1999, p. 36) or “all paid-for space on a Web site or in an e-mail” (Strauss & Frost, 2001, p. 221), or that which “occurs when a company pays or makes some sort of financial or trade arrangement to post its logo or product information with the intent of generating sales or brand recognition on someone else’s Internet space” (Kaye & Medoff, 2001, p. 17).

In this dissertation, Internet advertising is broadly defined as Internet content paid for by an identifiable advertiser with persuasive intent to achieve marketing communication goals. This proposed definition of Internet advertising is consistent with the majority opinions from a recent panel discussion of the redefinition of advertising in general by a group of advertising experts in the United States (Richards & Curran, 2002). According to Richards and Curran (2002),
“advertising is a paid, mediated form of communication from an identifiable source, designed to persuade the receiver to take some action, now or in the future” (p. 74).

**Benefits of Internet Advertising**

A number of scholars have enumerated several benefits of Internet advertising (Ducoffe, 1996; Kaye & Medoff, 2001; Korgaonkar & Wolin, 2002; Plesmacker, Geuens, & Bergh, 2001; Schlosser & Kanfer, 1999; Yoon & Kim, 2001; Wells, Burnett, & Moriarty, 2003):

1) Continuous exposure to a global market: Internet advertising allows advertisers to deliver their messages across the world with “24-hour-a-day presence” (Berthon, Pitt, & Watson, 1996, p. 44; Korgaonkar & Wolin, 2002) and a high speed that traditional media can hardly match.

2) Targeting specific consumers: Advertisers can place Internet advertising such as a banner ad on websites that will draw the attention of a precisely targeted audience (Atlantic Media Company, 2004, November, p. 10). For example, virtual communities such as blogs, online chatrooms, and newsgroups on the Internet can be used to deliver advertising messages tailored for the intended consumers because “common needs and interests” of these specific consumers can be identified by the online services they use (Sangwan, 2005, p. 2).

3) Easy updating of ads: The cost of maintaining Internet advertising is less than that of advertising through traditional media (Hoffman, Novak, & Chatterjee, 1995). Therefore, updating and changing ad content on the Internet can be relatively easily and quickly done, because Internet advertising is practically free from space and time limitations (Chen & Wells, 1999).

4) Customization of advertising content: The Internet combined with database marketing allows advertisers to customize advertising messages, making the consumer think the advertisement is prepared just for her or him. For example, registered users of Amazon.com are greeted with their names when they revisit the site. At this moment, the personalised or one-to-one marketing communication messages such as advertising or sales promotions can be delivered to the visitors (Goldsmith, 1999; Peppers & Rogers, 1997). Therefore, the effectiveness of the advertising can be boosted.
5) Facilitation of the purchase process: By linking the ad to their online order web page, advertisers can facilitate consumers’ product purchase processes and can get immediate sales, which would be delayed when traditional advertising media are used.

6) Delivery of multiple modes of communication: Hypertext used in the Internet allows advertisers to deliver advertising messages in a multimedia format. Thus, Internet advertising provides advertisers with an opportunity “to increase effectiveness by synergistically conveying different aspects of a message in each mode” (Gallagher, Foster, & Parsons, 2001, p. 58).

Formats of Internet Advertising

Internet advertising format refers to the manner in which advertising appears on the Internet (Rodgers & Thorson, 2000). Some advertising researchers have tried to classify different kinds of growing Internet advertising even though there seems to have been a lack of consensus on the evolution of Internet advertising (Kaye & Medoff, 2001; Steinbock, 2000; Wells et al., 2003). Some researchers have included even corporate websites in the realm of Internet advertising (e.g., Ducoffe, 1996; Faber, Lee, & Nan, 2004; Hwang, McMillan, & Lee, 2003; Karson & Korgaonkar, 2001; Rodgers & Thorson, 2000; Singh & Dalal, 1999). Because various formats of Internet advertising have been continuously developed by the advertisers, it would be difficult or fruitless to capture all the formats of Internet advertising. The primary formats of Internet advertising are as follows:

1) Buttons or button ads: Buttons are considered “some of the smallest ad units on the Internet” (Steinbock, 2000, p. 201). They are the miniature banner ads usually found at the bottom of a web page and because of their small size, they usually include only advertiser names and/or brands.

2) Banners or banner ads: Banner ads are rectangular or banner-shaped advertisements on a website. Clickable banner ads, which are linked to advertisers’ sites, are located usually at the top or bottom of the website. Specifically, Steinbock (2000) divided banner ads into five kinds: static banners, animated banners, sound banners, real-time banners, and transactive banners (pp. 198-199). Some kinds of banner ads are called collectively “rich-media ads” because they “are animated, contain audio or video, or just flash, blink, or make weird sounds” (Kaye & Medoff, 2001, p. 37).
3) Context-based keyword advertising: Advertisements displayed along with search results in a search engine web site when search engine users input key words that advertisers purchase in advance. This kind of advertising allows “advertisers to target users based upon specified keywords that a user enters” when using the search engine (Steinbock, 2000, p. 204).

4) Pop-up ads: There are two kinds of pop-up ads. “Interstitials” are advertisements that pop up in between pages or sites without viewers’ will. On the other hand, “superstitials only play when initiated (such as by clicking the mouse) by users and only when fully downloaded” (Kaye & Medoff, 2001, pp. 38-41). So, some also call the superstitial “a polite pop-up” (Adams, 2003, p. 64).

In addition, advertorials, email advertising, (advertising-related) games, hyperlinks, microsites, sponsorships, and portals are also included in the evolving area of Internet advertising (Adams, 2003; Kaye & Medoff, 2001; Rodgers & Thorson, 2000; Steinbock, 2000). On the other hand, some researchers have classified Internet advertising into dichotomous groups (e.g., passive versus active ads) in terms of advertising exposure manner on the Internet (Chatterjee, 1998; Cho, 1999) because the Internet, especially the Web, is “a convergence of captive and self-paced media” (Ha, 2003, p. 7).

Recent Research on Internet Advertising as Persuasive Communication

As examined in the prior chapter, recent years have witnessed the steady increase of Internet advertising revenues along with the growing number of online consumers in the United States. This market situation seems to have contributed to increased attention to Internet advertising. Hence, academic researchers as well as practitioners have embarked upon a journey to understand Internet advertising as a new communication phenomenon. Among several research areas in Internet advertising, the discussion of recent studies will be centered mainly on research relevant to Internet advertising as persuasive communication because of this dissertation’s academic interest.

Consumers’ responses to Internet advertising.

In order to study Internet advertising as persuasive communication, an understanding of the antecedents of consumers’ attitudes toward Internet advertising is of importance in identifying factors affecting attitudes. Recently, a number of researchers have studied various antecedents of consumers’ attitudes toward Internet advertising (e.g., Brackett & Carr, 2001;
Cho, 1999; Cho, Lee, & Tharp, 2001; Choi, Miracle, & Biocca, 2001; Ducoffe, 1996; Karson & Korgaonkar, 2001; Korgaonkar & Wolin, 2002; Raney, Arpan, Pashupati, & Brill, 2003; Rossiter & Bellman, 1999; Schlosser et al., 1999; Yoo, Kim, & Stout, 2004). Studies conducted by some of these researchers are discussed below.

Using an intercept survey conducted in public spaces in New York City, Ducoffe (1996) tested a hypothesized model in which advertising value perceived by consumers through three dimensions (informativeness, irritation, and entertainment) affects consumers’ attitudes toward Internet advertising. Ducoffe (1996) defined advertising value as “a cognitive assessment of the extent to which advertising gives consumers what they want” (p. 24). Based on the data collected through the survey, the researcher reported that the relationships hypothesized in the model were observed in the data. Ducoffe concluded that if Internet advertising is perceived to be more informative, less irritating, and more entertaining, then consumers would rate Internet advertising high in value and thus they would hold “favorable general attitudes” toward Internet advertising (p. 30). In addition, the researcher found that entertainment in advertising value would have “an independent and direct impact on overall advertising attitudes” (p. 30).

Based on the model tested by Ducoffe (1996), Brackett and Carr (2001) extended Ducoffe’s original model by adding two additional variables (i.e., credibility and relevant demographic variables). The researchers found that informativeness, entertainment, and credibility had a direct, positive effect on both advertising value and attitudes toward Internet advertising. However, it was found that the relevant demographic variables such as gender and the major discipline of students did not affect advertising value, but they had only a direct effect on attitudes toward Internet advertising, while irritation, which had a direct, negative effect on advertising value, had no direct effect on attitude toward Internet advertising.

In addition, Brackett and Carr also found that their college students’ responses were less favorable than those of Ducoffe’s nonstudent sample with respect to ratings of informativeness, entertainment, and irritation in advertising value, while students rated the Internet more favorably as a source of valuable information than Ducoffe’s sample. Specifically, compared with the responses of Ducoffe’s nonstudent sample, students rated Internet advertising relatively low in informativeness and entertainment, and high in the irritation dimension of advertising value, which affects directly and positively the attitudes toward Internet advertising. This result
is consistent with previous research reporting that college students have less positive attitudes toward advertising than businessmen in nonstudent samples (Haller, 1974).

Some researchers have found interesting empirical evidence that the level of the forced exposure to Internet advertising controlled by new communication technology can have a positive effect on consumer’s attitudes toward Internet advertising. Contrary to their initial prediction, Cho and colleagues (2001) found that consumers who viewed a banner ad in the format of the highest forced exposure (i.e., forced exposure to a banner ad with no skip option) had the most favorable attitude toward the banner ad as well as the most favorable attitude toward brand and the highest purchase intention. According to these researchers, the large amount of attention paid to the banner ad in the forced-exposure format was believed to contribute to the unexpected results of their experimental study. The researchers failed to provide any further explanations of why the large amount of (involuntary) attention to the banner ad generated positive effects from consumers forced to watch the banner ad.

Previous studies (e.g., Cho et al., 2001) seemed to try to understand advertising intrusiveness mainly associated with consumers’ negative responses without defining clearly what ad intrusiveness is. Thus, such a line of research has implicitly equated ad intrusiveness with forced exposure to advertising. As a result of this, they could not explain why consumers responded positively to ads after forced exposure to the ads. However, results of relevant Internet advertising studies (e.g., Edwards, Li, & Lee, 2002; Li, Edwards, & Lee, 2002) suggest a possible answer to the question of why forced exposure to Internet advertising under certain conditions may lead to favorable responses to the ads rather than unfavorable ones.

According to Edwards, Li, and Lee (2002), advertising intrusiveness is based on consumers’ perceptions about the gap between their goals and information or entertainment features of the ads and is defined by “the degree to which a person deems the presentation of information as contrary to his or her goals (either functional or hedonic)” (p. 85). Hence, this definition implies that consumers would be less likely to perceive the intrusiveness of the ads even with forced exposure if the information or entertainment provided in the ads is not contrary to their goals at that time of ad exposure. In other words, “not all interruptions are perceived negatively” (Li et al., 2002, p. 45). Therefore, we may infer that even involuntary exposure to Internet advertising may lead to positive responses to the ads if the content of the ads is congruent with viewers’ goals.
Other researchers have investigated the relationship between consumers’ Internet usage and their attitudes toward Internet advertising (e.g., Korgaonkar & Wolin, 2002). Using cluster analysis, Korgaonkar and Wolin (2002) classify survey respondents into three groups (i.e., light, medium, and heavy user groups). The results of their survey provides empirical support for the existence of a positive relationship between the frequency of Web usage and attitudes toward Internet advertising. In other words, the heavy user group’s attitudes toward Internet advertising were the most favorable and the light users of the Internet held the least favorable attitudes. The researchers also found that consumer Internet usage patterns were significantly related to consumer’s beliefs about Internet advertising, online shopping, and demographics. Based on their results and three theoretical dimensions of the hierarchy-of-effects model (Lavidge & Steiner, 1961), Korgaonkar and Wolin (2002) argue that heavier Internet users holding stronger positive beliefs about honesty, entertainment value, and informativeness of Internet advertising (cognition) are likely to have more favorable attitudes toward Internet advertising (affect) leading to more frequent Internet purchasing (conation).

However, the universal adoption of the hierarchy of advertising influence suggested by Korgaonkar and Wolin’s (2002) argument should be cautioned against, because the sequence of the hierarchy-of-effects model (i.e., cognition → affect → conation) can be changed when perceived differences of products within the class and consumer’s level of involvement are considered (Swinyard & Patti, 1979). For example, in low-involvement situations, advertising messages on the Internet have a subtle impact on consumers’ brand recognition (cognition). In the subsequent purchasing situations, consumers may choose the familiar brand (conation) stored in their minds. Consumers’ attitudes toward the brand or products can be formed or changed (affect) while or after they use the products (Krugman, 1965). So, under the low-involvement condition with products, consumers’ cognition, which is elicited through the exposure to advertising messages, is likely to influence behaviors or conation, which in turn has an effect on the affect dimension of consumers (cognition → conation → affect). Furthermore, other researchers (Janiszewski, 1993; Zajonc, 1968; Zajonc & Marcus, 1982) have found evidence that mere incidental, repeated exposures to the stimulus such as a brand name in the advertisement could influence consumers to hold favorable attitudes toward the brand (affect) even without prior attentive processing (cognition). This line of research also suggests an alternative sequence of advertising influence starting with affect.
Recognizing a market trend of “content/commerce convergence” in marketing communication including advertising, some communication researchers have assessed consumers’ responses to Internet sites as advertising (e.g., Raney et al., 2003). Conducting an online experiment, Raney and colleagues (2003) investigated the effects of interactive and/or entertaining content of four automotive sites on the evaluations of the sites including participants’ attitudes toward ads. These researchers found that participants were likely to express the most positive site evaluations when they navigated the website containing highly entertaining content (i.e., the BMW film ad) as compared to other sites as Internet advertising with different modes of presentation.

In relation to the effect of modes of presentation on consumers’ responses, Choi, Miracle, and Biocca (2001) investigated whether consumers’ responses to Internet advertising are affected by anthropomorphic or human-shaped agents, which are “graphically displayed” and “controlled by artificial intelligence” and thus provide consumers with the perception of “face-to-face interactions” on the website (para. 2 and 3). The researchers found that people exposed to Internet advertising with an anthropomorphic agent generating perceived presence tended to have more favorable attitudes toward the ad and higher intentions to revisit the site than those exposed to Internet advertising without an agent.

As the use of animated Internet advertising has increased, a growing number of advertising researchers have also investigated the animation effect of Internet advertising on consumer’s responses to Internet advertising (e.g., Cho, 1999; Sundar & Kalyanaraman, 2004; Yoo et al., 2004). For instance, some advertising researchers found that animated banner ads generated more favorable consumer attitudes toward Internet advertising than static banner ads (Yoo et al., 2004). In addition, some researchers have also studied whether animated Internet advertising has an effect on consumers’ behavioral intentions such as their intention to click on banner ads. Cho (1999) examined the effects of animated ads on consumers’ intention to click the banner ads in low vs. high-involvement situations and found that in low-involvement situations, consumers were more likely to click animated banner ads than static ads.

As the knowledge about attitudes toward Internet advertising has accumulated, an increasing number of academic researchers have also become interested in studying consumers’ attitudes toward the websites (e.g., Balabanis & Reynolds, 2001; Bruner & Kumar, 2000; Chen & Wells, 1999; Chen, Clifford, & Wells, 2002; McMillan, Hwang, & Lee, 2003; Poh & Adam,
Modifying the traditional construct such as attitude toward the ad, Chen and Wells (1999) suggested a new construct named *attitude toward the site* ($A_{st}$) in order to measure “general favorability toward the website” (p. 28). In relation to the new construct, the researchers identified three website content dimensions that affect attitudes toward the site: entertainment, informativeness, and organization. They found that the three content dimensions accounted for most of the variance in the evaluation of the websites. Based on their study results, Chen and Wells concluded that “a good website” that generates positive attitudes toward the website “is one that delivers relevant and well-organized information in an engaging manner” (p. 36). In their follow-up study (Chen et al., 2002) using a nonstudent sample, Chen and colleagues confirmed that three website content scales accounted for attitudes toward the site.

In their Internet advertising research, some researchers have also introduced the construct of attitudes toward the site by modifying the brand evaluation scales from previous research (e.g., Bruner & Kumar, 2000; Stevenson et al., 2000). Stevenson and colleagues (2000) found that the complexity of webpage backgrounds had negative effects on viewers’ responses including attitudes toward the site, and there were positive correlations between attitudes toward the site and traditional advertising hierarchy of effects such as attitude toward the ad, attitude toward the brand, and purchase intention.

Using a nonstudent sample and adding new variables, Bruner and Kumar (2000) replicated and extended previous research by Stevenson et al. (2000). They found that viewers’ weekly time spent on the Web and perceived interestingness of the webpage backgrounds had positive effects on attitudes toward the website. In addition, Bruner and Kumar illuminated two effects of the complexity of the webpage backgrounds on attitudes toward the site: a direct negative effect and an indirect positive effect through the interestingness.

Hoping to find a new channel for their business, numerous brick-and-mortar companies have rushed to the Internet to build an online presence. In this market situation, some researchers have also been interested in examining how consumers’ attitudes toward the offline brand affect their attitudes toward the website containing the offline brand (e.g., Balabanis & Reynolds, 2001). In general, the offline brand can be defined as the differential identity of the product or service delivered through traditional media in a market where multiple competitors provide similar products or services. Asking consumers to visit two websites having offline brands,
Balabanis and Reynolds (2001) found that consumers’ prior attitudes toward the offline brand was positively related to their attitudes toward the site associated with the brand. This study confirms the industry’s anecdotal observation that consumers’ attitudes toward offline brands transfer to their attitudes toward the site on the Internet (e.g., Harvin, 2000, January 24).

Combining research results of previous traditional studies and Internet advertising studies (Brown & Stayman, 1992; Chen & Wells, 1999; Bruner & Kumar, 2000; Stevenson et al., 2000), Poh and Adam (2002) suggested an integrated model delineating the relationships between three website dimensions (entertainment, informativeness, and organization), attitude toward the site, attitude toward the ad, attitude toward the brand, and purchase intention (see Figure 1 in this section). Replicating Bruner and Kumar’s (2000) study, Poh and Adam confirmed that attitude toward the website is positively correlated with attitude toward the ad, attitude toward the brand, and purchase intention. In other words, the more consumers have positive attitudes toward the website, the more they have positive attitudes toward the ad shown in the site, positive attitudes toward the brand in the ad, and positive intentions to buy the product or service in the ad.

Several advertising researchers have identified antecedents of people’s attitudes toward the website in the relationships between viewers (perception) and the website (structure) (e.g., McMillan et al., 2003; Wu, 1999). Wu (1999) found that users’ perceived interactivity, consisting of navigation and responsiveness, was positively related to their attitudes toward the website. Conducting a field experiment on the Internet, McMillan, Hwang, and Lee (2003) investigated the effects of structural and perceptual factors on attitudes toward the website. McMillan and associates found that perceptual factors (i.e., user involvement with the subject of the site and perceived interactivity) were stronger predictors of consumers’ attitudes toward the website than structural factors (i.e., site features and informational vs. transformational content), and both involvement and perceived interactivity had a strong positive relationship with attitudes toward the website. Specifically, consumers who are more involved with the subject of the visited site and perceive more interactivity from the site are more likely to hold favorable attitudes toward the website even when the site has few features or little factual data.
While numerous Internet advertising scholars have concentrated on studying the antecedents of consumers’ attitudes toward the website, some researchers have drawn academic attention to the consequences of attitudes toward the website (e.g., Lee, Hong, & Lee, 2004). Lee and colleagues (2004) examined the relationship between consumers’ attitudes toward the website and their confidence in brand choice, and the moderating role of their product knowledge in the relationship between attitude toward the site and confidence in brand choice. The researchers found that participants holding more favorable attitudes toward the site of the specific brand were more likely to choose the specific brand than other brands. In addition, participants having more positive attitudes toward the site of the specific brand were likely to

**Figure 1.** An Integrated Model Related to Internet Advertising  
Source: Adapted from Poh and Adam (2002)
have a higher level of confidence in the choice of such brands when they had low product knowledge.

**Recent application of persuasion models and theories to Internet advertising research.**

The elaboration likelihood model (ELM) of persuasion has enjoyed considerable popularity among marketing and advertising researchers as well as attitude researchers because the ELM incorporates “the effects of a multitude of persuasion variables, processes, and outcomes” (Petty, Wegener, & Fabrigar, 1997, p. 616) into a single theoretical framework of persuasion. So, the ELM has been repeatedly tested and empirically verified in various media contexts (Lord, Lee, & Sauer, 1995; MacKenzie, Lutz, & Belch, 1986; Petty & Cacioppo, 1986). Recently, advertising researchers have applied the ELM to the Internet as a new medium for advertising (e.g., Cho, 1999; Hershberger, 2003; Karson, 1998; Karson & Korgaonkar, 2001; Shamdasani et al., 2001; Singh & Dalal, 1999). Before we examine recent Internet advertising research applying the ELM, a brief introduction of the ELM as a persuasion model facilitates our understanding of Internet advertising research.

According to the elaboration likelihood model (ELM) suggested originally by Petty and Cacioppo (1981, 1986), there are two basic routes in the persuasive communication process, the central route and the peripheral route. Both routes concern the processing of information provided to change the attitude of the receiver of the message. When people are exposed to a persuasive message, according to Petty and Cacioppo (1986), they are in the situation of choosing the manner in which they process the message: the central route or the peripheral route. Here, the concept of the elaboration is suggested in this stage of the information processing. Elaboration is defined as “the extent to which a person carefully thinks about issue-relevant arguments contained in a persuasive communication” (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986, p. 7).

According to the ELM, people’s motivation and ability may cause them to choose the central route. In the central route, people engage in deliberate and active consideration of information provided to form an attitude only when they are motivated and able to process the information. If the message is personally relevant to the receivers of the message, people will be motivated to carefully process the information in the message delivered to them. In addition, people are motivated to process the information when they perceive a personal responsibility to make a correct decision (Petty, Harkins, & Williams, 1980), when they are exposed to multiple
sources of the message (Harkins & Petty, 1981), or when they have high need for cognition (Cacioppo, Petty, & Morris, 1983).

Another important prerequisite to the central route in the information process is people’s ability to think or concentrate during message reception. The following factors affect people’s ability: distraction during a person’s evaluation of the message (Petty, Wells, & Blocks, 1976), repetition of the message (Cacioppo & Petty, 1979), and the kind of medium used to deliver the message (Chaikin & Eagly, 1976). If the receiver of the message is neither motivated nor able to process the given information, he or she may take another route when processing the information. In the peripheral route, people are assumed to be less motivated and more passive recipients of the message (e.g., lazy organisms [McGuire, 1969]; cognitive misers [Taylor, 1981]). In other words, elaboration likelihood will be low when the receiver is neither motivated nor able to carefully process the message. Thus, the receiver tends to pay more attention to other peripheral cues such as source expertise and attractiveness, the mere number of arguments, visuals and music rather than arguments or evidence within the message (Cho, 1999; Petty, Cacioppo, & Kasmer, 1988). In their experiments, Petty and Cacioppo (1981, 1986) showed that attitudes formed through the peripheral route are less likely to be accessible, less enduring, and susceptible to subsequent attacking messages than those formed through the central route.

Based on the ELM, which has been validated in other media contexts, some researchers have recently started to explore the new territory of Internet advertising as persuasive communication. Cho (1999) arguably made one of the first systematic attempts to apply the ELM to the Internet as a new medium for advertising. He modified the ELM in order to reflect unique characteristics of Internet advertising such as interactivity and voluntary exposure to ads (i.e., clicking banner ads) and examined several mediating variables affecting consumers’ voluntary exposure to or clicking a banner ad on the Internet. Three mediating variables examined in the study were 1) relevancy between the content of the web site as an advertising vehicle and the product category of a banner ad, 2) attitude toward the vehicle (the website), and 3) attitude toward Internet advertising in general.

Cho (1999) found that, as the traditional ELM predicts, people with high personal and product involvement were more likely to choose the central route in the processing of Internet advertising (i.e., to click banner ads to get more information) than those in low involvement, while consumers in low involvement tended to pay attention to peripheral cues of Internet
advertising such as the larger size and more dynamic animation of a banner ad. In addition, it was also found that people holding more favorable attitudes toward Internet advertising in general were likely to have more favorable attitudes toward specific banner ads. As Cho (1999) acknowledged, however, a proxy measure of clicking a banner ad and non-representative samples employed in his pioneering research limited the generalization of findings.

Using the dichotomous Internet user type such as *surfers* versus *searchers*, Singh and Dalal (1999) also tried to apply the ELM to the Internet as an advertising medium. According to the researchers, surfers who wander for fun are hedonistic and less involved while searchers who try to find information are utilitarian and more involved (see also Karson & Korgaonkar, 2001, for the discussion of involvement and Internet user type). Persuasion measures used in the study include the attitude toward the home page, the attitude toward the sponsor of the home page, and the likelihood that consumers would further explore the site.

Based on the regression analyses on the persuasion measures, Singh and Dalal (1999) found that the emotional dimension (peripheral cues) of the home page as Internet advertising had a statistically significant effect on the persuasion-related responses of “low-involvement hedonistic” surfers. However, high-involvement searchers did not seem to be included in the study design and thus findings only partially supported the ELM predictions in the very limited situation. Furthermore, there was no mention of the use of the websites only with the emotional content in the study design. It was reported that participants in the study surfed informational or rational content sites and the mixed (rational and emotional) content sites, not the emotional content sites.

Extending the ELM to Internet advertising research, recent research investigated the effects of product involvement, relevance between ad product category and website content, and reputation of the site (Shamdasani et al., 2001). Consistent with the predictions of the ELM, the research found that reputation of the website as a peripheral cue had little effect on persuasion processing for high-involvement products such as automobiles if there was no relevance between banner ad product category and website content, while site reputation as a peripheral cue had “a prominent effect” on low-involvement products such as sports drinks.

As we examined above, research has provided evidence supporting the traditional tenets of the ELM in an Internet advertising context (e.g., Cho, 1999; Shamdasani et al., 2001; Singh & Dalal, 1999). However, a study suggested a divergent conclusion about the application of the
ELM to Internet advertising (e.g., Karson & Korgaonkar, 2001). Unlike other previous studies discussed above, Karson and Korgaonkar’s (2001) study found that consumers’ involvement had few moderating effects in Internet advertising context: There was no differential impact of argument strength (in Internet advertising) between high- and low-involvement participants on attitudes toward the ad, attitudes toward the brand, and purchase intentions, and there was also no difference between high- and low-involvement participants concerning the effect of peripheral cues (i.e., color and block size of the background or wallpaper in the site as Internet advertising) on attitudes toward the brand. Their findings are inconsistent not only with Internet advertising research applying the ELM (e.g., Cho, 1999; Shamdasani et al., 2001; Singh & Dalal, 1999), but also with previous classic ELM studies (e.g., Petty, Cacioppo, & Schumann, 1983).

On the other hand, another Internet advertising study (Hershberger, 2003) employing the ELM reported mixed results partially supporting and questioning the applicability of the persuasion model to Internet advertising. In a dissertation, Hershberger (2003) tried to extend the explanatory power of traditional ELM to the Internet advertising context by adding Internet-related variables such as attitude toward the site, Internet expertise, and trust in the Internet. Hershberger failed to provide evidence supporting the claim that there were any moderating effects of message involvement on either peripheral or central route processing in an Internet advertising context, but a moderating role of product involvement in central route processing was found. Even though he was not able to find substantial evidence supporting traditional ELM, Hershberger reported a new moderating role of Internet expertise in ad processing on the Internet. Stated plainly, Internet experts were less likely to pay attention to peripheral cues in Internet advertising than Internet novices.

Although two Internet advertising studies (Hershberger, 2003; Karson & Korgaonkar, 2001) failed to provide supporting evidence for the ELM, we may find commonality in their experiments: The manipulations of personal or message involvement, which is considered “situational” rather than “enduring” (Andrews, Durvasula, & Akhter, 1990), were performed in two studies. While the manipulation checks were reported acceptable, the findings of two studies failed to provide evidence showing expected effects caused by the manipulations. Even though prudent replication of the studies needs to be done to confirm their findings, research results provided by these two studies seem to demonstrate the difficulty of manipulating involvement in the context of new media, partly stemming from “the lack of a universally-accepted
conceptualization of involvement” (Laczniak, Muehling, & Grossbart, 1989, p. 29) as the conceptually “controversial” construct (see Andrews et al., 1990, for the detailed discussion of the issue).

This review of the advertising research applying the ELM to the Internet indicates that researchers have tried to understand how consumers process Internet advertising as persuasive communication and to identify which variables affect consumer processing of advertising in new media such as the Internet. Their research interests seem to lie mainly in the cognitive process of Internet advertising as persuasive communication, not in the motivational underpinnings of attitudes that can be expressed in Internet advertising messages. Thus, Internet advertising research led by the ELM perspectives has unwittingly ignored the motivational aspects of persuasion by emphasizing cognitive aspects of persuasion.

Recently, other researchers have suggested that we may consider the development of a brand new persuasion theory for the study of Internet advertising, after they failed to find empirical evidence supporting the ELM as a traditional persuasion model (e.g., Karson & Korgaonkar, 2001). However, it would be premature and would not be beneficial to attempt to develop a new theory without thoroughly testing extant theories in a new media context. In fact, there are other persuasion theories that have been verified in traditional media contexts but have been rarely tested in the Internet context. Attitude function theory is a candidate theory that can be tested in a new media context.

As acknowledged in the prior chapter, very few studies have examined Internet advertising by applying attitude function theory as a theoretical framework, while the ELM has gained popularity in Internet advertising research field. Some researchers have made an initial attempt to apply attitude function theory to the Internet as a new advertising medium. Yoon and Kim (2001) studied the relationship between the usage of various media including the Internet and perceived product characteristics in relation to attitude functions. In their study, it was reported that some parts of the questionnaire used in the survey were constructed on the basis of Katz’s (1960) attitude function theory. Even though questions are based on the attitude function classification done by Katz, their approach relating attitude functions to product characteristics seems similar to Shavitt’s (1990) attitude object-oriented approach, which will be explained later.
In Yoon and Kim’s study, attitude function theory was used to assess the perceived characteristics of four product categories such as automobiles, luxury watches, shampoos, and fast food. The study reported that consumers tend to use the Internet for their purchase when their perception of low-involvement products such as shampoos was associated with knowledge function and value-expressive function. For other product categories, it was reported that there was no significant relationship between the use of the Internet and product characteristics associated with attitude functions. Even though Yoon and Kim’s study would turn out to be one of few pioneering advertising studies applying attitude function theory to the Internet, their research employed persuasion theory to measure consumers’ perception of product characteristics, rather than to test any research hypotheses suggested in classic and contemporary attitude function theories, which will be discussed in the next section.

The comprehensive review of Internet advertising literature reveals that advertising researchers have extensively investigated the effects of various factors on consumers’ responses such as their attitudes toward Internet advertising and attitudes toward the website, and that a growing number of investigators have tried to apply a traditional persuasion model such as the ELM to Internet advertising. In sum, the various factors investigated by researchers can be divided into two main factors: consumer-related and medium/ad-related factors. Table 2 summarizes research studying various factors affecting consumers’ responses to Internet advertising as persuasive communication.

On the basis of the comprehensive literature review, the analysis of research on Internet advertising as persuasive communication identifies a knowledge gap in Internet advertising research: Previous studies have virtually ignored the effects of advertising messages in terms of consumers’ psychological needs and associated attitudes in order to understand persuasive communication effects on the Internet. Some researchers have noticed the importance of incorporating consumers’ psychological needs into their processing of advertisements (e.g., MacInnis & Jaworski, 1989; Rodgers & Thorson, 2000). Based on past research, MacInnis and Jaworski (1989) identified two major psychological needs related to products: utilitarian and expressive needs. The utilitarian needs are defined as “requirements for products that remove or avoid problems,” while the expressive needs are understood as “requirements for products that provide social or aesthetic utility” (MacInnis & Jaworski, 1989, p. 2). These two consumer needs are also called “functional needs” and “symbolic needs” in relation to the differentiation of the
Table 2
Factors Affecting Consumers’ Responses to Internet Advertising

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<th>Consumer-related factors</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Demographic and consumer experience factors</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>- gender (Brackett &amp; Carr, 2001)</td>
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<td>- Internet usage (Bruner &amp; Kumar, 2000; Korgaonkar &amp; Wolin, 2002)</td>
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<td>- product knowledge (Lee et al., 2004)</td>
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<td>- involvement (Cho, 1999; Hershberger, 2003; Karson &amp; Korgaonkar, 2001; McMillan et al.,</td>
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<td>2003; Singh &amp; Dalal, 1999)</td>
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<td>- perceived advertising value (Brackett &amp; Carr, 2001; Ducoffe, 1996)</td>
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<td>- perceived interactivity (Bezjian-Avery et al., 1998; Macias, 2003; McMillan et al., 2003; Wu, 1999)</td>
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<td>- perceived product category based on attitude functions (Yoon &amp; Kim, 2001)</td>
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<tr>
<td>- perceived website dimension (Brackett &amp; Carr, 2001; Bruner &amp; Kumar, 2000; Ducoffe, 1996;</td>
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<td>Poh &amp; Adam, 2002)</td>
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<tr>
<td>- perceived website reputation (Shamdasani et al., 2001)</td>
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<td>- prior attitudes toward the offline brand (Balabanis &amp; Reynolds, 2001)</td>
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<th>Psychological factors</th>
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<td>- relevancy of website content and advertising product category (Cho, 1999; Shamdasani et al., 2001)</td>
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<th>Medium or ad-related factors</th>
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<td><strong>Structural factors</strong></td>
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<td>- animation (Cho, 1999; Sundar &amp; Kalyanaraman, 2004; Yoo et al., 2004)</td>
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<tr>
<td>- banner ad size (Cho, 1999; Li &amp; Bukovac, 1999)</td>
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<td>- forced exposure (Cho et al., 2001)</td>
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<td>- mode of content presentation (Choi et al., 2001; Raney et al., 2003)</td>
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<tr>
<td>- site design and features (Bruner &amp; Kumar, 2000; Karson &amp; Korgaonkar, 2001; McMillan et al.,</td>
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<td>2003; Stevenson et al., 2000)</td>
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<td>- informational versus transformational aspects of content (McMillan et al., 2003)</td>
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<th><strong>Content factors</strong></th>
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<tr>
<td>- relevancy of website content and advertising product category (Cho, 1999; Shamdasani et al., 2001)</td>
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brand positioning strategy in the marketing communication context (Park, Jaworski, & MacInnis, 1986, p. 136).

Recognizing the importance of the psychological needs of consumers in advertising information processing, matching advertising appeals to corresponding psychological needs has been intermittently discussed among advertising researchers (e.g., Johar & Sirgy, 1991; MacInnis & Jaworski, 1989; Rossiter & Percy, 1997), even though scant attention has been given to research on the nexus between psychological needs and attitudes or to the functional matching of attitudes related to psychological needs of consumers exposed to advertisements. This stream of advertising research may find a theoretical foundation in attitude function theory’s postulation that people hold attitudes to serve their psychological needs. Therefore, research based on attitude function theory may contribute to filling this knowledge gap in Internet advertising research. Attitude function theory as the theoretical framework of this dissertation will be introduced in the next section.

**Attitude Function Theory**

Researchers interested in the study of advertising have studied extensively attitudes of consumers who listen, read, or watch advertising as one form of persuasive communication under the assumption that attitude toward the advertisement ($A_{\text{ad}}$) has an effect on attitude toward the brand ($A_{\text{b}}$) that the advertisement promotes (e.g., Lutz, 1985; MacKenzie & Lutz, 1989; MacKenzie, Lutz, & Belch, 1986; Muehling & McCann, 1993; Shimp, 1981). Especially, research on attitude change has been one of the main areas in the study of persuasive communication including advertising. McGuire (1969) classified the study of attitude change as following four main theoretical approaches: consistency, information processing, social judgment, and functional. Among these theoretical approaches to attitude change, only the functional approach gives the full attention to “motive structures” of people for the understanding of attitude change, whereas the other three approaches fail to recognize the role of motives in attitude change (Spivey, Munson, & Locander, 1983, p. 257). This dissertation will focus on the functional approach to the study of attitude and attitude change as the main theoretical framework of the study.

Why do people hold attitudes? As Eagly and Chaiken (1998) point out, this question has been “the most far-reaching question that attitude theorists can raise” (p. 303). Thus, the academic attempts to answer this question have engendered a *functional approach* to attitude
research in the United States. The fundamental tenet of attitude function theory is that people have their attitudes mainly because attitudes serve psychological needs of people. The functional approach has been also called a *motivational approach* to attitude research primarily because this approach views attitudes as “motive-determined” and thus it underscores the importance of understanding “the motivational underpinnings of attitudes” when studying attitude formation and change (Locander & Spivey, 1978; Lutz, 1991). On the other hand, some scholars classified attitude function theory into one of “person-oriented theories” maintaining that “attitude change occurs when the subjective experience of the individual changes” (Kahle, 1984, p. 9).

Attitude function theory seems to work under the following underlying theoretical assumptions: In general, people try to maintain a stable condition of psychological equilibrium. If the stable condition is changed by external factors or the internal mental state is stimulated by cues (see Table 3 for the list of factors and cues), psychological tension is generated within people’s minds. Thus, people are likely to avoid or change such an unstable condition of disequilibrium by fulfilling unmet psychological needs. In other words, under such an unstable condition, people tend to have a motive to fulfill their psychological needs in order to return to the condition of equilibrium. So, people tend to hold attitudes to meet their psychological needs. These theoretical assumptions of the functional approach to attitudes are consistent with the systematic view of attitudes as “a dynamic process by which generally constant conditions of an individual’s physical and social world are achieved” (Cacioppo, Petty, & Geen, 1989, p. 299).

Under such assumptions, attitude function theorists predict that people in the condition of unmet psychological needs are more likely to be persuaded when they are exposed to persuasive communication addressing their psychological needs. Thus, attitude function researchers argue that “successful persuasion entails implementing change procedures that match the functional basis of the attitude one is trying to change” (Eagly & Chaiken, 1993, p. 480). Because the functional approach concentrates mainly on answering “the question of *when* persuasive messages will be effective” and the question of “*why* such changes occur” (Lavine & Snyder, 1996, p. 581), attitude function theorists predict that persuasive communication messages will be most effective when the persuasive messages are relevant to or “match” the attitude functions (motivational bases of attitudes) of message recipients. Thus, this prediction is called *functional matching hypothesis* of persuasion. In the following subsections, classic attitude function theories, contemporary research in terms of three approaches to the measurement of attitude
functions, and functional matching and its theoretical and practical implications will be discussed.

Classic Attitude Function Theories

In the late 1950s and the early 1960s, early pioneers of attitude function theory tried to identify and classify attitude functions (Katz, 1960; Smith, Bruner, & White, 1956). Their taxonomy of attitude functions, which was done almost simultaneously but independently, shared some common grounds conceptually, even though the labels of attitude function varied. Their original classification of attitude functions has guided later researchers in integrating and reorganizing attitude function categories (e.g., Herek, 1986, 1987; Shavitt, 1989, 1990) and has provided them with a solid foundation for a comprehensive understanding of attitude functions.

According to Daniel Katz’s seminal classification, there are four major functions that an attitude may serve for its holder:

1) **Knowledge function**: Individuals incessantly encounter a plethora of information as stimuli from the environment surrounding them. In this situation, people may have the motivation to “seek knowledge to give meaning to what would otherwise be an unorganized chaotic universe,” and attitudes serving the knowledge function provide the individuals with “standards or frames of reference for understanding their world” (Katz, 1960, p. 175). In other words, attitudes help individuals to organize “diverse perceptions into a meaningful overall picture” (Lutz, 1991, p. 330). So, such cognitive need as the motivation for structure has been discussed with Katz’s knowledge function (Jamieson & Zanna, 1989) because of the conceptual similarity. Thus, Eagly and Chaiken (1993) noted that the knowledge function “to organize and simplify people’s experience” has the conceptual resemblance to the idea that “schemas are needed to enable people to make sense out of their experience” (p. 19). In addition, some attitude researchers have considered the knowledge function of attitudes to be “the most fundamental function attitudes serve” (e.g., Shavitt, 1989, p. 312).

2) **Utilitarian function**: Keywords for the utilitarian function are rewards and penalties. Thus, the utilitarian function is conceptually related to the behavioristic learning theory. The utilitarian function is based on the presumption that people make an effort “to maximize the rewards in their external environment and to minimize the
penalties” (Katz, 1960, p. 170). So, attitudes serving the utilitarian function are “the means for reaching the desired goal or avoiding the undesirable one” (p. 171). Thus, this utilitarian function is also called the *instrumental* function.

3) **Ego-defensive function**: People hold attitudes in the service of this function to protect their egos from their “own unacceptable impulses and from the knowledge of threatening forces” and to reduce their “anxieties created by such problems” (Katz, 1960, p. 172). The conceptual foundation of the ego-defensive function derived originally from the psychoanalytic theory about defense mechanisms of Freudian psychology (Eagly & Chaiken, 1993, p. 20).

4) **Value-expressive function**: The value-expressive function of attitude is served when the holder of the attitude is motivated to express personal values and/or his or her self-concept. The attitudes that serve the value-expressive function “not only give clarity to the self-image but also mold that self-image closer to the heart’s desire” (Katz, 1960, p. 173). Thus, the value-expressive function can be explained in terms of ego psychology.

As shown from Katz’s classification in relation to other existing theories, the functional approach suggested by Katz has been considered the *reconciliation* of two major approaches to attitude change such as learning theory approach and consistency approach, which are closely related to two models (i.e., rational versus irrational models) of human behaviors (Severin & Tankard, 1997), or the *eclectic approach* combining several theoretical approaches to persuasion (Trenholm, 1989).

On the other hand, Smith and associates independently developed a somewhat overlapping list of attitude functions to understand the American public’s attitude toward Russia in the Cold War era (Smith et al., 1956). They divided attitude functions into three categories:

1) **Social-adjustive function**: This attitude function stresses the utility of attitudes helping individuals to deal with social relationships. While Katz and coworkers failed to “explicitly consider how attitudes mediate a person’s relations with others,” Smith’s research team covered the conceptual gap by proposing this social-adjustive function of attitudes (Eagly & Chaiken, 1993, p. 481).

2) **Externalization function**: By identifying externalization function of attitudes, Smith and colleagues shared the almost identical idea with Katz’s research camp proposing
ego-defensive function influenced by psychoanalytic theory. Attitudes help individuals to externalize the self’s intrapsychic conflicts through mechanisms such as projection. Attitudes that serve externalization function protect the self from internal conflicts or from the perceived threat in the external world surrounding the individual.

3) **Object-appraisal function:** This attitude function suggested by Smith and colleagues reflects the combined aspects of attitudes serving knowledge and utilitarian functions proposed by Katz (1960). In serving object-appraisal function, attitudes help people “in classifying for action the objects of the environment, and they make appropriate response tendencies available for coping with these objects” (Smith et al., 1956, p. 41). The importance of the object-appraisal function in understanding of attitude functions has been supported increasingly by contemporary attitude researchers (e.g., Eagly & Chaiken, 1998; Fazio, 2000; Greenwald, 1989). Furthermore, some attitude researchers have considered the object-appraisal function as attitudes’ “universal function of enabling people to evaluate and appraise stimuli in their environment” (Eagly & Chaiken, 1998, p. 304) or as “the primary purpose of holding an attitude” (Tesser & Shaffer, 1990, p. 497).

In addition to his classification of major attitude functions, Katz (1960) discussed the detailed conditions of attitude arousal and change in relation to four attitude functions (see Katz, 1960, pp. 176-191 for an insightful discussion of specific examples associated with the determinants of attitude arousal and change in terms of four attitude functions). Along with his original classification of attitude functions, Katz made a significant contribution to the development of subsequent attitude function research by specifying the determinants of attitude arousal and change in relation to attitude functions. This is mainly because his specification has provided a fundamental theoretical framework guiding the development of experimental manipulations in recent research advancing the understanding of attitude functions and has stimulated later research’s rigorous testing of attitude function theory in theory-driven experimental settings (e.g., Julka & Marsh, 2000; Marsh & Julka, 2000). Table 3 summarizes Katz’s (1960) specification concerning the determinants of attitude arousal and change in relation to his four attitude functions.
Contemporary Attitude Function Research

Classic theories developed by early attitude functionalists such as Katz, Smith, and their colleagues have generated methodological criticism about the deficiency of empirical assessment of attitude functions (Herek, 1986; Insko, 1967; Shavitt, 1989), even though they have contributed significantly to the advancement of our theoretical understanding of attitude functions. In order to overcome the lack of empirical scrutiny in the research by classic functionalists, several approaches to the operationalization of attitude functions have been suggested in attitude studies conducted by contemporary attitude researchers. However, the objective measurement of attitude functions has been a persistently challenging task for attitude researchers. As Herek (2000) points out, one reason for this problem stems from “the longstanding tension within the functional approach between two conceptualizations of attitudes: as relatively stable personality traits and as dynamic outcomes of a dialectic among characteristics of persons, objects, and situations” (p. 332). In general, the review of contemporary research on attitude functions reveals that attitude researchers have made their efforts on the empirical investigation of attitude functions by approaching to three factors associated with the attitude functions, individuals as the holders of attitudes, attitude objects that individuals evaluate, and situations surrounding individuals and attitude objects. In the following review of contemporary attitude function research, the main approaches focusing on individual differences and attitude objects will be discussed in detail because two approaches are closely relevant to this dissertation.

Individuals.

The first approach to measuring attitude functions focuses on individual differences. Even early attitude functionalists employed their version of the individual difference approach reflecting the view that “attitudes are equivalent to personality syndromes” (Herek, 2000, p. 332). However, their research generated “substantial confounds,” “methodological problems,” and “interpretational ambiguities” of data (Julka & Marsh, 2000; Shavitt, 1989). Thus, using the psychological construct of “self-monitoring” as another but new individual difference approach, contemporary attitude researchers have approached indirectly the empirical assessment of attitude functions. Herek (2000) acknowledged the utility of the individual difference approach using the self-monitoring construct when he mentioned that “many contemporary researchers have found this conceptualization useful and have continued to impute attitude functions from
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<th>Attitude Functions</th>
<th>Attitude Arousal Conditions</th>
<th>Attitude Change Conditions</th>
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<tr>
<td>Utilitarian function</td>
<td>Activation of needs&lt;br&gt;Salience of cues associated with need satisfaction&lt;br&gt;Posing of threats&lt;br&gt;Appeals to hatred and repressed impulses</td>
<td>Need deprivation&lt;br&gt;Creation of new needs and new levels of aspiration&lt;br&gt;Shifting rewards and punishments&lt;br&gt;Emphasis on new and better paths for need satisfaction</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ego-defensive function</td>
<td>Rise in frustrations&lt;br&gt;Use of authoritarian suggestion&lt;br&gt;Salience of cues associated with values&lt;br&gt;Appeals to individual to reassert self-image</td>
<td>Removal of threats&lt;br&gt;Catharsis&lt;br&gt;Some degree of dissatisfaction with self&lt;br&gt;Greater appropriateness of new attitude for the self</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Value-expressive function</td>
<td>Reinstatement of cues associated with old problem or of old problem itself&lt;br&gt;Ambiguities which threaten self-concept</td>
<td>Control of all environmental supports to undermine old values&lt;br&gt;Ambiguity created by new information or change in environment</td>
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<td>Knowledge function</td>
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<td>More meaningful information about problems</td>
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global assessments of personality traits, especially the trait of self-monitoring” (p. 332).

According to Snyder and DeBono (1989), the investigation of attitude functions can be strategically conducted by using scores on the self-monitoring scale developed by Snyder (1974). Based on the score results, the researcher can identify two groups of people. Those who have high scores on the self-monitoring scale “are concerned about, and are adept at, tailoring their behavior to fit social and interpersonal considerations of situational appropriateness” while people having relatively low scores on the self-monitoring scale are less sensitive to their social environment so that they “tend to guide their behavioral choices on the basis of relevant inner source (such as values, feelings, and dispositions)” (Snyder & DeBono, 1989, p. 344). These individual differences are assumed to reflect the differences in the functions their attitudes serve (e.g., High self-monitors hold attitudes that serve the social-adjustive function while low self-monitors have attitudes that serve the value-expressive function).

Especially, some attitude functionalists have found an indirect way of measuring attitude functions in advertising as persuasive messages by using the scale of self-monitoring (e.g., DeBono & Packer, 1991; Snyder & DeBono, 1985). Snyder and DeBono (1985) found that image-oriented advertisements were more appealing to high self-monitors, while product-quality-oriented advertisements received more favorable responses from low self-monitors. In addition, it was found that these different responses from high and low self-monitors were likely to lead to different consumer behaviors: High self-monitors were willing to pay more for and try products of which ads were image-oriented, while low self-monitors were willing to pay more for and try products of which ads were quality-oriented. In addition, subsequent research found that such individual differences identified through the self-monitoring scale had a consistent impact on consumers’ evaluations of product quality in the ad, perception of ad self-relevance, and recognition of ads (DeBono & Packer, 1991). These seminal research results imply that “the different advertising strategies are appealing to different functional bases of attitudes” (Snyder & DeBono, 1989, p. 345).

In the history of advertising practice in the U.S., there have been two major approaches in developing advertising messages: a “soft-sell” approach, emphasizing the image aspect associated with the use of the product in the ad and a “hard-sell” approach, concentrating on the claims on the quality aspect or practical value of the product in the ad. The former school of creative thought has received an inspiration from Theodore MacManus, a legendary ad
copywriter who wrote the automobile ad for Cadillac, while the latter school has been represented by Claude Hopkins, the author of *Scientific Advertising* (Applegate, 1994). The logic of using these two approaches in the advertising seems to reflect advertising practitioners’ *a posteriori* recognition of these individual differences found in consumers’ responses to advertising. Some scholars have also identified these approaches to the development of ad messages and have named “informational” versus “transformational” advertising (e.g., Johar & Sirgy, 1991; McMillan et al., 2003; Rossiter & Percy, 1997). Informational advertising is created to emphasize “the functional features of the product” with factual data, while transformational advertising has “a creative objective to create an image of the generalized user of the advertised product (or brand)” (Johar & Sirgy, 1991, p. 23). These two advertising practices are theoretically supported by attitude function research based on dichotomous classification of attitude functions, which seems to be closely associated with cognition-based and affect-based attitudes (e.g., instrumental versus symbolic [Abelson & Prentice, 1989; Ennis & Zanna, 2000; Maio & Olson, 2000]; evaluative versus expressive [Herek, 1986, 1987]). Similarly, advertising and marketing researchers have extensively investigated these two distinctive patterns in terms of products (functional versus expressive [Dahlén, Rasch, & Rosengren, 2003]; think versus feel [Voughn, 1986]), or consumer buying motives (utilitarian versus image [Mittal, 1990]) or consumer product needs (functional versus symbolic [Park, Jaworski, & MacInnis, 1986]; utilitarian versus expressive [MacInnis & Jaworski, 1989]). Among the various versions of dichotomous classification of attitude functions, instrumental versus symbolic attitude functions will be used for this dissertation project, primarily because the researcher believes that the terms capture the distinctive dimensions of two attitude functions the most, and a growing number of contemporary attitude function theorists seem to agree on “instrumental versus symbolic distinction” for their research (Abelson & Prentice, 1989; Ennis & Zanna, 2000; Maio & Olson, 2000, p. 423).

Subsequent research found that product characteristics (utilitarian versus social identity products) could constrain the individual differences (high versus low self-monitors) in the attitude functions in the advertising. Employing three experiments, Shavitt, Lowrey, and Han (1992) examined whether individual differences in attitude functions would emerge for specific product categories. The products selected in the experiments were expected to engage either utilitarian, social identity, or both attitude functions. According to Shavitt et al. (1992), social
identity function of attitude is served when people’s attitudes “symbolize and express one’s identity by fostering identification with reference groups” (p. 339). In this study, the subjects were asked to describe their attitudes toward selected products and to write persuasive messages such as advertisements about the products designed to appeal to themselves. No differences were detected in the responses of high versus low self-monitors for the utilitarian products. However, significant differences in the responses of two groups were identified for the social identity products which “could be used to facilitate social relationships and obtain social approval” (Shavitt et al., 1992, p. 343). Shavitt and colleagues reported that for social identity products, high self-monitors tended to pay more attention to social expression of the products than low self-monitors, while those having low scores on the self-monitoring scale tended to respond more to product quality and associated attributes than high self-monitors. Summing up, previous research using the individual difference approach to attitude functions suggests that attitudes may serve different functions for different people and advertising message differentiation based on different functional bases of attitudes could be effective in eliciting positive attitudes toward the ad from consumers.

Even though numerous studies using indirect measures such as the self-monitoring scale have achieved remarkable success at predicting different responses of two groups of people (high versus low self-monitors) to persuasive messages (e.g., DeBono & Packer, 1991; Shavitt et al., 1992; Snyder & DeBono, 1985), the individual difference approach to the measurement of attitude functions has not been free from criticism. Thus, some researchers (Lennox & Wolfe, 1984) have revised the self-monitoring scale developed by Snyder (1974) and named it the “attention-to-social-comparison-information” (ATSCI) scale. The revised scale measuring individual differences has been adopted in consumer research related to automobile purchases (e.g., Bearden & Rose, 1990).

Attitude objects.

The second approach to measure attitude functions shifts its research attention from people holding attitudes to attitude objects. In the context of advertising research, this change of research orientation in attitude function studies seems to facilitate the investigation of attitude functions in persuasive messages such as advertising, because the object-oriented approach to attitude function focuses mainly on the characteristics of attitude objects or products that can be
expressed in the advertisements. This approach starts its understanding of attitude functions under the assumption that the nature of an attitude object may shape “the function of an attitude toward an object” (O’Keefe, 2002, p. 36). For instance, it has been argued that attitudes toward some products such as coffee or shampoo are mainly “unifunctional” in terms of attitude functions, whereas attitudes toward certain products such as automobiles can serve “multiple functions” (Ennis & Zanna, 1993, 2000; O’Keefe, 2002; Shavitt, 1989, 1990; Spivey, Munson, & Locander, 1983).

However, there are some caveats against the blind adoption of the attitude object-oriented approach without the understanding of a specific social context: We should note that the unifunctionality of a certain product is not shaped solely by the characteristics of the product \textit{per se}, but some attitude functions of a certain product are “a reflection of social consensus about the meanings or goals associated with the product” (Shavitt & Nelson, 2000, p. 40). In addition, the simplistic classification of attitude functions related to certain attitude objects is not “immutable” (Shavitt, 1990, p. 128). Some researchers argue that attitude objects are socially constructed, and thus purposes served by certain attitude objects can be changed over time or across various social groups even within a society (see Herek, 2000, for the insightful discussion of the issues). This multiplicity of socially constructed meanings related to attitude objects results in “functional divergence” (Herek, 2000, p. 330).

Using open-ended attitude descriptions, Shavitt (1990) examined whether attitudes toward certain products selected from three functional categories (i.e., utilitarian, social identity, and self-esteem maintenance functions) were primarily unifunctional and reported the identification of “single-function objects.” In addition, Shavitt found that participants had more positive responses to the brand, purchase intention, and ad appeals, when the ads contained relevant persuasive appeals closely related to a particular attitude function with which certain consumer products in the ads were associated. Specifically, the ads containing utilitarian appeals elicited favorable responses to utilitarian products such as air conditioner or coffee, whereas the ads expressing social identity appeals invited favorable thoughts about social identity products such as greeting cards.

Shavitt (1990) provided an empirical foundation of attitude object-oriented approach to measure attitude functions by focusing on product characteristics in her research (see Woods, 1960, for the conceptual discussion of psychological product classes, which are virtually
identical with Shavitt’s classification). More specifically, Shavitt’s influential research (1990) contributed to “a better understanding of how the characteristics of attitude objects affect functions, especially with unifunctional objects, that is, objects that elicit one principal function in a particular population” (Herek, 2000, p. 332). Shavitt (1990) succinctly pointed out that attitude function approach to persuasion “is concerned with theory-based categories of beliefs (utilitarian, social identity, etc.), the motivational underpinnings of these belief categories, and the conditions that elicit those motives” (p. 142).

Based on Katz’s (1960) classic attitude function theory, Johar and Sirgy (1991) proposed a conceptual research framework emphasizing the congruence between perceived product characteristics and corresponding advertising appeals in order to develop effective advertising messages. They argued that persuasion using utilitarian advertising appeals is effective when the product in the ad is perceived as utilitarian, while value-expressive advertising appeals have a positive effect on consumers’ responses when the perceived characteristics of the product are value-expressive. Thus, persuasion employing these advertising appeals is processed through “functional congruity” or “self-congruity.”

According to Johar and Sirgy (1991), functional congruity is “the match between the beliefs of product utilitarian attributes (performance-related) and the audience’s referent attributes,” which are defined as “the criteria used to evaluate the actual performance characteristics of the product” (p. 26). On the other hand, self-congruity is defined as “the match between the product’s value-expressive attributes (product-user image) and the audience’s self-concept,” and the product-user image is “the stereotype the audience has about the typical user of the product” (Johar & Sirgy, 1991, p. 24). Subsequent research has furthered the understanding of self-congruity associated with personality traits (low versus high self-monitoring) of consumers (e.g., Aaker, 1999). In addition, Johar and Sirgy (1991) contributed to theoretical advancement of the object-oriented approach to attitude functions by illuminating specific product-related factors that may influence the selection of two attitude function-based advertising appeals (i.e., utilitarian versus value-expressive advertising appeals). Product-related determinants, according to Johar and Sirgy (1991), include product differentiation, product life-cycle, product scarcity, and product conspicuousness.

As discussed above, attitude functions of some consumer products such as automobiles have been considered multiple (Ennis & Zanna, 1993, 2000; Spivey et al., 1983). However, some
categories of car models such as subcompact and family models are more likely to have a single attitude function in the sense that their characteristics are “predominantly utilitarian in nature” (Ennis & Zanna, 2000, p. 398), whereas sports and luxury car models are “more multifunctional” (Ennis & Zanna, 1993, p. 662).

Functional Matching and its Implications

Classic attitude function theories focused primarily on the classifications of various attitude functions and provided a theoretical prediction about attitude change or persuasion. Built on this theoretical heritage, contemporary attitude researchers have continuously conducted the empirical testing of the theoretical prediction along with the efforts to develop the measurement of theoretically identified functions of attitudes or to reorganize the classifications of attitude functions (e.g., Abelson & Prentice, 1989; Gastil, 1992; Herek, 1986, 1987; Shavitt, 1990). As briefly discussed above, the essence of the theoretical prediction suggested by attitude function theory lies primarily on the matching of functionally relevant persuasive messages to specific attitude functions of message recipients for effective persuasive communication. In a nutshell, it is theoretically predicted that the effectiveness of persuasive communication messages will be greater when the messages match attitude functions of message recipients than when the messages do not match such attitude functions. This is also called the functional matching hypothesis.

The review of selected attitude function literature (especially in relation to advertising) indicates that numerous empirical data from past attitude function research have consistently supported the functional matching effect predicted by attitude function theory (e.g., DeBono & Packer, 1991; Ennis & Zanna, 1993, 2000; Julka & Marsh, 2000; Shavitt, 1990; Snyder & DeBono, 1985; Spivey et al., 1983), even though some researchers have reported inconsistent research results in certain contexts such as in the context of the presentation of counterattitudinal arguments (Millar & Millar, 1990) or advertising practice (Dubé, Chattopadhyay, & Letarte, 1996). Regardless of this success in testing functional matching hypothesis, “most functional research has focused only on the initial input step (message presentation) and the ultimate output (attitude change) without consideration of intervening psychological processes” (Herek, 2000, p. 338). The recognition of such limitations revealed in previous attitude function research seems to have stimulated the emergence of another line of attitude function research examining the variables that may influence the effect of functional matching. For example, a line of attitude
function research has examined the influence of various cognitive variables on the functional matching effects (DeBono & Harnish, 1988; Lavine & Snyder, 1996, 2000; Petty & Wegener, 1998; Petty, Wheeler, & Bizer, 2000). In this dissertation, corporate credibility as a cognitive variable, which will be discussed in the next section, will be studied in the attitude function research context.

Functional matching has been considered to be the crux of theoretical predictions suggested by attitude function theory. It is believed that functional matching has significant implications for persuasion research and applications. The theoretical and practical implications for functional matching are as follows: First, functional matching of persuasive communication messages enables researchers to take a proactive approach to the understanding of persuasive communication because functional matching implies the deliberate selection and tailored construction of persuasive messages on the basis of the identification of attitude functions of message recipients. Second, functional matching of persuasive messages provides persuasion researchers with a theoretically lucid and parsimonious research framework (i.e., match vs. non-match) in persuasion research. Third, the functional matching hypothesis suggested by attitude function theory implies intuitively simple experimental design that provides researchers with high probability of controlling the research process and the opportunity to investigate the causal relationships in persuasive communication. Fourth, at the application level, functional matching of persuasive messages such as advertising can be utilized as a method of market segmentation, “segmenting markets based on the specific functional profile or combination of functional attitudes being served” (Spivey et al., 1983, pp. 267-268) and thus functional matching has the potential to enable advertisers to develop effective marketing communication strategy for message-based persuasion.

**Corporate Credibility as a Special Case of Source Credibility**

In the persuasion research field inspired by pioneering communication experimental studies of Hovland and colleagues at Yale (Hovland, Janis, & Kelly, 1953; Rogers, 1997), the source of persuasive messages has received continuous attention in terms of credibility (see Pornpitakpan, 2004, for a recent comprehensive and thorough review) from a number of researchers “regardless of the theoretical orientation of the time” (DeBono & Harnish, 1988, p. 541). Especially, previous advertising research examining source credibility effects on the persuasiveness of advertising message has concentrated mainly on endorser credibility for the
company (e.g., Ohanian, 1990), while relatively less scholarly attention has been given to the advertiser or corporate credibility as a special case of source credibility.

According to MacKenzie and Lutz (1989), advertiser credibility is defined “the perceived truthfulness or honesty of the sponsor of the ad” (p. 51). In their structural model of attitude toward the ad (Aad) formation, advertiser credibility leads to advertising credibility, which, in turn, affects attitude toward the ad. Advertiser credibility can be virtually interchangeable with the construct of corporate credibility as “a type of source credibility focused on a specific corporation as the maker of a product and/or the source of advertising and of other marketing communications” (Newell & Goldsmith, 2001, p. 235), because most of modern advertisements are paid for by companies unless they are classified ads used by individuals. Corporate credibility is defined as “consumer or other stackholder perceptions of a company’s trustworthiness and expertise” (Goldsmith, Lafferty, & Newell, 2000b, p. 304). Several researchers have provided empirical evidence on the positive effect of corporate credibility (as the special case of source credibility) on attitudes toward the ad, attitudes toward the brand, and purchase intentions (Goldsmith, et al., 2000a, 2000b; Lafferty & Goldsmith, 1999, 2004). In addition, based on a comprehensive review of the previous five-decades of empirical studies, Pornpitakpan (2004) concluded that sources with high credibility influence product and company attitudes more positively than low credibility sources and that corporate credibility as a type of source credibility positively influences consumers’ attitudes toward the ad and the brand. Furthermore, it would be of theoretical importance to consider the influence of corporate credibility on “the overall consumer reaction to advertising” (Goldsmith, et al., 2000a, p. 53).

Recently, the investigation of perceived (source) credibility on the Internet has increased with the explosive use of the Internet as the new information source in our society (e.g., Eastin, 2001; Flanagan & Metzger, 2000; Greer, 2003) because questions concerning source credibility of the information available on the Internet have been continuously raised. Specifically, several characteristics of the Internet as an information source affecting credibility have been identified (Flanagan & Metzger, 2000; Metzger, Flanagan, & Zwarun, 2003). They include lack of any structural or centrally controlled information filters, which existed in the traditional media, the ease of online content alteration using digital publishing technologies, and the hard distinction between advertising and informational content in the websites.
Hypotheses

As reviewed in the prior section, a comprehensive review of classic and contemporary research on attitude functions indicates that theoretical predictions (functional matching) of attitude function theory have been verified through the accumulated empirical research focusing on traditional media, especially print media. More specifically, it has been tested and verified in traditional media contexts that persuasive communication messages including advertising are most effective when the persuasive messages are relevant to or match the attitude functions of message recipients.

The new car shopping environment shaped by the commercialization of the Internet since 1994 seems to generate different consumer experiences and perceptions from those in conventional car shopping environment (Klein & Ford, 2003; Molesworth & Suortti, 2002). Hence, attitudes formed through these different experiences and perceptions of online car shoppers need to be studied to better understand consumer behavior related to online car shopping. In addition, previous Internet advertising research has concentrated mainly on the empirical investigation of persuasive communication effects of banner advertisements on the Internet (e.g., Briggs & Hollis, 1997; Cho 1999; Cho et al., 2001; Hershberger, 2003; Li & Bukovac, 1999; Shamdasani et al., 2001). However, there has been an emerging skeptical view concerning the effects of banner ads because of the extremely low click-through rate and uncertain validity as the measure of banner ad effectiveness (e.g., Chu, Chang, & Hsia, 2003; Goldsmith & Lafferty, 2002). In addition, the analysis of a focus group discussion for this research, which will be presented in the next chapter, indicates that participants do not pay attention to current automotive banner ads and do not recall the persuasive messages in the banner ads. Thus, the empirical study of the commercial website as Internet advertising is suggested as an alternative approach to the study of the persuasive communication effects of Internet advertising (Ducoffe, 1996; Faber, Lee, & Nan, 2004; Hwang et al., 2003; Karson & Korgaonkar, 2001; Rodgers & Thorson, 2000; Singh & Dalal, 1999).

According to previous Internet advertising research (e.g., Bruner & Kumar, 2000; Po & Adam, 2002; Stevenson et al., 2000), consumers’ responses such as attitude toward the site, attitude toward the brand, and behavioral intention are significantly correlated. On the other hand, previous attitude function research (e.g., DeBono & Packer, 1991; Snyder & DeBono, 1985) provided evidence that low self-monitors tend to respond more positively to instrumental...
function-based advertisements while high self-monitors are more likely to respond positively to symbolic function-based ads. Therefore, combining two lines of research, the following hypotheses are posed in relation to a new media context such as the Internet:

**H1:** Online consumers’ responses (attitude toward the site, attitude toward the brand, and behavioral intention) to the corporate website as Internet advertising will be more positive when attitude function-based website appeals match their attitude functions (as measured by the extent of self-monitoring) than when the site appeals do not match their attitude functions.

Logically, this functional matching hypothesis (H1) can be decomposed into the following two sub-hypotheses:

**H1A:** Online consumers’ responses to the corporate website as Internet advertising (attitude toward the site, attitude toward the brand, and behavioral intention) will be more positive when low self-monitors view the instrumental function-based website than when they view the symbolic function-based website.

**H1B:** Online consumers’ responses to the corporate website as Internet advertising (attitude toward the site, attitude toward the brand, and behavioral intention) will be more positive when high self-monitors view the symbolic function-based website than when they view the instrumental function-based website.

Based on the consideration of consumers’ concern about website credibility (see the detailed findings of focus group research in the next chapter) and empirical evidence on the effects of corporate credibility as a special case of source credibility in the persuasive communication process (e.g., Goldsmith, et al., 2000a, 2000b; Lafferty & Goldsmith, 1999, 2004), the following hypotheses are posed:

**H2:** Responses (attitude toward the site, attitude toward the brand, and behavioral intention) of online consumers who view persuasive messages in the website with high
corporate credibility will be more positive than those of online consumers who view the messages in the website with low corporate credibility.

Furthermore, previous attitude function research focusing on advertising (DeBono & Packer, 1991; Ennis & Zanna, 1993, 2000; Johar & Sirgy, 1991; Shavitt, 1990) provided considerable empirical evidence that attitude function-based advertising appeals have positive effects on consumers’ responses including attitude toward the ad, attitude toward the brand, and purchase intention when ad appeals are matched to specific attitude functions measured indirectly or directly. In addition, as mentioned above, a line of attitude function research has examined the influence of cognitive variables on the functional matching effects (DeBono & Harnish, 1988; Lavine & Snyder, 1996, 2000; Petty & Wegener, 1998; Petty, Wheeler, & Bizer, 2000). However, few attitude function researchers examining the influence of cognitive variables on the functional matching effects have investigated the role of source credibility, especially corporate credibility on the functional matching effects. A recent comprehensive review of source credibility effect on persuasion (Pornpitakpan, 2004) revealed that corporate credibility as a special case of source credibility has positive effects on consumers’ responses including attitude toward the ad, attitude toward the brand, and purchase intention. Thus, it can be deduced that advertising appeals matched to consumers’ attitude functions will have additive effects on consumers’ responses in general when corporate credibility is high. However, it is not known yet that how unmatched ad appeals affect consumers’ responses when corporate credibility is high. On the other hand, it is not clearly understood that how matched ad appeals affect consumers’ responses when corporate credibility is low. Therefore, the following research question is raised:

**RQ: Are there any significant interaction effects among attitude functions (as measured by the extent of self-monitoring), attitude function-based website appeals, and corporate credibility on online consumers’ responses to Internet advertising (attitude toward the site, attitude toward the brand, and behavioral intention to revisit the site)?**

In the next chapter, the findings of the focus group research and pilot studies as the preliminary research for the dissertation will be reported and the detailed planning of two experiments as the main study of this dissertation will be discussed.
CHAPTER 3
PRELIMINARY RESEARCH

This chapter will introduce the reports from a focus group discussion and pilot studies that were conducted as the preliminary research for this dissertation.

Focus Group Research

A focus group discussion was selected as the preliminary research step for this dissertation study with the intent of obtaining in-depth information on college students’ perceptions of and experiences with online car shopping. Because focus group discussions can be used for “in-depth exploration” of a research topic about which little is known, the focus group discussion is “particularly effective for gaining a more in-depth understanding of the topic, and, hence, a better definition of the research questions” (Anderson & Kanuka, 2003, p. 102). The information acquired through the focus group discussion was expected to contribute to the development of research questions, and of the questionnaire used in the experiments of this dissertation study. The planning, conducting, and analysis of the focus group discussion were based mainly on methods outlined by Krueger (1994).

Participants and Procedure of Focus Group Discussion

A total of 29 undergraduate students participated in four focus group sessions held at the Florida State University. Initially, the researcher visited the classes provided by department of communication at the Florida State University, and 37 students signed up for the study. All the participants were informed that they would receive the credit for their course in the exchange for their voluntary participation in the focus group discussion. Before the focus group discussion was conducted, all the participants were asked to fill out a brief questionnaire, which was designed to collect basic background information of participants. The pre-focus group questionnaire included questions about previous car purchasing experience, online car shopping, and personal demographic information (See Appendix C for the content of the pre-focus group questionnaire). The focus group discussion was conducted on the basis of questions developed by the researcher (See Appendix D for the content of focus group questions). The content of the focus group discussion was audio-tape recorded by the researcher as the moderator of the focus
group discussion. The recorded content of focus group discussion was transcribed for the purpose of the analysis by the researcher of this study.

**Findings of Focus Group Discussion**

The analysis of pre-focus group questionnaire, which included ten closed- and four open-ended questions, provided basic information about participants’ car buying experiences on and offline along with their demographic information. Among the 29 participants, most of them (90%) had their own cars, and 14 students (48%) had bought a car for themselves. Among those who had bought a car, brand reputation (43%) was the first reason for their choice of specific car. Price of the car (21%) was the second reason for their choice mentioned by participants. Most participants reported that they shopped on the Internet (93%) and used a search engine for their shopping (86%). More than half of respondents (66%) had online car shopping experiences such as searching for car information while none of participants purchased a car online. There were 25 female and four male participants in the focus group sessions. More than half of students (55%) used the Internet most, and television (28%) was the second medium used most by them. Many students (76%) in the focus group were juniors, and the mode of their age was 20 years old (59%).

In the open-ended question section, students were asked to list the most important factor in their car purchase, the reason that the factor was important, and the reason for buying or not buying a car online. The open-ended question section was designed to capture participants’ attitudes toward and perceptions of car shopping on and offline without any restrictions to responses and thus to overcome the inherent limitation of a multiple-choice question format that might make the researcher unwittingly miss any possible responses from the participants.

When participants were asked about the most important thing they looked for in the car, “reliability” of the car was the most frequently mentioned word. In addition to this, “price” of the car, “dependability,” “safety,” and “value” were frequently considered the most important considerations for a car purchase. Concerning the reasons for the importance of these factors in car purchase, many students’ responses were identical: The car as “an expensive purchase.” In addition, students’ lack of time and money was another reason for the importance of the factor they chose for car purchase. The students as consumers expect to “get their money’s worth” when they buy a car for themselves.
Concerning online car purchase, three common reasons for not purchasing a car online emerged from the responses of participants: 1) Inability to inspect and test drive a car on the Internet (“I’d rather see and test drive the car in person”), 2) uncomfortable feelings about the lack of human interaction in the buying process (“I would feel more comfortable and secure purchasing car in person”), and 3) questions about the credibility of the web sites (“Don’t know for sure how credible the source (website) is”). In addition to this, some participants also mentioned the negotiability of the price in the offline environment and the concern about the possible expensive shipping cost of cars purchased online. Some studies reported similar concerns with online car shopping (Molesworth & Suortti, 2002; Nua Internet Surveys, 2002, October 14): Participants were ambivalent about online car shopping (i.e., they wanted to search for car information online but avoided buying cars online because of the reasons mentioned above). These kinds of responses in the pre-focus group questionnaire emerged again through the dynamics of focus group discussion. This is consistent with previous research on the paradoxes of new technology adopted by consumers (e.g., Mick & Fournier, 1998).

After moderating four sessions of main focus group discussion, the researcher found the following common themes from the discussion:

1) Most students in focus groups wanted to and did research to obtain the information about the car on the Internet in order to gather un-biased information at the early stage of car buying process and/or to arm themselves with the information before going to local dealers. One student’s comment illuminated this attitude: “(The Internet is) a good research tool before you actually go out (for a car).” In addition, many of students reported that they use search engines to find car information on the Internet.

2) Students’ thoughts about car buying on the Internet were negative in general, even though they liked to use the Internet for getting car information. Most of participants said that they would avoid buying the car online because they cannot check and/or test-drive the car on the Internet or because they are concerned about the credibility of the websites or about the security of online transactions for big purchases: “(I am) scared to do actual purchase of car online”; “I feel nervous about spending much money online (like a car purchase)”; “It’s really hard to trust Internet sites”; “I’d just rather go to a (local) dealership for myself.”
3) When they had multiple online search results for their car shopping, students said that they selected the results on the basis of “familiarity” or “relevancy” of words or “brand names” they were looking for. One student’s comment was impressive and intriguing: “Something in your mind” is the “familiarity” or “relevancy” of words. So, it can be inferred that people would select the search results containing “familiar” or “relevant” words if some words in the search results are accessible from their memory. This anecdotal finding seems to suggest the applicability of some theoretical frameworks to future research: Accessible attitudes (towards objects) from memory tend to orient people’s attention to the objects among other competing stimuli (Roskos-Ewoldsen & Fazio, 1992).

4) When they were asked about online car ads they saw, some of students recalled the brand names and some visual images in the ads, but most of them failed to recall the content of copy at all. Most of focus group participants expressed their hatred of pop-up ads that irritate them while surfing on the Internet. These responses were considered to develop the content and format of the simulated online ad used in this dissertation study.

The analysis of the focus group discussion provided insight and preliminary information about online car shopping done by college students. The insight and information gleaned from the focus group discussion provided additional understanding of online consumer behavior related to this study and informed the development of the questionnaire of the main study and the stimulus advertising content and format used in the main experimental study.

This section discussed procedures and findings of focus group sessions conducted as one of the preliminary research steps for this dissertation study. Several interesting findings were reported on the basis of the analysis of pre-focus group questionnaire and transcripts of focus group discussion. Especially, the noticeable finding was consumers’ ambivalence toward online car shopping: consumers’ adoption of the innovation of searching online car information and their resistance to the innovation of online car buying closely associated with website credibility issues.

**Pilot Studies**

Two pilot studies were conducted before main experiments were performed. The purposes of the pilot studies were 1) to check manipulations of independent variables (attitude
function-based website ad appeals [instrumental versus symbolic] and corporate credibility [low versus high]), and reliabilities of the measures in the questionnaire (see Perdue & Summers (1986) for the detailed discussion of manipulation checks in experiments), 2) to get overall, in-depth information about two versions of stimulus websites and two other filler websites that can not be captured by the standardized questionnaire items (see Appendix E for the questions used in the pilot studies), 3) to detect any mistakes that might be in the questionnaire and stimulus materials, and 4) to ensure that instructions and wording in the questionnaire were clear to the participants.

Pilot Study 1

Sample.
A total of 37 undergraduate students (who enrolled in the courses provided by Department of Communication at the Florida State University) participated in Pilot Study 1. Among 37 participants, there were 29 female students (78.4%). The mean age of the participants was 20.57 years old. Internet (73%) was the medium they used most. Most of the respondents (89.2%) used the Internet for more than 6 years. There were 30 Caucasian students (81.1%) among the respondents and two respondents did not answer about their ethnicity/race.

Experimental design.
2 (instrumental versus symbolic website ad appeals) x 2 (low versus high corporate credibility by company names) between-subjects factorial design was employed to fulfill the purpose of Pilot Study 1.

Procedure.
After signing up for participation, the participants came to the computer lab in the Department of Communication at the Florida State University. Participants were randomly assigned to experimental conditions. In pilot studies, attitude function as an independent variable was not measured because the purpose of pilot studies was to check whether the manipulation of stimulus materials was successful. After a brief instruction was given, the participants viewed three website pages (one version of stimulus websites [instrumental or symbolic function-based website] with a combination of either low or high corporate credibility website name, and two filler websites) used in the study. They responded to the standardized items in the questionnaire following some multiple choice and open-ended questions about the site after viewing each website page. Participants were debriefed, thanked, and dismissed after submitting their
questionnaire. The participants received the course credit in the exchange for their voluntary participation in the study.

**Stimulus materials.**

Four versions of stimulus materials (instrumental versus symbolic website appeals with the use of the website names [myauto.com vs. cars.com]) were used in Pilot Study 1. In the process of constructing the stimulus materials for Pilot Study 1, a fictitious website name (http://www.myauto.com) as the brand name was created. On the other hand, the ecological validity of the study was also considered. Thus, the contents of the existing automotive intermediary website (such as cars.com (http://www.cars.com) where car shoppers can search car information before they buy or sell automobiles) were downloaded. Thus, myauto.com as a fictitious site name was used for the low credibility condition while cars.com as a relatively well-know website name was employed for the high credibility condition. The manipulation of corporate credibility using website names was based on the following assumptions: Previous consumer research has provided evidence that mere incidental exposures to the brand name tend to influence positively consumers’ evaluation and choice of the product and/or service (Janiszewski, 1993). Compared to myauto.com, the fictitious website name in this study, cars.com is the already-established online company specializing in automotive information search and it was assumed that it was probable that consumers might have been exposed to the website name since 1997 via traditional media such as newspapers, the Internet, and 2004 national television campaigns (Cars.com, n.d.). In addition, recent website credibility research reported that Cars.com was the 4th highest rated e-commerce website and was the only automotive-related website among the list (Fogg et al., 2002, p. 64).

Extending previous attitude function research (e.g., Ennis & Zanna, 1993, 2000; Shavitt, 1990; Snyder & DeBono, 1985), dichotomous attitude function-based persuasive communication messages (i.e., texts and hyperlinks containing instrumental function versus symbolic function-based ad appeals) in the website as the stimulus materials were also developed. Using Adobe Photoshop CS (version 8.0) and Macromedia Dreamweaver MX, the homepage of the downloaded website was modified for Pilot Study 1: The design of the header was modified with the logo of MyAuto.com, the fictitious website name created for the study. Among four sections of the contents of the homepage, three sections in the actual website were deleted and existing text and hyperlinks were replaced by theoretically developed text and hyperlinks. The
active hyperlinks in the downloaded website were deactivated in order to strive for the maximum control of variables in the experiment. For the website in the high credibility condition, cars.com as the site name was used instead of myauto.com. As the stimulus materials for Pilot Study 1, four (instrumental versus symbolic website appeals and high versus low corporate credibility) websites were constructed (see Appendix H for the stimulus materials used in Pilot Study 1).

In addition, filler websites (also known as distractor websites) were used in order to distract participants’ attention during the experimental session. For filler websites, several candidate websites were downloaded from the Internet after extensive website search using the search engine. Among the downloaded websites, two filler websites were finally selected on the basis of their similarity of website content organization, product category (e.g., health products and laptop computers) in which participants may be interested (Yi, 1990), and uploading time of the website content (see Appendix I for computer screen captures of two filler websites). Following the identical modification procedures explained above, two filler websites (www.bodyshapingwithherbs.com and www.laptoptravel.com) were also modified to maximize the control of the experiment. The index webpage containing several display order versions of the websites was constructed to facilitate counterbalancing the sequences of the target website across participants (see Appendix J for computer screen capture of the index webpage). Each website was hyperlinked in order for participants to advance to the next webpage in the experiment (see Karson & Korgaonkar, 2001; Rodgers, 2003 for the similar methodological procedures in simulated online environment). The modified contents of the website as the stimulus materials were stored as the computer files in the password-protected, secure database provided by the Department of Communication at the Florida State University.

Microsoft Internet Explorer (version 6.0) as the Web browser program was used to deliver the simulated and controlled online content of stimulus materials. Because the theoretically manipulated website contents were used for the strict control of the experiment and the contents were locally stored in the database, the concealment of the website address and the status display were necessary and inevitable not to reveal the real address of the computer files used in this study (see Karson & Korgaonkar, 2001, p. 58 for similar methodological concerns in simulated online experiment environment). Thus, the following steps were taken for the maximum control of the stimulus material display: The website address window in the address bar and computer file status in the status bar were not displayed in the Web browser by not
selecting “Address Bar” and “Status Bar” in the submenu of “Toolbars” in the “View” menu in the Internet Explorer program and by choosing “Lock the Toolbars” option. In addition, participants were instructed not to resize the Web browser during their viewing the sites to ensure that all the participants viewed the same-sized stimulus materials.

**Independent variables.**

**Corporate Credibility:** As explained above, corporate credibility was manipulated by using website names in Pilot Study 1. In other words, myauto.com as a fictitious site name was used for the low credibility condition while cars.com as relatively well-known website name was employed for the high credibility condition. The website names for each condition were placed in the header and the text in the sites. In addition, for the high corporate credibility condition, a graphic image of seal of the Better Business Bureau Reliability program and the text associated with the seal were used to enhance the experimental manipulation of corporate credibility in Pilot Study 1.

**Website Appeal:** Extending previous attitude function research (e.g., Ennis & Zanna, 1993, 2000; Shavitt, 1990; Snyder & DeBono, 1985), dichotomous attitude function-based persuasive communication messages (i.e., texts and hyperlinks containing instrumental function versus symbolic function-based ad appeals) in the website as the stimulus materials were developed for Pilot Study 1. Instrumental function-based website appeals are defined as advertising appeals expressed via texts indicating the usefulness of car information that can be searched in the website, while symbolic function-based appeals are defined as advertising appeals expressed via texts indicating the social relation and the self-image of the site user associated with car information search. Based on the analysis of a focus group discussion and literature review of attitude function research, the specific words used in two function-based sites were selected. For the instrumental function-based website, the following utilitarian words/phrases were selected: “car features,” “price,” “reliability,” “resale market value,” “safety,” “performance,” “promotion information,” and “the best deal on your next car.” They were associated with car information search behaviors in the text. For the symbolic function-based website, the following user image-related or social relation words/phrases were selected: “smart people just like you,” “state-of-the-art search technology,” “an innovative leader,” “personal style,” “Impress your family, friends, and/or colleagues,” “cool experience,” and
Dependent variables.

Attitude toward the site (Ast): Adopting the view suggested by a new stream of research considering the whole home page as Internet advertising, attitude toward the site in this experimental study can be considered to be identical to attitude toward the ad (Aad), which has been used as traditional and important advertising effectiveness measure (Brown & Stayman, 1992; Muehling & McCann, 1993). Attitude toward the site as Internet advertising was operationally defined as the mean score (index score) of all the responses to the items asking participants’ general favorability toward the content of the website (i.e., the controlled content of the homepage) as Internet advertising. It was measured on an eight-item, 7-point Likert scale ($\alpha = .90, M = 3.88, SD = 1.12$) ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (7). The measure of attitude toward the site was adapted from recent Internet advertising research (Cho, 2003, p. 207) (Items with the sign of * were reversely coded): “I dislike this site*; This site is entertaining; This site is good; This site is worthless*; This site is boring*; This site is useful; This site is unpleasant*; This site supplies valuable information.” Higher scores reflected more positive attitude toward the site.

Attitude toward the brand (Ab): In this study, attitude toward the brand was operationally defined as the mean score of all the responses to the items asking participants’ general favorability toward the website name shown in the controlled content of the homepage. In this experimental study, the brand was the corporate name represented by the URL (Uniform Resource Locator) of the website. Attitude toward the brand (Ab) was measured by a three-item, 7-point semantic differential scale ($\alpha = .94, M = 4.04, SD = 1.32$) adapted from previous research: “good/bad, pleasant/unpleasant, favorable/unfavorable” (MacKenzie & Lutz, 1989). High scores indicate positive attitudes toward the brand.

Behavioral intention: This construct was operationally defined as the mean score of all the responses to the items asking participants’ intended future behavior associated with revisiting the website they viewed. Considering research context (Internet automotive marketing communication), the scale from previous research conducted by Raney and colleagues (2003) was employed to measure behavioral intention to revisit the website. In Pilot Study 1, participants’ intention to revisit the site was measured by a 7-point Likert scale ($\alpha = .93, M =$
3.10, $SD = 1.60$) ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (7). Four items were used to measure intention to revisit the website: “I am likely to visit the site again; I am likely to tell a friend about the site; if I was buying a car, I would probably visit the site again; if a friend was buying a car, I would probably tell him/her about the site” (Raney et al., 2003, p. 46).

**Manipulation checks and summary of participant responses**

Because there are two items for each scale, the reliability of instrumental and symbolic function manipulation check was assessed by computing Pearson’s bivariate correlations. Correlations (one-tailed test) were significant at the level of .001.

**Instrumental function manipulation check:** For the manipulation check of instrumental function-based appeals, the following items ($r = .88, M = 4.85, SD = 1.20$) were provided: “In general, the messages of the website emphasized the usefulness of online searching for information about cars; The messages on the website were related to the usefulness of online searching for information about cars.” Index scores for the instrumental function manipulation check scale were calculated by adding all the item scores and dividing them by the number of items used for the scale.

**Symbolic function manipulation check:** For the manipulation check of symbolic function-based appeals, the following items ($r = .83, M = 3.99, SD = 1.35$) were provided: “In general, the messages of the website emphasized how online searching for car information is related to the users’ image and style or others’ perceptions of the users; The messages on the website were related to the users’ image and style or others’ perceptions of the users in terms of online searching for car information.” Index scores for the symbolic function manipulation check scale were also calculated in the identical manner explained above.

**Corporate credibility manipulation check:** The manipulation of corporate credibility was checked on an eight–item, 7-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (7). The scale ($\alpha = .92, M = 3.99, SD = 1.05$) was used to measure perceived corporate credibility and it was adapted from previous research (Newell & Goldsmith, 2001, p. 237). Eight items for the scale were summed and averaged to get an index score. The following eight items were used for the manipulation check of corporate credibility (Items with the sign of * were reversely coded): “The company (cars.com or myauto.com) has a great amount of experience; The company is skilled in what they do; The company has great expertise; The company does
not have much experience*; I trust the company; The company makes trustful claims; The company is honest; I do not believe what the company tells me.*”

Independent-samples t-tests were conducted to examine the manipulations of instrumental and symbolic function-based website ad appeals, and corporate credibility, respectively. Results of t-tests revealed that the manipulation of instrumental function-based website ad appeals was successful. More specifically, participants in the instrumental function-based site ad appeal condition (n = 18, M = 5.28, SD = 1.05) perceived the site to be more instrumental than those in symbolic site ad appeal condition (n = 19, M = 4.45, SD = 1.22). The mean difference was statistically significant, \( t(35) = 2.21, p < .05 \). Therefore, the manipulation of instrumental function-based website appeals was verified.

In addition, t-test results confirmed that the symbolic function-based website ad appeals were successfully manipulated. Participants in symbolic function-based website ad appeal condition (n = 19, M = 4.45, SD = 1.29) perceived the site more symbolic than those in instrumental site ad appeal condition (n = 18, M = 3.50, SD = 1.26). The perceived difference was statistically significant, \( t(35) = -2.26, p < .05 \). Hence, the manipulation of symbolic function-based website ad appeals in this study was successful.

However, t-tests indicated that the manipulation of corporate credibility using mere corporate names (myauto.com, a fictitious name, for the low credibility condition versus cars.com for the high credibility condition) did not generate significant differences in perceptions of corporate credibility, \( t(34) = -1.49, p > .05 \), even though the mean for the participants in high credibility condition (n = 17, M = 4.26, SD = .97) was relatively higher than for those in the low credibility condition (n = 19, M = 3.74, SD = 1.09). In fact, among the respondents in Pilot Study 1, six participants reported that they knew cars.com before they saw the site. Its frequency ranking was the first and cars.com tied with autotrader.com (n = 6) among the recalled automotive websites. Nonetheless, t-test results suggested that the manipulation using a relatively well-known company name did not seem to be strong enough to generate a statistical difference. Thus, Pilot Study 2 was conducted later to replace the corporate credibility manipulation used in Pilot Study 1 with a stronger manipulation that had been verified in previous research.

In addition, correlations among three dependent variables including attitude toward the site (as advertising), attitude toward the brand and behavioral intention were examined because
previous research reported that they are related to each other (e.g., Bruner & Kumar, 2000; Poh & Adam, 2002; Stevenson et al., 2000). Consistent with prior advertising studies, correlations among three dependent variables were statistically significant and all the variables were positively correlated. Bivariate correlations among the dependent variables in Pilot Study 1 were summarized in Table 4.

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Note. ** Correlation was significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). Ast = Attitude toward the site; Ab = Attitude toward the brand; BI = Behavioral intention. M = Mean, SD = Standard Deviation.

In addition, answers to open-ended questions in Pilot Study 1 are summarized herein. Among 37 students, six students mentioned autotrader.com in an un-aided recall question about automotive websites (“Please write automotive-related website name you know”). Cars.com was also recognized by the same number of students (n = 6) when they were asked whether they knew the site in Pilot Study 1 before (an aided recall question after viewing the site: “Do you know the name of the website you just viewed?”). So, both websites were ranked the first in terms of the site name recall rate in unaided and aided ways, respectively. Positive comments were concentrated mainly on the stimulus website, especially about instrumental function-based website: “it is well-organized; texts are easy to understand; (the site is) very informative or useful; it is simple but good.” However, many of participants complained about the design aspect of the website: “I hate design (of the site) and I want more photos; (the site is) visually boring,
plain, and bland; empty looking [This indicated white space when the Web browser size was maximized by participants. Thus, the size of the visible Web browser was also controlled]; (the site needs) more eye-catching design." Concerning theoretically constructed persuasive messages in the symbolic function-based website condition, two students’ comments seemed very thought-provoking about the process of persuasive communication: “(texts are explicitly) persuasive; (the site) tries hard to sell image; (texts) call me ‘smart.’ (I) felt as if (it was) making fun of me; (it) made me suspicious.”

**Pilot Study 2**

**Sample.**

A total of 30 undergraduate students (who enrolled in the courses provided by Department of Communication at the Florida State University) participated in Pilot Study 2. In this study, there were 25 female students (83.3%) among 30 participants. The mean age of the participants was 20.77 years old. More than half of participants (56.7%) reported the Internet as the medium they used most. Most of the respondents (83.3%) used the Internet for more than six years. There were 21 Caucasian students (70%) among the participants.

**Experimental design.**

Like Pilot Study 1, 2 (instrumental versus symbolic website ad appeals) x 2 (low versus high corporate credibility by news articles about company description) between-subjects factorial design was employed.

**Procedure.**

Identical procedures for the recruitment of sample and for the experiment were used except for the replacement of corporate credibility manipulation in Pilot Study 2. The main purpose of Pilot Study 2 was to develop a stronger manipulation of corporate credibility than the one generating an insignificant difference in Pilot Study 1. Thus, fictitious news articles containing descriptions of the fictitious e-commerce company (myauto.com) with low versus high corporate credibility were included in the questionnaire in Pilot Study 2. Accordingly, the written instructions were modified. Participants read news articles about the companies and viewed the company websites. After viewing, participants responded to the standardized items in the questionnaire following some multiple choice and open-ended questions about the site. They were debriefed, thanked, and dismissed after submitting their questionnaire. The participants received course credit in the exchange of their voluntary participation in Pilot Study 2.
**Stimulus materials.**

The main purpose of Pilot Study 2 was to develop a stronger manipulation of corporate credibility than the one generating an insignificant difference in Pilot Study 1. Following the manipulation method of corporate credibility tested and verified in previous research (e.g., Lafferty & Goldsmith, 2004), low and high corporate credibility versions of fictitious news articles about a fictitious e-commerce company (myauto.com) were constructed by using low versus high numbers for specific information (such as company starting year [“2004” versus “1997”], monthly website visitors [“1,000” versus “5 million”], affiliated media [“25 local newspapers” versus “175 leading newspapers”] and car dealers [“50” versus “10,000”], market coverage difference (“several metropolitan markets” versus “nationwide”), and negative versus positive wordings in reporting about the company (“one of new players” versus “one of the fastest-growing”, “below average” versus “highest”). An effort to maintain equal lengths of the news articles was also made in the editing process of the texts (see Appendix M for the manipulated news articles in terms of corporate credibility). For two other filler websites, moderate numbers for specific information and neutral wordings were used in the news articles. In the instructions for participants, the text was introduced as an excerpt of a recent news article about an e-commerce company featured in *Wall Street Journal*. Participants were instructed to read each manipulated news article before viewing the respective website.

**Independent variables.**

*Corporate Credibility:* Conceptually, corporate credibility is defined as “a type of source credibility focused on a specific corporation as the maker of a product and/or the source of advertising and of other marketing communications” (Newell & Goldsmith, 2001, p. 235). Instead of using company names as in Pilot Study 1, fictitious news articles of *Wall Street Journal* about a fictitious e-commerce company (myauto.com) were used to manipulate corporate credibility in Pilot Study 2.

*Website Appeal:* The identical attitude function-based (instrumental versus symbolic) website appeals used in Pilot Study 1 were also employed in Pilot Study 2.

**Dependent variables.**

*Attitude toward the site:* The identical scale (α = .83, M = 4.34, SD = .99) used in Pilot Study 1 was used to assess participants’ attitude toward the site they viewed.
Attitude toward the brand: The same measure (α = .92, M = 4.48, SD = 1.49) used in Pilot Study 1 was employed to check participants’ attitude toward the brand in Pilot Study 2.

Behavioral intention: The identical scale (α = .96, M = 4.01, SD = 1.85) used in Pilot Study 1 was used to assess participants’ behavioral intention to revisit the website in Pilot Study 2. In general, reliabilities of all the measures in Pilot Study 2 were acceptable.

Manipulation checks.

The reliabilities of instrumental (r = .78) and symbolic (r = .73) function manipulation check were assessed by computing Pearson’s bivariate correlations. Correlations (one-tailed test) were significant at the level of .01.

Instrumental function manipulation check: Participants in the instrumental function-based site ad appeal condition (n = 20, M = 5.15, SD = 1.14) did not perceive the site to be more instrumental than those in symbolic site ad appeal condition (n = 10, M = 5.20, SD = 1.34). This unexpected result seemed to be caused by unequal sample sizes in instrumental versus symbolic function-based website conditions. Because the main purpose of Pilot Study 2 was to check the manipulation of corporate credibility, the equal sample size issue was centered mainly on the corporate credibility condition. Hence, the manipulation of instrumental function-based website appeals was not successful. Based on the lesson from this, every effort was made to maintain equal sample sizes in the instrumental versus symbolic function-based website conditions.

Symbolic function manipulation check: t-test results confirmed that the symbolic function-based website ad appeals were successfully manipulated even though there was a unequal sample size issue. Participants in symbolic function-based website ad appeal condition (n = 10, M = 4.55, SD = 1.34) perceived the site to be more symbolic than those in instrumental site ad appeal condition (n = 20, M = 3.65, SD = 1.07). The perceived difference was statistically significant, t(28) = -2.00, p < .05. Therefore, the manipulation of symbolic function-based website ad appeals in this study was successful.

As mentioned above, the main purpose of Pilot Study 2 was to re-examine the manipulation of corporate credibility using a method verified in previous research.

Corporate credibility manipulation check: The identical scale (α = .91, M = 4.46, SD = 1.02) used in Pilot Study 1 was employed in Pilot Study 2. Independent-samples t-test results indicated that the manipulation of corporate credibility by using news articles was successful. Participants who read a new article with high credibility (n = 15, M = 5.10, SD = .86) perceived
the site to be more credible than those in low credibility condition (n = 15, \( M = 3.83, SD = .73 \)). The mean difference was statistically significant, \( t (28) = -4.39, p < .001 \). Thus, based on the verification of the reliabilities of the measures and the manipulation checks of independent variables via Pilot Study 1 and 2, two main experiments were systematically prepared and later conducted using larger samples.
CHAPTER 4
EXPERIMENT 1

This chapter will explain the research method used in Experiment 1 and report results of data analysis.

Method

The survey method has prevailed in previous studies examining consumers’ responses including their attitudes toward Internet advertising (e.g., Brackett & Carr, 2001; Ducoffe, 1996; Goldsmith & Lafferty, 2002; Korgaonkar & Wolin, 2002; Schlosser et al., 1999). As discussed in Chapter 1, to date, few researchers have conducted attitude function theory-based experiments on consumers’ responses to websites as Internet advertising. In addition, “laboratory-based research” using experiments might be more applicable to the study related to “consumer information search on the Internet” than other research methods (Peterson & Merino, 2003, p. 106) because this dissertation will study consumers’ attitudes toward Internet advertising associated with online information search for their purchase. In this dissertation, the experiments based on the simulation of online environment were conducted to test research hypotheses and questions of the study. Specifically, the main objective of Experiment 1 was to test functional matching hypotheses (H1, H1A, and H1B) in the context of a simulated online environment. The hypotheses were as follows:

**H1:** Online consumers’ responses (attitude toward the site, attitude toward the brand, and behavioral intention) to the corporate website as Internet advertising will be more positive when attitude function-based website appeals match their attitude functions (as measured by the extent of self-monitoring) than when the site appeals do not match their attitude functions.

**H1A:** Online consumers’ responses (attitude toward the site, attitude toward the brand, and behavioral intention) to the corporate website as Internet advertising will be more positive when low self-monitors view the instrumental function-based website than when they view the symbolic function-based website.

**H1B:** Online consumers’ responses (attitude toward the site, attitude toward the brand, and behavioral intention) to the corporate website as Internet advertising will be more
positive when high self-monitors view the symbolic function-based website than when they view the instrumental function-based website.

Sample

The participants for Experiment 1 were recruited from the introductory and intermediate undergraduate courses provided by College of Communication and College of Social Work at the Florida State University. There were two parts in Experiment 1. A total of 186 students participated in the first part (pre-exposure questionnaire session). Among them, a total of 111 students (59.7% of the first-part participants) completed the second part (computer lab session) of Experiment 1. Among 111 participants, 75 female students (67.6%) participated in Experiment 1. The mean age of the participants was 20.65 years old (SD = 1.44). More than half of participants (62.2%) reported the Internet to be the medium they used most. Most of the respondents (85.6%) said that they had used the Internet for more than six years. There were 80 Caucasian (72.1%), 14 African American (12.6%), 13 Hispanic/Latino (11.7%), three students in “other” category along with one Asian American student in the sample. Most of the participants (93.7%) had their own cars, and more than half (58.6%) of them made a decision to get the car they had.

Using student samples for the experimental study of this dissertation was supported based on the following reasons: This dissertation deals with persuasive communication on the Internet as a new medium. Even though students tend to have less positive attitude toward toward traditional and Internet advertising than non-student sample (Ducoffe, 1996; Haller, 1974), students as “experienced early adopters” represent better experienced Internet users when we study “the context of the diffusion of an innovation” (Gallagher, Parsons, & Foster, 2001, p. 81). In addition, because of their homogeneous nature, students were selected as appropriate subjects for experimental research (Calder, Phillips, & Tybout, 1981), because the control of individual differences among participants was one of the important issues in the experimental research. Furthermore, this experimental study was designed in order to test whether manipulated stimuli in an online environment affect participants’ responses as attitude function theory predicts rather than to make “inference to some broader population” (Tourangeau, Couper, & Steiger, 2003, p. 8).
**Experiment Design**

To test the research hypotheses about functional matching in an online context (H1, H1A, and H1B), Experiment 1 was conducted based on a 2 (Self-monitoring: low versus high self-monitors) x 2 (Website appeal: Instrumental function-based versus symbolic function-based ad appeals) between-subjects factorial design. Self-monitoring of participants, which is an indirect, previously verified measure of attitude function and is described below, was measured in the pre-exposure questionnaire. In addition, a theoretically developed attitude function inventory for online car information search was included to measure directly attitude functions in the pre-exposure questionnaire (see Appendix F for attitude function inventory). Website appeals were manipulated in the experiment.

**Procedure**

Students who agreed to participate in the experiment received extra or partial credit for their course. As briefly mentioned above, Experiment 1 consisted of two parts. In the first part, independent variables were measured, and the dependent variables were assessed in the second part of Experiment 1. There was a two-week interval between pre-exposure sessions in classrooms and the computer lab sessions to control possible common method biases in Experiment 1 because Experiment 1 included not only a verified, indirect measure of attitude function, but also a theoretically developed, direct measure of attitude function. A “temporal separation” between the independent and dependent variables was created to avoid providing “common contextual cues” (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, & Podsakoff, 2003, pp. 886-887).

After signing up for the lab experiment, paper-and-pencil pre-exposure questionnaires were distributed to the participants of this study (see Appendix L for the pre-exposure questionnaire). The pre-exposure questionnaire was used mainly to measure participants’ attitude functions that should be related to their online car information search. In the questionnaire, the revised self-monitoring scale (also known as attention-to-social-comparison-information [ATSCI] scale) was used to measure attitude function indirectly (see Appendix G for the ATSCI scale). The questionnaire also included questions about Internet expertise, basic demographic information, such as gender, academic classification, age, media use, and their race/ethnicity.

In the designated sessions, which were held two weeks later from the sign-up date, recruited students participated in the experiment at the computer labs in the Department of Communication at the Florida State University. After entering the computer lab, each participant
was assigned randomly to one of the experimental conditions (see Burke & Christensen, 2004, pp. 226-227 for detailed random assignment procedure; see the following Stimulus Materials subsection for detailed explanation of stimulus materials). The procedure of random assignment was to ensure that “experiments don’t build in differences (authors’ emphasis) between groups” (Haslam & McGarty, 2004, p. 242). In other words, researchers were able to “neutralize differences in study respondents across treatments” through the randomization in the experimental study (Swaminathan, 2000, p. 17).

In the designated experimental session, randomly assigned participants received a post-exposure questionnaire. On the first page of the questionnaire, the instructions about the experiment were given. After reading the first page, participants were exposed to the instruction webpage, which hyperlinked two filler websites and one target website as a stimulus material. The display sequencing of the target website was counterbalanced across participants in Experiment 1. The webpages for Experiment 1 were stored in the secure database of Department of Communication. The websites were displayed on the screen of IBM-compatible computers in the computer lab. After viewing the controlled contents of each homepage, participants completed a post-exposure questionnaire for each website. The questionnaire measured participants’ responses to the stimulus materials, and they were also asked to provide information about their Internet usage, product class (automotive) involvement, online shopping purchase dollar amount, and demographics at the last stage in the questionnaire (see Appendix M for post-exposure questionnaire in Experiment 1). At the end of the questionnaire, a suspicion check was given by asking participants to write the assumed purpose of the study. No participants were correct in hypothesis guessing. Thus, all the completed questionnaires were used for the statistical analysis later. At the end of the questionnaires used in Experiment 1 and 2, participants were asked to write their last name (first four letters) and social security number (last four digits) to match pre-exposure and post-exposure data. After completing the post-exposure questionnaire, participants were debriefed, thanked, and dismissed.

Independent Variables and Stimulus Materials

Attitude Function: Attitude function was operationally defined as the mean score of participants’ responses to the statements describing directly their psychological needs associated with the attitude object. In this study, attitude object was searching for car information on the Internet. Adapting Ennis and Zanna’s (2000) dichotomous classification (instrumental versus
symbolic) of attitude functions, an attitude function inventory for online car information search was developed (see Appendix F for the detailed list of the attitude function inventory). The 22 item scale included items such as: 1) 11 items for instrumental function ($\alpha = .96$): “I search for car information on the Internet to get my money’s worth for purchase”; “I search for car information on the Internet to find a reliable car,” 2) 11 items for symbolic function ($\alpha = .93$): “I search for car information on the Internet because it is an innovative way to get information”; “I want my friends to know I search the Internet for car information.”

The direct measure of attitude function was developed mainly on the assumption that people are aware of their psychological needs at the conscious level and can report them by responding to the standardized format describing the psychological needs. However, after checking response patterns in the questionnaire, it is thought that this assumption might not find a solid ground in assessing some attitude functions for the following reasons: People may not be consciously aware of their specific psychological needs associated with some attitude objects. Further, people may react to the attempt to ask their psychological needs, which are kept within themselves, especially when the needs are closely related to self or self-image. Thus, they may not respond properly when these psychological needs are directly questioned.

There were many cases of uniformed, seemingly problematic response patterns in the direct measure items. For example, visual inspection of item response patterns seemed to indicate that there were many cases showing response acquiescence or a yea-saying tendency due to not using counterbalanced items in the measure. In addition, the almost identical wordings used in the items asking attitude functions were grouped in the block in the questionnaire. The juxtaposition of items in the questionnaire might cause extreme cases of “consistent” responses (see Tourangeau, Rips, & Rasinski, 2000, pp. 213-214.). In addition, the frequency distribution of the measure seemed to indicate some patterns in responses. Specifically, kurtosis of the measure (instrumental function index = -.713; symbolic function index = -.608) indicated that some responses were in tail parts in the frequency distribution curve. In other words, unlike normal distribution, the frequency distribution of direct measured attitude functions was flat. Thus, based on several reasons, the direct measure was excluded in main statistical analysis. Instead, self-monitoring, the verified, indirect measure of attitude function was employed.

Self-monitoring: Self-monitoring as an indirect measure of attitude function was a between-subjects measure in this study. It was operationally defined as the mean score of
participants’ responses to the statements describing indirectly their psychological needs. In this study, attitude function associated with the attitude object (i.e., searching for online car information) was measured indirectly by attention-to-social-comparison-information (ATSCI) scale as the revised self-monitoring scale. As introduced in Chapter 2, some attitude functionalists have found an indirect way of measuring attitude functions in advertising as persuasive messages by using the scale of self-monitoring (e.g., DeBono & Packer, 1991; Snyder & DeBono, 1985). These researchers reported that persons with high self-monitoring scores tended to like image-oriented ad (or symbolic function-based ad appeals) while persons with low self-monitoring scores were more likely to respond favorably to quality-oriented ads (or instrumental function-based ad appeals). Thus, those who have high self-monitoring scores (measured by the ATSCI scale) were predicted to respond more favorably to symbolic function-based ad appeals while those with low self-monitoring scores were predicted to respond more positively to instrumental function-based ad appeals.

Self-monitoring was measured by a thirteen-item, 7-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (7) (Cronbach’s alpha = .84). A total of 13 items, originally developed by Lennox and Wolfe (1984), were summed and averaged to obtain index scores of the scale (see Appendix G for the items used to measure self-monitoring). One item in the ATSCI scale was reverse-coded so that a higher score indicated a higher attention to social comparison information (Where needed, some of the measures used in Experiment 1 and 2 were recoded in the identical manner so that higher scores in items reflected responses to the construct in a positive direction). Then, the index scores were divided into two groups (low [n = 54] versus high [n = 53] self-monitors) by a median score as a criterion.

Website Appeal: As used in Pilot Study 1 and 2, identical dichotomous (instrumental versus symbolic) attitude function-based persuasive communication messages (i.e., texts and hyperlinks containing instrumental function versus symbolic function-based ad appeals) in the website as the stimulus materials were used for Experiment 1.

Two versions of the manipulated contents of the website were used as the stimulus materials for Experiment 1: One website has persuasive texts and hyperlinks containing instrumental function-based ad appeals, while the other website displays persuasive texts and hyperlinks representing symbolic function-based ad appeals (see Appendix I for computer screen captures of two websites as the stimulus materials for Experiment 1). In Experiment 1 and 2,
only one name (www.myauto.com) was used for the company name to remove any existing company name effects on consumers’ responses by dropping a relatively known company name (www.cars.com), which was tested in Pilot Study 1 and did not generate strong effects of corporate credibility.

**Manipulation Checks**

After viewing the content of the website as stimulus materials, participants expressed their responses to the following statements, checking the manipulation concerning instrumental versus symbolic function-based appeals in the contents (i.e., texts and hyperlinks) of the website for Experiment 1. Identical items measuring *instrumental function manipulation check* (r = .78) and *symbolic function manipulation check* (r = .79) used in Pilot Study 1 and 2 were used in Experiment 1 (Pearson’ correlations were calculated to assess the reliability of instrumental and symbolic function manipulation checks. The correlations were significant at the level of .01.

**Dependent Measures**

Previously verified measures used in advertising research were adapted and/or modified for Experiment 1 in order to assure high reliability and validity of the measures.  

*Attitude toward the site (Ast)*: As in Pilot Study 1 and 2, the identical eight items (α = .87) measuring attitude toward the site were used in Experiment 1.  

*Attitude toward the brand (Ab)*: Attitude toward the brand (Ab) was measured by a three-item, 7-point semantic differential scale (α = .92), which was used in Pilot Study 1 and 2.  

*Behavioral intention to revisit the website*: As in Pilot Study 1 and 2, a 4-item scale from previous research conducted by Raney and colleagues (2003) was employed to measure behavioral intention to revisit the website. The reliability of the measure (α= .93) was satisfactory.  

The reliability coefficients for the scales used in Experiment 1 are summarized in Table 5. In general, all the reliability estimates for the scales used in Experiment 1 seemed acceptable.
Table 5
Scale Reliability Coefficients, Item Means, Standard Deviations, and Ranges for Experiment 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scale</th>
<th>Experiment 1 (N = 111)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>α (or r for the scale with *)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-monitoring (ATSCI)</td>
<td>.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instrumental function manipulation check</td>
<td>.78*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Symbolic function manipulation check</td>
<td>.79*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attitude toward the site</td>
<td>.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attitude toward the brand</td>
<td>.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Behavioral intention to revisit the site</td>
<td>.93</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. α = Crobach’s alpha coefficient; r = Pearson’s correlation coefficient; M = Mean; SD = Standard deviation. * the correlation was significant at the level of .01.

Results

Manipulation Checks

Two items were used to examine whether manipulation of instrumental function-based website appeals was successful (See the items in chapter 3). A t-test for two independent samples revealed that participants exposed to instrumental function-based website appeals (M = 5.86, SD = .85) perceived the site to be more instrumental than those exposed to symbolic function-based website appeals (M = 5.50, SD = 1.25). The perceived difference was statistically significant (p < .05). Two items were also used to examine whether manipulation of symbolic function-based website appeals was successful. A t-test results revealed that participants who viewed symbolic function-based website appeals (M = 5.29, SD = 1.35) felt the site to be more symbolic than
counterparts who saw instrumental function-based website appeals \((M = 4.00, SD = 1.36)\). The difference was significant \((p < .001)\). Thus, it is concluded that the manipulations of instrumental and symbolic function-based website appeals were successful.

**Statistical Analysis of Data**

A two-way multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was conducted to test the research hypothesis \((H1)\) stating that online consumers’ responses to the corporate website as Internet advertising (attitude toward the site, attitude toward the brand, and behavioral intention) will be more positive when persuasive messages of Internet advertising match their attitude functions (as measured by the extent of self-monitoring) than when the messages do not match their attitude functions. In other words, MANOVA was performed to determine the effect of attitude function-based website appeals and self-monitoring (as an indirect measure of individuals’ attitude functions: instrumental versus symbolic) on three dependent variables including attitude toward the website \((Ast)\), attitude toward the brand \((Ab)\), and behavioral intention \((BI)\).

Before conducting the main analysis of data for Experiment 1, a randomly selected 10% of the cases were given meticulous visual inspection for data-entry errors by comparing the filled questionnaire with SPSS input contents. In addition, frequency distributions for items in the data file were used to detect any errors and missing data. In addition, no systematic pattern was detected in missing data analysis. Thus, it was inferred that the small amount of missing data occurred randomly, and was not likely to cause serious problems (see Shadish, Cook, & Campbell, 2002; Tabachnick & Fidell, 2001, pp. 65-66; Tinsley & Brown, 2000, pp. 10-12 for the detailed discussion of dealing with missing data). Data was analyzed using SPSS version 13 and missing data were excluded in data analysis. Descriptive statistics for Experiment 1 are summarized in Table 6.
Table 6
Descriptive Statistics of Cell Means and Standard Deviations for Experiment 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dependent variables</th>
<th>Self-monitoring</th>
<th>Attitude function-based website advertising appeals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Instrumental</td>
<td>Symbolic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>5.13 (.87)*</td>
<td>4.61 (1.07)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n = 31</td>
<td>n = 23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>5.28 (.90)</td>
<td>4.92 (.99)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n = 25</td>
<td>n = 28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>5.12 (1.35)</td>
<td>5.10 (1.61)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attitude toward the site</td>
<td>n = 31</td>
<td>n = 23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5.05 (1.22)</td>
<td>4.94 (1.46)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n = 25</td>
<td>n = 28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Behavioral intention</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>4.32 (1.51)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>High</td>
<td>4.74 (1.38)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n = 25</td>
<td>n = 23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>High</td>
<td>4.12 (1.59)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n = 25</td>
<td>n = 28</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. * = Mean (Standard Deviation)

Previous attitude function research and Internet advertising research suggests that three dependent variables in this study (i.e., attitude toward the site, attitude toward the brand, and behavioral intention to revisit the website) may be theoretically and empirically correlated to each other (Bruner & Kumar, 2000; Po & Adam, 2002; Shavitt, 1990; Stevenson et al., 2000). Bartlett’s test for sphericity was used to determine if the dependent variables for experiment 1 were correlated because the MANOVA assumes that dependent variables are correlated. The test result was significant ($p < .001$), and it indicated that dependent variables were intercorrelated. The Box’s test was not significant, $F(18, 33817) = .828, p = .669$. Thus, homogeneity of variance-
covariance as a test assumption for MANOVA was fulfilled, and Wilks’ Lambda (Λ) was used as the test statistic in this analysis.

The 2 x 2 between-subjects MANOVA results revealed that there were no significant main effects of attitude function-based website appeals, Wilks’ Λ = .942, F(3, 101) = 2.06, p = .111, partial η² = .058*, observed power = .513, or self-monitoring, Wilks’ Λ = .976, F(3, 101) = .820, p = .486, partial η² = .024, observed power = .222, on the combination of three dependent variables including attitude toward the site, attitude toward the brand, and behavioral intention. In addition, MANOVA results indicated that there were no significant interaction effects, Wilks’ Λ = .981, F(3, 101) = .649, p = .585, partial η² = .019, observed power = .182, of website appeals and self-monitoring on the dependent variables. Thus, H1 was not supported. Before examining the results of multiple, univariate ANOVA, a Bonferroni-type adjustment was made for inflated Type I error (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2001, p. 349). This adjustment involved “setting a more stringent alpha level for the test of each DV” (Mertler & Vannatta, 2002, p. 122). Thus, each univariate test was conducted at the significance level of .016, because there were three dependent variables (.05/3 = .0167). At the more stringent alpha level, the results of univariate ANOVA revealed that participants’ attitude toward the website did not differ significantly for attitude function-based website appeals, F(1, 103) = 5.49, p = .021, partial η² = .051, observed power = .641, even though the p value (.021) almost approached to newly adjusted, stringent level of the significance (α = .016). The main effect of the website appeals on behavioral intention was not statistically significant, F(1, 103) = 2.96, p = .088, partial η² = .028, observed power = .399. In addition, participants’ attitude toward the brand did not differ significantly for attitude function-based website appeals, F(1, 103) = .06, p = .814, partial η² = .001, observed power = .053. Univariate ANOVA results indicated that all the main effects of self-monitoring on each dependent variable were not significant: attitude toward the site, F(1, 103) = 1.54, p =

* In the multivariate situation, η² is calculated to estimate the strength of association or “the relation between the grouping variable and the leading composite of the outcome variables” (Tinsley & Brown, 2000, p. 197). In this dissertation, partial η² was reported as a recommended estimate of a strength of association or an effect size, mainly because it is a less biased estimate than η², especially in the multivariate case (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2001, p. 339). In addition, η² is easy to calculate when the value of Wilks’ Λ is available (η² = 1 - Λ), because Wilks’ Λ as “an inverse criterion” is interpreted as the variance in the linear combination of the DVs not accounted for by the IV(s) (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2001, p. 339), and η² is interpreted as “the proportion of the variance accounted for in the best linear combination of DVs by the IV(s) and/or interactions of IVs” (Mertler & Vannatta, 2002, p. 125). Here, the value of partial η² indicates that 5.8% of the variance in the best linear combination of attitude toward the site, attitude toward the brand and behavioral intention scores was accounted for by attitude function-based website appeals.
.218, partial $\eta^2 = .015$, observed power = .233; attitude toward the brand, $F(1, 103) = .17, p = .682$, partial $\eta^2 = .002$, observed power = .069; behavioral intention, $F(1, 103) = 1.08, p = .301$, partial $\eta^2 = .010$, observed power = .178.

A one-way multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was conducted to test the research hypothesis (H1A) stating that online consumers’ responses (attitude toward the site, attitude toward the brand, and behavioral intention) to the corporate website as Internet advertising will be more positive when low self-monitors view the instrumental function-based website than when they view the symbolic function-based website. Bartlett’s test for sphericity was used to determine if the dependent variables for Experiment 1 were significantly correlated because the MANOVA assumes that dependent variables are intercorrelated. The test result was significant ($p<.001$) and it indicated that dependent variables were significantly correlated. The Box’s test was not significant, $F(6, 15499) = .552, p = .769$. Thus, homogeneity of variance-covariance as a test assumption for MANOVA was fulfilled, and Wilks’ Lambda (Λ) was used as the test statistic in this analysis.

Utilizing “select cases” command in the menu of SPSS, only low self-monitors were included in this one-way MANOVA. The MANOVA results indicated that there was no significant mean differences among low self-monitors who viewed instrumental (Ast: $M = 5.13$, $SD = 0.87$; Ab: $M = 5.12$, $SD = 1.35$; BI: $M = 4.32$, $SD = 1.51$)* versus symbolic (Ast: $M = 4.61$, $SD = 1.07$; Ab: $M = 5.10$, $SD = 1.61$; BI: $M = 3.90$, $SD = 1.77$) function-based website on a combination of three dependent variables, Wilks’ Λ = .866, $F(3, 50) = 2.59, p = .063$, partial $\eta^2 = .134$, observed power = .601. Even though the $p$ value almost approached the significance level, it was not statistically significant. Thus, H1A was not supported.

Another one-way multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was conducted to test the research hypothesis (H1B) stating that online consumers’ responses (attitude toward the site, attitude toward the brand, and behavioral intention) to the corporate website as Internet advertising will be more positive when high self-monitors view the symbolic function-based website than when they view the instrumental function-based website. Before conducting one-way MANOVA for high self-monitors, the assumptions of the test were examined. Bartlett’s test for sphericity was used to determine if the dependent variables for Experiment 1 were

*Note. Ast = Attitude toward the site, Ab = Attitude toward the brand, BI = Behavioral Intention, M = Mean, SD = Standard Deviation.
significantly correlated because the MANOVA assumes that dependent variables are intercorrelated. The test result was significant ($p<.001$) and it indicated that dependent variables were significantly correlated. The Box’s M test was not significant, $F(6, 18167) = .753, p = .607$. Therefore, homogeneity of variance-covariance as a test assumption for MANOVA was fulfilled. Thus, Wilks’ Lambda ($\Lambda$) was used as the test statistic in this analysis.

Using the identical technique (“select cases”) used to analyze data for $H1A$, one-way MANOVA was conducted to test $H1B$. The MANOVA results for $H1B$ also indicated that there was no significant mean differences among high self-monitors who viewed instrumental (Ast: $M = 5.28, SD = 0.90$; Ab: $M = 5.05, SD = 1.22$; BI: $M = 4.74, SD = 1.38$) versus symbolic (Ast: $M = 4.92, SD = 0.99$; Ab: $M = 4.94, SD = 1.46$; BI: $M = 4.12, SD = 1.59$) function-based website on a combination of three dependent variables, Wilks’ $\Lambda = .954, F(3, 49) = .789, p = .506$, partial $\eta^2 = .046$, observed power = .207. Hence, $H1B$ was not supported.

\* Note. Ast = Attitude toward the site, Ab = Attitude toward the brand, BI = Behavioral Intention, $M$ = Mean, $SD$ = Standard Deviation.
CHAPTER 5
Experiment 2

This chapter will explain the research method used in Experiment 2 and report results of data analysis.

Method

The main purposes of Experiment 2 were to replicate Experiment 1, and to test the research hypothesis investigating main effects of corporate credibility as a special case of source credibility on the dependent variables in the context of the simulated online environment and to answer the research question concerning the interaction effects among three independent variables on the combination of three dependent variables. The research hypothesis (H2) and research question (RQ) were as follows:

**H2**: Responses (attitude toward the site, attitude toward the brand, and behavioral intention) of online consumers who view persuasive messages in the website with high corporate credibility will be more positive than those of online consumers who view the messages in the website with low corporate credibility.

**RQ**: Are there any significant interaction effects among attitude functions (as measured by the extent of self-monitoring), attitude function-based website appeals, and corporate credibility on online consumers’ responses to Internet advertising (attitude toward the site, attitude toward the brand, and behavioral intention to revisit the site)?

Sample

A total 246 participants were recruited from the introductory and intermediate undergraduate courses provided by College of Communication and College of Business at the Florida State University. Among the 246 participants, 148 students were female (60.2%). The mean age of the participants was 21.13 years old (SD = 2.49). More than half of participants (62.6%) reported the Internet as the medium they used most. The average year of Internet usage among the participants was 8.59 years (SD = 2.02). There were 152 Caucasian (61.8 %), 40 African American (16.3%), 34 Hispanic/Latino (13.8%), 6 Asian American (2.4%), and 12 students in “other” category. Most of the participants (92.7%) had their own cars and more than half (61.8%) of them made a decision to get the car they had.
Experiment Design

Experiment 2 was conducted based on a 2 (Self-monitoring: low versus high self-monitors) x 2 (Website appeal: Instrumental function-based versus symbolic function-based appeals) x 2 (Corporate credibility: high versus low) between-subjects factorial design.

Procedure

For Experiment 2, participants signed up for their lab sessions in their classes. Students who agreed to participate in the lab sessions received extra or partial credit for their course. In designated lab sessions, the participants came to the computer labs either in the Department of Communication or in the Department of Communication Disorders. For Experiment 2, the experimenter added two steps closely related to the manipulation of corporate credibility as a special case of source credibility: 1) Inserting a fictitious news article of the Wall Street Journal featuring e-commerce company information with the manipulation of either low or high corporate credibility in the questionnaire before viewing the website, and 2) checking the manipulation of corporate credibility after exposure to the website (see Appendix N for questionnaire used in Experiment 2). Participants were randomly assigned to the experimental conditions. Participants listened to a brief instruction and read a news article about the stimulus before they viewed the website. After viewing the site, the participants filled out the questionnaire. The identical stimulus materials and filler websites used in Experiment 1 were also used in Experiment 2. The display sequencing of target website was counterbalanced across participants in Experiment 2. After completing post-exposure questionnaire, participants were debriefed, thanked, and dismissed.

Independent Variables and Stimulus Materials

Self-monitoring: Like Experiment 1, the function of attitudes toward searching online car information was indirectly measured by the revised self-monitoring scale, attention-to-social-comparison-information (ATSCI) scale. The identical items for the scale used in Experiment 1 were employed in Experiment 2. All the items were summed and averaged to index scores. Then, the scores were median-splited into two groups consisting of low (n = 126) versus high (n = 118) score groups in self-monitoring. Persons with low scores in ATSCI indicate that those who are likely to be responsive to instrumental function-based website appeals while high ATSCI scorers are those who tend to respond positively to symbolic function-based website appeals. The reliability of the scale was assessed by calculating Cronbach’s alpha (α = .88).
Website Appeal: The identical persuasive messages and hyperlinks describing two attitude function-based appeals in the stimulus materials used in Experiment 1 were employed for Experiment 2.

Corporate Credibility: Conceptually, corporate credibility is defined as “a type of source credibility focused on a specific corporation as the maker of a product and/or the source of advertising and of other marketing communications” (Newell & Goldsmith, 2001, p. 235). The identical manipulation method used in Pilot Study 2 was employed in Experiment 2 (see Pilot Study 2 section in Chapter 3 for the detailed manipulation information of corporate credibility). As did in Pilot Study 2, only myauto.com as the e-commerce company name was used for Experiment 2.

Manipulation Checks

In Experiment 2, manipulation checks on website appeals were conducted by using the identical, two-item, 7-point scales used in the manipulation check in Experiment 1. The reliability estimates for two-item instrumental ($r = .80$) and symbolic ($r = .87$) function manipulation check scales were obtained by calculating Pearson’s correlation coefficients. The manipulation of corporate credibility was checked on an eight–item, 7-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (7). The scale ($\alpha = .92$) was used to measure perceived corporate credibility and it was adapted from previous research (Newell & Goldsmith, 2001, p. 237). Eight items for the scale were summed and averaged to get an index score. The following 8 items were used for the manipulation check of corporate credibility (Items with the sign of * were reversely coded): “The company (cars.com or myauto.com) has a great amount of experience; The company is skilled in what they do; The company has great expertise; The company does not have much experience*; I trust the company; The company makes trustful claims; The company is honest; I do not believe what the company tells me.*”

Dependent Measures

The identical dependent measures selected for Experiment 1 were also used in Experiment 2.

Attitude toward the site (Ast): The identical eight-item measure used in Experiment 1 was employed in Experiment 2. The alpha coefficient for attitude toward the site was .88.
**Attitude toward the brand (Ab):** As used in Experiment 1, attitude toward the brand (Ab) was measured by the identical three-item, 7-point semantic differential scale for Experiment 2. The reliability estimate for attitude toward the brand was .95.

**Behavioral intention to revisit the website:** As employed in Experiment 1, the identical 7-point Likert scale (α = .95) originally developed by Raney and colleagues (2003) was used in Experiment 2.

The reliability coefficients for the scales used in Experiment 2 are summarized in Table 7. In general, all the reliability estimates for the scales used in Experiment 2 seemed satisfactory.

### Table 7
Scale Reliability Coefficients, Item Means, Standard Deviations, and Ranges for Experiment 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scale</th>
<th>Experiment 2 (N = 246)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>α</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(or r for the scale with *)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-monitoring</td>
<td>.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corporate credibility manipulation check</td>
<td>.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instrumental function manipulation check</td>
<td>.80*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Symbolic function manipulation check</td>
<td>.87*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attitude toward the site</td>
<td>.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attitude toward the brand</td>
<td>.95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Behavioral intention</td>
<td>.95</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. α = Cronbach’s alpha coefficient; r = Pearson’s correlation coefficient (The correlations were significant at the level of .01); M = Mean; SD = Standard deviation.*
Results

Manipulation Checks

The identical items used in Experiment 1 were employed to check the manipulation of website appeals (see the items in chapter 3). Results of independent-sample t-test indicated that the manipulations of both instrumental and symbolic function-based website appeals were successful. Research participants exposed to instrumental function-based website appeals ($M = 5.50, SD = 1.08$) perceived the site to be more instrumental than those exposed to symbolic function-based website appeals ($M = 5.25, SD = 1.08$). The perceived difference was statistically significant ($p < .05$). The viewers of symbolic function-based website appeals ($M = 4.90, SD = 1.35$) perceived the site to be more symbolic than those exposed to instrumental function-based website appeals ($M = 4.37, SD = 1.32$). The perceived site appeal difference was significant ($p < .01$). Therefore, the manipulations of website appeals were successful. In Experiment 2, corporate credibility was also manipulated. Thus, the manipulation of corporate credibility was examined using eight items explained in the previous chapter. Independent-sample t-test results revealed that participants who read high credibility version of fictitious news article featuring e-commerce company information ($M = 5.10, SD = .91$) perceived higher corporate credibility than those who read low credibility version of e-commerce company information ($M = 3.95, SD = .92$). The perceived difference in corporate credibility was statistically significant ($p < .001$). Hence, it was concluded that corporate credibility manipulation in Experiment 2 was successful.

Statistical Analysis of data

A one-way multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was performed in order to test the following research hypothesis (H2): Responses (attitude toward the site, attitude toward the brand, and behavioral intention) of online consumers who view persuasive messages in the website with high corporate credibility will be more positive than those of online consumers who view the messages in the website with low corporate credibility. The identical procedure explained in Experiment 1 was also taken to examine data for Experiment 2 before conducting the main statistical analysis of data. No systematic pattern was found in missing data. Data for Experiment 2 was also analyzed using SPSS version 13. Thus, the main effect of corporate credibility on the combination of attitude toward the site, attitude toward the brand, and behavioral intention was assessed as follows. Corporate credibility as the independent variable was divided into two groups exposed to news articles with low ($n = 123$) or high corporate
credibility (n = 122). There was one case of missing data, which was excluded in the main analysis, in the sample. Descriptive statistics for corporate credibility are summarized in Table 8.

**Table 8**
Descriptive Statistics of Cell Means and Standard Deviations for Corporate Credibility

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dependent variables</th>
<th>Corporate credibility (N = 245)</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Low (n = 123)</td>
<td>High (n = 122)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attitude toward the site</td>
<td>4.47 (.91)*</td>
<td>5.27 (.86)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attitude toward the brand</td>
<td>4.48 (1.23)</td>
<td>4.82 (1.58)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Behavioral intention</td>
<td>3.59 (1.62)</td>
<td>4.80 (1.50)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* * = Cell Mean (Standard Deviation)

Bartlett’s test for sphericity was used to determine if the dependent variables for experiment 1 were correlated because the MANOVA assumes that dependent variables are correlated. The test result was significant (p < .001) and it indicated that dependent variables in Experiment 2 were intercorrelated. On the other hand, the results of Box’s M test (F(6, 427749) = 2.18, p < .05) indicated the assumption of equal covariance matrices (i.e., homoscedasticity) was violated. However, Box’s M test is considered as “a notoriously sensitive test of homogeneity of variance-covariance matrices” (Tabachnick & Fiddel, 2001, p. 330). The sample sizes were almost equal (see Table 8) and p value (.042) was almost near the significance level of .05. Thus, robustness of the test was expected. Therefore, Wilks’ Lambda (Λ) was used as the test statistic in this analysis. In addition, Pillai’s Trace as “a more robust multivariate test statistic” was also checked for the analysis (Mertler & Vannatta, 2002, p. 124).
The results of one-way MANOVA revealed that there was a significant effect of corporate credibility on the combination of three dependent variables in Experiment 2, Wilks’ $\Lambda = .824$, Pillai’s Trace $= .176$, $F(3, 241) = 17.150$, $p < .001$, partial $\eta^2 = .176$, observed power $= 1.000$. The multivariate effect of corporate credibility was statistically significant ($p < .001$). Partial $\eta^2$ as an estimate of effect size indicates that 17.6% of the variance in the best linear combination of attitude toward the site, attitude toward the brand and behavioral intention scores was accounted for by corporate credibility. Thus, Hypothesis 2 (H2) was empirically supported.

As follow-up analyses, multiple univariate ANOVAs were conducted after a Bonferroni-type adjustment of alpha level was made (Tabachnick & Fiddel, 2001, p. 349). Each univariate test was conducted at the significance level of .016, because there were three dependent variables ($.05/3 = .0167$). Participants’ attitude toward the website differed significantly for corporate credibility, $F(1, 243) = 50.46$, $p < .016$, partial $\eta^2 = .172$, observed power $= 1.000$. In addition, their behavioral intention to revisit the site also differed significantly for corporate credibility, $F(1, 243) = 36.36$, $p < .016$, partial $\eta^2 = .130$, observed power $= 1.000$. However, univariate ANOVA results indicated that corporate credibility had no significant main effect on attitude toward the brand, $F(1, 243) = 3.53$, $p = .061$, partial $\eta^2 = .014$, observed power $= .465$.

To answer the research question of this dissertation, a three-way multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was conducted. The research question (RQ) to be answered was as follows: RQ: Are there any significant interaction effects among self-monitoring, attitude function-based website appeals, and corporate credibility on online consumers’ responses to Internet advertising (attitude toward the site, attitude toward the brand, and behavioral intention to revisit the site)? In other words, 2 x 2 x 2 MANOVA was performed to determine the effect of self-monitoring, attitude function-based website appeals, and corporate credibility on the combination of three dependent variables including attitude toward the website, attitude toward the brand, and behavioral intention to revisit the site. Descriptive statistics for Experiment 2 are reported in Table 9.
Table 9
Descriptive Statistics of Cell Means and Standard Deviations for Experiment 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dependent Variables</th>
<th>Self-monitoring</th>
<th>Corporate Credibility</th>
<th>Website Attitude</th>
<th>Function-based Ad Appeals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Low Corporate Credibility</td>
<td>High Corporate Credibility</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Instrumental</td>
<td>Symbolic</td>
<td>Instrumental</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attitude toward the site</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>4.66 (.83)*</td>
<td>4.23 (.98)</td>
<td>5.50 (.70)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>High</td>
<td>4.69 (.80)</td>
<td>4.30 (.96)</td>
<td>5.09 (.90)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>4.48 (1.53)</td>
<td>4.38 (.91)</td>
<td>5.02 (1.68)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attitude toward the brand</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>4.82 (1.13)</td>
<td>4.33 (1.13)</td>
<td>4.56 (1.59)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>3.74 (1.69)</td>
<td>3.28 (1.52)</td>
<td>4.99 (1.38)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Behavioral intention</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>4.00 (1.71)</td>
<td>3.42 (1.55)</td>
<td>4.59 (1.65)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. * = Cell Mean (Standard Deviation)

Bartlett’s test for sphericity was used to determine if the dependent variables for Experiment 2 were significantly correlated because the MANOVA assumes that dependent variables are intercorrelated. The test result was significant (p<.001) and it indicated that dependent variables were significantly correlated. The Box’s test was not significant, $F(42, 70340) = 1.044, p = .392$. Thus, homogeneity of variance-covariance as a test assumption for MANOVA was fulfilled and Wilks’ Lambda ($\Lambda$) was used as the test statistic in this analysis.
The 2 x 2 x 2 between-subjects MANOVA results revealed that there was no significant interaction among three independent variables, Wilks’ $\Lambda = .996$, $F(3, 233) = .31$, $p = .819$,
partial $\eta^2 = .004$, observed power = .109. Therefore, the answer to the research question (RQ) of this dissertation is that based on the statistical analysis of data collected for Experiment 2, the researcher did not find empirical evidence showing interaction effects among three independent variables on the combination of three dependent variables.

However, there was a significant multivariate main effect of corporate credibility, Wilks’ $\Lambda = .817$, $F(3, 233) = 17.37$, $p < .001$, partial $\eta^2 = .183$, observed power = 1.000, on the combination of three dependent variables including attitude toward the site (Ast), attitude toward the brand (Ab), and behavioral intention (BI). As in Experiment 1, there were no significant differences among attitude function-based website appeals, Wilks’ $\Lambda = .986$, $F(3, 233) = 1.10$, $p = .351$, partial $\eta^2 = .014$, observed power = .294, and self-monitoring, Wilks’ $\Lambda = .991$, $F(3, 233) = .74$, $p = .531$, partial $\eta^2 = .009$, observed power = .206, on the three dependent variables for Experiment 2.
CHAPTER 6
DISCUSSION

This chapter will provide a theoretical discussion of the findings about functional matching and corporate credibility effects. After additional comments on the results of two experiment is made, a brief discussion of the power issue associated with the statistical tests will be given. Limitations of the study will be discussed and several suggestions for future research will be provided. By revisiting research purposes of this dissertation, this chapter will provide concluding comments.

Functional Matching Effect

The main purpose of Experiment 1 was to test functional matching hypotheses (H1, H1A, and H1B) in the context of a simulated online environment. As reported in Chapter 4, the results of the 2 x 2 (low versus high self-monitors; instrumental versus symbolic function-based website appeals) MANOVA did not seem to provide empirical evidence showing that functional matching enhanced consumers’ responses to the persuasive appeals. In other words, the statistical analysis of data from Experiment 1 seemed to indicate that there was no significant interaction effect between attitude function (as measured by self-monitoring) and website appeals on the combination of three dependent variables including attitude toward the site, attitude toward the brand, and behavioral intention to revisit the site.

In addition, one-way MANOVAs were performed to test sub-hypotheses (H1A and H1B). The hypotheses were as follows:

**H1A:** Online consumers’ responses to the corporate website as Internet advertising (attitude toward the site, attitude toward the brand, and behavioral intention) will be more positive when low self-monitors view the instrumental function-based website than when they view the symbolic function-based website.

**H1B:** Online consumers’ responses to the corporate website as Internet advertising (attitude toward the site, attitude toward the brand, and behavioral intention) will be more positive when high self-monitors view the symbolic function-based website than when they view the instrumental function-based website.

Concerning these two sub-hypotheses, at least, there seem to be consistent cell mean differences for low self-monitors (on the combination of three dependent variables) predicted in sub-
hypothesis H1A (see Table 6), even though there was no significant multivariate effect of website appeals on the combination of the dependent variables. In other words, even though it was not statistically significant, the mean differences shown in Table 6 suggest that there is a tendency for low self-monitors to be more persuaded when they view the instrumental function-based website than when they view the symbolic function-based website. In addition, a close examination of Table 6 also seems to show some pattern indicating that mean values in the instrumental function-based website appeal condition tend to be higher than those in the symbolic function-based website appeal condition even though the difference is not statistically significant, Wilks’ Λ = .866, \( F(3, 50) = 2.59, p = .063 \), partial \( \eta^2 = .134 \), observed power = .601. In other words, the results of Experiment 1 seem to suggest that there was an overwhelming effect of instrumental function-based website on all participants’ responses while there was little room for the effect of symbolic function-based website. Compared with previous attitude function research (e.g., DeBono & Packer, 1991; Ennis & Zanna, 1993, 2000; Snyder & DeBono, 1985), the results were inconsistent.

Based on these analyses, we may find some explanations why the functional matching effect was insignificant in Experiment 1 and 2. First, one possible explanation is that there is a possibility that online car information search as an attitude object is unifunctional at least for a student sample, rather than multifunctional. Shavitt (1990) provided significant empirical evidence that there are unifunctional attitude objects “that elicit one principal function in a particular population” (Herek, 2000, p. 332) even though the simplistic classification of attitude functions related to certain attitude objects is not “immutable” (Shavitt, 1990, p. 128). Searching for car information on the Internet may belong to this category of attitude functions. Specifically, the sample used in this study consisted of college students whose average time of Internet use was more than eight and half years \( (M = 8.59, SD = 2.02) \), and 60.6% of the students owned laptop computers, which facilitate Internet access with fewer time and space constraints. For this Internet-savvy population, the function of their attitudes toward searching for product information online might be predominantly unifunctional (i.e., instrumental function) even though further empirical studies are needed to investigate whether attitude function toward consumers’ search car information online is unifunctional across the general population. Unlike the student population, those who are not frequent users of the Internet and thus do not feel such confidence about their expertise on the Internet might have psychological needs that can be met
by the symbolic attitude function. In addition, findings of a focus group discussion as the preliminary research for this dissertation indicated that most of students’ comments on car information search were related exclusively to instrumental attitude function, which implies unifunctionality of attitudes toward online car information search (see Chapter 3 for findings of a focus group discussion).

The second possible explanation is closely related to the close examination of mean differences between participants who viewed the instrumental function-based website and those exposed to the symbolic function-based website (see Table 6). Why did this pattern arise? Participants who viewed the symbolic function-based website may have processed the persuasive messages in a self-protective way, because the participants seemed to interpret that there was an explicit persuasion attempt from the advertiser with a commercial interest, especially when they noticed textual cues related to self-image such as “smart people like you” in the message. In other words, consumers as “active” information processors let their self-defensive mechanism work to guard against explicit persuasion attempts toward the self when the persuasion attempt explicitly addresses their self-images.

This pattern of persuasive communication process called “psychological reactance” has been examined by several persuasion researchers (Brehm, 1966; Burgoon, Alvaro, Grandpre, & Voulodakis, 2000; Roberts & Leifer, 1975). According to psychological reactance theory, psychological reactance is motivated by the receivers of the persuasive communication messages to meet their “basic need for self-determination in effecting his or her environment” when they perceive “a potential threat to freedom” in the persuasive communication process (Burgoon et al., 2000, p. 216). Therefore, responses from the viewers exposed to the symbolic function-based website can be understood from the theoretical perspective of psychological reactance. In addition, with respect to the case of persuasive messages containing “smart people like you,” the Persuasion Knowledge Model (PKM) in the symbolic function-based website argues that consumers “may over time develop ideas about the conditions that lead (persuasion) agents to use such a tactic (such as equating the receiver of persuasive messages to “smart” people) and consequently about the agent’s thinking was” (Friestad & Wright, 1994, p. 13). Thus, the PKM explains that “the perception of a tactic may disrupt the comprehension and elaboration of topic-related statements or images, by drawing the consumer’s attention to their persuasion knowledge and away from their topic knowledge” (Friestad & Wright, 1994, p. 13). Combing with
psychological reactance theory, the PKM explains why the functional matching effect, especially in the symbolic function-based website containing persuasive messages related to the self, generated inconsistency in the experiment. In addition, some attitude function researchers have suggested that functional matching effects can be reduced when there is intense manipulation of (self-related) attitude function, which “may lead to defensiveness and greater difficulty in obtaining attitudinal effects” (Marsh & Julka, 2000, p. 289).

Therefore, based on these theoretical understandings of the experiment results, we may argue that functionally matching persuasive messages may not work when the self-related messages are perceived as a threat to freedom of the message receiver (the self) and/or the messages contain perceived persuasive tactics that the receivers has learned over time. As discussed briefly in Chapter 2, a growing number of persuasion researchers have reported inconsistent evidence for the functional matching hypothesis (e.g., Dubé, Chattopadhyay, & Letarte, 1996; Millar & Millar, 1990), even though there has been accumulating evidence for functional matching effects in persuasive communication. In addition, some of responses from the participants in pilot studies suggested that they noticed explicit persuasion attempts with a commercial intent (see Chapter 3 for summary findings of open-ended questions in pilot studies). The similar pattern about the mean differences in the cells seems to be also shown in Table 9 for Experiment 2 as the replication of Experiment 1 even though it varied in some cells when participants read a news article about an e-commerce company with high corporate credibility.

**Corporate Credibility Effect**

An interesting point in the analysis of data from Experiment 2 is that the mean scores of the participants who tended to react to the symbolic function-based website surpassed the mean scores of the viewer of the instrumental function-based website when they viewed a news article with high corporate credibility in Experiment 2. In other words, perceived high corporate credibility seemed to (although not significantly) somewhat relieve psychological reactance to the symbolic function-based website appeals.

In Experiment 2, corporate credibility was manipulated as a form of publicity that consumers tend to perceive to be more objective than advertising because a news article as the source of information is perceived as “neutral” relative to the commercial interest of the advertiser. In addition, the brand of the website (www.myauto.com) was unfamiliar to participants because the brand was a fictitious one in Experiment 1 and 2. This may also affect
consumers’ information processing of persuasive messages. In Experiment 1, there was no objective information about the unknown company which provided persuasive communication to advance their own commercial interest. However, in Experiment 2, this situation was changed by adding objective information about the company before the consumers were exposed to the commercial website as Internet advertising. The corporate credibility shown in the form of news articles as an objective, impartial communication source (i.e., publicity) in Experiment 2 seemed to affect consumers’ responses because it is believed that there was a synergetic effect of marketing communication tools (publicity and advertising) on consumers’ responses. This explanation is consistent with a recent study examining the synergetic effect of advertising and publicity (Stammerjohan, Wood, Chang, & Thorson, 2005).

**Additional Comments**

Previous research testing functional matching hypothesis has been conducted in the context of traditional media such as mostly print media. However, few studies were conducted in the context of new media such as the Internet. Therefore, compared with traditional media, new media environment may have affected participants’ persuasive communication process, which may be difficult to explain by traditional persuasion theories. As discussed in Chapter 2, we notice that mixed results of applicability of traditional persuasion theory, especially ELM to new media environment such as the Internet. Attitude function theory tested in this study may have followed a similar path, even though the replications should be made. In other words, the characteristics of new media may have contributed partly to inconsistent results of this study.

In addition, the manipulation of instrumental versus symbolic function-based websites in this study may not have been strong enough to generate statistically significant mean differences among the participants. Thus, it might have led to insignificant differences. However, this explanation is based mainly on the assumption that there is more than one attitude function about attitude objects of interest in the population. However, we could not find the differences because we failed to elicit corresponding responses even though multiple attitude functions of attitude objects exist.

Reviewing the general results of the statistical tests in Experiment 1 and 2 seems to show that there was relatively low observed power even though a high power was found in the

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* Power is defined as “the probability of detecting a significant effect when the effect truly does exist in nature” (Weinfurt, p. 249).
statistical tests assessing corporate credibility effect. There could be possible sources for the lack of power in the statistical tests performed in Experiment 1 and 2.

First, it is believed that median-split method for grouping in the MANOVA, which was used in this study, may contribute to the lowering power in the statistical test. Thus, in general, the multiple regression method is recommended for the analysis of data. However, the research goal, which was based on previous advertising research, was to understand attitude functional matching effect on the combination of three dependent variables, for which the multiple regression may not be the most effective statistical test because separate tests have to be performed.

Second, according to Tabachnick and Fidell (2001), the magnitude and direction of the relationships among the dependent variables in the analysis affect power in MANOVA. In both Experiment 1 and 2, the correlations among the dependent variables were significant and positively related (see Table 10 and 11 for correlation matrix for the dependent variables in Experiment 1 and 2). This fact could contribute to the possible loss of power leading to insignificant multivariate test results in the study. The multivariate test such as the MANOVA is considered as highest “when the pooled within-cell correlation among two DVs is high and negative” (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2001, p. 329). Thus, power in the test is lowered when the magnitude of the correlations among the dependent variables is either moderate or the direction of correlation is positive.

Table 10
Correlations among the Dependent Variables in Experiment 1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Ast</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>111</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Ab</td>
<td>.38**</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td></td>
<td>111</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. BI</td>
<td>.84**</td>
<td>.26**</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>111</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. ** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). Ast = Attitude toward the site; Ab = Attitude toward the brand; BI = Behavioral intention
Table 11
Correlations among the Dependent Variables in Experiment 2.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Ast</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>245</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Ab</td>
<td>.35**</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td></td>
<td>246</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. BI</td>
<td>.78**</td>
<td>.26**</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>246</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. ** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). Ast = Attitude toward the site; Ab = Attitude toward the brand; BI = Behavioral intention

Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research

Limitations
As any studies do, this dissertation also has some caveats and limitations to discuss:
First, the sample used in this study was conveniently collected from college students, who may not represent the general population. Therefore, the results of this study to attitude study cannot be applied to online consumers in general. However, as clearly mentioned in Chapter 3, using the student sample for this experimental study was appropriate because students are considered homogeneous (Calder, Phillips, & Tybout, 1981) and early adopters of an innovation such as the Internet (Gallagher, Parsons, & Foster, 2001).

Second, this study used the attention-to-social-comparison-information scale, an indirect or proxy measure of attitude function, which may not fully reflect consumers’ attitude function. Even though the use of a direct measure of attitude function is theoretically supported, a history of the measurement of attitude functions suggested that directly measuring attitude function has been a persistently challenging task. To the best of researcher’s knowledge, to date, there has been no verified, direct measure of attitude function related to consumers’ car information search online. This situation calls for the systematic development of the measurement scale, which takes considerable time and financial resources. It is considered beyond the purpose of this study even though the scale development is of critical importance in the advancement of scientific knowledge.
Third, this study used a simple website design with fictitious or unknown website names for the website as stimulus materials in both experiments. In the stage of pilot studies, several participants in the studies mentioned “no-eye-catching” website design, even though the design factor of the website was not the interest of this study. Thus, some aspects of ecological validity might be threatened because this study did not use more professionally designed or eye-catching websites even though the researcher made efforts such as downloading the format and content of existing websites to increase ecological validity of the study. In addition, to achieve the maximum control of the experiment, participants in this study were not allowed to view additional, hyperlinked pages, which might also affect ecological validity of the study.

In addition, this study was conducted in a computer lab for the experiments. Therefore, the controlled laboratory research setting may have affected participants’ responses. For the data collection method, this study was dependent primarily on self-report responses, not actual behaviors (i.e., online information search behaviors).

**Suggestions for Future Research**

The limitations of this study illuminate some aspects in the direction of future attitude function research:

First, it is suggested that future studies replicate this study with greater sample size to increase the power of statistics or with a non-student sample to increase the external validity of the study even though student sample is relatively easy to recruit and cost-efficient within limited time and financial resources. In addition, we may get different results if we use a nonstudent sample because college students have more negative and less positive attitudes toward advertising than other people (e.g., Brackett & Carr, 2001; Haller, 1974).

Second, the use of direct measure and/or the manipulation of attitude functions in the study should be considered in future research because they are theoretically more valid than other research methods or measures used in previous attitude function research, even though we acknowledge the methodological difficulty in the development of objective, direct measurement of attitude functions and the ethical issues associated with the manipulation of attitude functions, experimentally inducing psychological needs in the study (see Julka & Marsh, 2000 for a discussion of the ethical issues associated with attitude function manipulations). In addition, researchers can increase statistical power for future attitude function research by employing
“motivational inductions” in their experiments, which may lead to stronger functional match effects (Julka & Marsh, 2000, p. 291).

Third, future studies should consider using either more professionally prepared websites or letting participants navigate hyperlinks in the website to increase the ecological validity of the study. However, this approach, especially the latter one, requires not only more financial resources and computer technology expertise, but also risks of the loss of control in a scientific experiment. Therefore, the researchers should balance carefully between the ecological validity and the control of the experiment when they design their research using new communication technology.

Fourth, future research may include gender as an independent variable in research design. Previous research seemed to have paid little attention to gender differences in attitude functions even though there is evidence for the differences (Prentice & Carlsmith, 2000). Thus, for example, future research may investigate the relationship between gender and attitude function of online car information search.

Last but not least, future research should investigate further whether corporate credibility as the special case of source credibility will work on consumers’ responses in relation to attitude function research under other conditions:

1) **Familiar brand (website) name**: Future study comparing familiar websites with unfamiliar ones would yield interesting results about the effect of corporate credibility because this study used only fictitious websites as the brand names.

2) **Different type of media delivering corporate credibility as publicity**: In this study, print media such as newspapers was used as a form of publicity affecting consumers’ perceived corporate credibility. Does corporate credibility differ for the type of media such as television (both audio and video) or radio (audio only)? What about word-of-mouth communication about corporate credibility from other consumers even when advertising matches psychological needs of target audience? This line of future research will provide insightful, rich guidelines in advertising media planning associated with an integrated marketing communication approach.

3) **Time lapse or sequence of corporate credibility effect as publicity**: In this study, corporate credibility as a form of publicity was manipulated right before consumers’ exposure to advertising. Future research should consider the variation of time lapse and sequence (i.e. before or after the ad) of corporate credibility as a form of publicity. This line of study will help not
only persuasion researchers but also practitioners such as public relations managers to strategically decide when to maximize public relation efforts.

**Concluding Comments**

Concluding the discussion of research results, we need to revisit the research purpose of this dissertation. The main purpose of this dissertation study was to advance the understanding of consumers’ attitudes toward Internet advertising as persuasive communication by the extension and the application of attitude function theory to the new medium. More specifically, there were two purposes of this study:

1) At the theory application level, this dissertation study was designed to assess the applicability of the functional approach to persuasion in a new media context such as the Internet. Inconsistent results of this study testing functional matching effects seem to suggest a limited applicability of functional approach to persuasion to online message-based persuasion. More specifically, as some Internet advertising research (Hershberger, 2003; Karson & Korgaonkar, 2001) has provided inconsistent empirical evidence for traditional persuasion theories, it seems that consumers may process persuasive communication on the Internet differently. Recognizing the relatively easy establishment of online presence by almost anyone, consumers may use self-defensive information processing, which may reduce the persuasion effect, especially when they perceive explicitly persuasive attempts and/or contextual cues in persuasive marketing communication such as advertising on the Internet from unknown e-commerce companies implicitly signaling a possible financial or other risk. Hence, as shown in Experiment 2 of this study, consumers might respond more positively to persuasive marketing communication such as attitude function-based website content when high corporate credibility is presented.

2) From the practical perspective, this investigation intended to provide suggestions about targeted Internet advertising message strategies based on consumers’ psychological needs. As discussed in Chapter 2, the functional matching effect predicted by attitude function theory implies the deliberate selection and tailored construction of persuasive messages on the basis of the identification of attitude functions of message recipients. However, the blanket adoption of persuasive message strategies based on functional matching effect should be cautioned against because, as research results indicated, functionally matched persuasive communication messages (especially the messages with symbolic function-based appeals) may not work when consumers
perceive the messages to be explicitly persuasive and/or the credibility of the new company is not known to target audience. Therefore, as shown in Experiment 2, companies, especially new ones, should consider making an integrated marketing communication effort (e.g., sending a well-edited company information to be used in traditional media such as newspapers or television) before establishing their commercial website presence as an Internet marketing communication channel to consumers.
APPENDIX A: HUMAN SUBJECT COMMITTEE APPROVAL LETTER

Florida State University
Office of the Vice President For Research
Human Subjects Committee
Tallahassee, Florida 32306-2763
(850) 644-8673 · FAX (850) 644-4392

APPROVAL MEMORANDUM

Date: 12/16/2005

To:
Chan-pyo Hong
1555 Delaney Drive # 1601
Tallahassee, FL 32309

Dept.: COMMUNICATION

From: Thomas L. Jacobson, Chair

Re: Use of Human Subjects in Research
Study of consumers' attitudes and behaviors on websites

The forms that you submitted to this office in regard to the use of human subjects in the proposal referenced above have been reviewed by the Secretary, the Chair, and two members of the Human Subjects Committee. Your project is determined to be Exempt per 45 CFR § 46.101(b) 2 and has been approved by an accelerated review process.

The Human Subjects Committee has not evaluated your proposal for scientific merit, except to weigh the risk to the human participants and the aspects of the proposal related to potential risk and benefit. This approval does not replace any departmental or other approvals, which may be required.

If the project has not been completed by 12/15/2006 you must request renewed approval for continuation of the project.

You are advised that any change in protocol in this project must be approved by resubmission of the project to the Committee for approval. Also, the principal investigator must promptly report, in writing, any unexpected problems causing risks to research subjects or others.

By copy of this memorandum, the chairman of your department and/or your major professor is reminded that he/she is responsible for being informed concerning research projects involving human subjects in the department, and should review protocols of such investigations as often as needed to insure that the project is being conducted in compliance with our institution and with DHHS regulations.

This institution has an Assurance on file with the Office for Protection from Research Risks. The Assurance Number is IRB00000446.

Cc: Laura Arpan
HSC No. 2005.1015
APPENDIX B: INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Informed Consent Form

Hello! My name is Chan-pyo Hong and I am a doctoral candidate in the Department of Communication at the Florida State University. Under the supervision of Dr. Laura Arpan, I am conducting a research study to learn college students’ attitudes and behaviors associated with the websites. You will be asked to participate in two parts of our research: You are going to fill out the questionnaires today, and later in the designated session, you will view the websites and fill out the questionnaires at the computer lab (Sign-up sheets for the session will be distributed after you sign this form). The first part of our study will last approximately 15 minutes and the second part of the study will last no more than 30 minutes. Your participation in this study is voluntary. If you choose not to participate or to withdraw from the study at any time, it will not affect your grade. There are no known risks to you if you participate in this study. The benefits to you are extra credit (the amount of which will be determined by your instructor) or class credit (i.e., you can fulfill a portion of your research requirement for your class) for your participation. It might also benefit you to learn about how research is conducted. You can stop at any points and you will still have an extra credit. Debriefing will be given at your class or by email after the collection of data.

The results of the research may be published, but your name will not be used. Your responses will be kept confidential, to the extent allowed by law and I will keep the data on a password secured disk and that I will destroy the data five years after it is published. The collected questionnaires will be handled only by authorized persons and the researcher. All the filled questionnaires will be shredded after the completion of this study by December 31, 2006.

If you have any questions concerning this research study, please call me at (850) 644-4879 and/or call Dr. Laura Arpan, my supervising professor at (850) 645-4693. If you have any questions about your rights as a subject/participant in this research, or if you feel you have been placed at risk, you can contact the Chair of the Human Subjects Committee, Institutional Review Board, through the Vice President for the Office of Research at (850) 644-8633.

Name: ____________________________________________ (Print last name first, please)

Signature: ____________________________________________
APPENDIX C: PRE-FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONNAIRE

Please answer the following questions. Choose only ONE choice or write legibly. All the information collected here will be confidential and be used only for academic purpose.

1. Do you have your own car?
   1) Yes  2) No

2. Have you ever bought a car?
   1) Yes  2) No (skip to question 4)

3. If you have bought a car, why did you choose that car?
   1) Brand reputation  2) Price  3) Advertising  4) Friend’s advice
   5) Consumer report  6) Other__________________(Specify)

4. Have you ever shopped online?
   1) Yes  2) No

5. Have you ever used a search engine (for example, www.google.com) for your shopping?
   1) Yes  2) No

6. Have you ever done car shopping online (for example, seeing the picture of a car or gathering car information)?
   1) Yes  2) No

7. Have you ever purchased a car online?
   1) Yes  2) No

8. What is your gender?
   1) Female  2) Male

9. Which medium do you use most?
   1) Internet  2) Magazine  3) Newspapers  4) Radio  5) Television
10. What is your academic classification?

1) Freshman  2) Sophomore  3) Junior  4) Senior
5) Graduate student  6) Other (Specify)

11. How old are you? Write your age (for example, 21 years old)

_____________ years old

Please write your answers legibly.

1. a) When you buy a car, what is the most important thing you look for in that car?

b) Why is that so important?

2. If you have purchased a car through the website, why did you use the website?

If not, why not?
APPENDIX D: FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONNAIRE

**Focus group questions** (The sentences in the parenthesis are supplementary comments/explanations for the moderator of the focus group discussion.)

(As you may know, some people use the Internet for their car shopping.)

1. a) Have you tried online car shopping? (Here, the meaning of shopping includes checking the price, and car information or other relevant information, not only purchasing the car per se)
   b) How would you feel about online car shopping?
   c) Why would (or wouldn’t) you do online car shopping?

2. (If yes to Q1a) What kind of website did you visit during your online car shopping?
   (Give exemplary website category such as manufacturer’s website (www.toyota.com), independent consumer report website (http://www.consumerreports.org/main/home.jsp), intermediary website (www.autobytel.com), and other kinds of website.)

3. How did you find that website?
   a) by search engines (www.google.com),
   b) by hyperlinks in other website,
   c) by word-of-mouth communication (for example, from friends or family),
   d) by other media (such as newspapers, radio, television, or outdoor billboard)

4. (If you had used search engines for your online car shopping, you could have received multiple search results.)
   a) How did you select the website? (by order of displayed results, by describing words contained in the text, and so on….),
   b) If some words in the search results had caught your attention, what were they?,

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c) Why did they draw your attention? As a result of that, did you visit that web site?

5. If you visited car intermediary website such as www.autobytel.com, what do you think makes good or bad website for your online car shopping?

6. a) Did you see any online car advertising?
   b) How and where did you find it?
   c) Could you recall any copy or any image?
   d) Did you like/hate the ad? Why/why not?

7. Any other topics related to online car shopping that are not covered in our discussion?
APPENDIX E: PILOT STUDY QUESTIONNAIRE

After viewing the websites, please answer the following questions.

1. Do you know the name of any website you just viewed?
   1) Yes   2) No (proceed to Question 3)

2. If you answered yes to question 1, have ever visited the website?
   1) Yes   2) No

3. Please write a) automotive, b) health product, c) lap-top computer related website names you know.
   1) automotive-related website:
   2) health product-related website:
   3) lap-top computer-related website:

4. What do you think about the website you reviewed? Please print your responses legibly in the following space.
   a) general impression of the website:
   b) text messages of the website:
   c) design of the website:
   d) Anything that can be improved:

5. What do you think about the questionnaire? Please write your opinion about the questionnaire and tell us what can be changed to improve.

6. List all the communication courses you are taking in this semester.
APPENDIX F: ATTITUDE FUNCTION INVENTORY (FOR ONLINE CAR INFORMATION SEARCH)

*Instrumental function of consumer attitude toward searching for online car information*

I search for car information on the Internet to get my money’s worth for purchase.
I search for car information on the Internet to get a better deal in my car purchase.
I search for car information on the Internet to get a gas-saving car.
I search for car information on the Internet to find a reliable car.
I search for car information on the Internet to find a safe car for me and my family or friends.
I search for car information on the Internet to find a good performance car.
I search for car information on the Internet to get peace of mind about my new car.
I search for car resale value information on the Internet to know the market value of my car.
I search for independent reports of cars on the Internet to get unbiased information about cars.
I search for car information on the Internet to save time.
I search for car information on the Internet to obtain car information with less effort.

*Symbolic function of consumer attitude toward searching for online car information*

1) *Value-expressive function of consumer attitude toward searching for online car information*

I search for car information on the Internet because it is a cool way to get information.
I search for car information on the Internet because it is an innovative way to get information.
I search for car information on the Internet because it is how smart people search for information.
I search for car information on the Internet because it is a state-of-the-art to get information.
I search for car information on the Internet because I am Internet-savvy.
I search for car information on the Internet because it is an intelligent way to get information.

2) *Social-expressive function of consumer attitude toward searching for online car information*
Highly educated people search for car information on the Internet.

Working professionals search for car information on the Internet.

I want my friends to know I search the Internet for car information.

I want my family to know I search the Internet for car information.

I want my colleagues or other students to know I search the Internet for car information.
APPENDIX G: ATTENTION-TO-SOCIAL-COMPARISON-INFORMATION (ATSCI) SCALE
Adapted from Lennox and Wolfe (1984).

It is my feeling that if everyone else in a group is behaving in a certain manner, this must be the proper way to behave.
I actively avoid wearing clothes that are not in style.
At parties I usually try to behave in a manner that makes me fit in.
When I am uncertain how to act in a social situation, I look to the behavior of others for cues.
I try to pay attention to the reactions of others to my behavior in order to avoid being out of place.
I find that I tend to pick up slang expressions from others and use them as part of my own vocabulary.
I tend to pay attention to what others are wearing.
The slightest look of disapproval in the eyes of a person with whom I am interacting is enough to make me change my approach.
It’s important to me to fit into the group I’m with.
My behavior often depends on how I feel others wish me to behave.
If I am the least bit uncertain as to how to act in a social situation, I look to the behavior of others for cues.
I usually keep up with clothing style changes by watching what others wear.
When in a social situation, I tend not to follow the crowd, but instead behave a manner that suits my particular mood at the time.*

* The item was reverse-coded for the analysis.
APPENDIX H: COMPUTER SCREEN CAPTURES OF THE STIMULUS MATERIALS FOR PILOT STUDY 1

Stimulus material for low corporate credibility
(Instrumental function-based content with website name of myauto.com)
Stimulus material for low corporate credibility
(Symbolic function-based content with website name of myauto.com)

Welcome to MyAuto.com!
Our website is designed to help smart people just like you.
In MyAuto.com, you can find car information using our state-of-the-art search technology such as IntelliCarSearch. You are an innovative leader when you search for car information in our website. You can find a car that reflects your personal style when you search with MyAuto.com. Smart people around the world find car information in MyAuto.com more than in any other websites.

Why don’t you start searching MyAuto.com today?

Car Info Center
- Find Car Info by IntelliCarSearch technology: be innovative and find car information fast with our state-of-the-art IntelliCarSearch technology developed by MyAuto.com research team.
- Tips for Smart Consumers: be smart consumers like you can find helpful car buying tips from our experts.
- Send Us about Our Website to Friends and Family: impress your family, friends, and/or colleagues by sharing your cool car experience and latest information in MyAuto.com.
- Join Our Internet-savvy User Community - MyAuto.com supports an Internet-savvy user virtual community where you can find friends as well as their real car-buying experiences.

Shopping Advice
Resources to help you get the right car at the right price
- How to Get the Best Deal
- Buying: Save Time, Money
- Top 10s: Best & Worst Lists
- Financing: Tips & Advice
- Safety: Crash Tests & More
- Insurance: Coverage Advice
- Car Talk: Maintenance Advice
Stimulus material for high corporate credibility

(Instrumental function-based content with website name of cars.com)
Stimulus material for high corporate credibility (Symbolic function-based content with website name of cars.com)
APPENDIX I: COMPUTER SCREEN CAPTURES OF THE STIMULUS MATERIALS

FOR EXPERIMENT 1 AND 2

(Instrumental function-based content)
Welcome to MyAuto.com!

Our website is designed to help smart people just like you.

In MyAuto.com, you can find car information using our state-of-the-art search technology such as IntelliCarSearch. You are an innovative leader when you search for car information in our website. You can find a car that reflects your personal style when you search with MyAuto.com. Smart people around the world find car information in MyAuto.com more than in any other websites.

Why don’t you start searching MyAuto.com today?

---

**Car Info Center**

- **Find Car Info by IntelliCarSearch Technology**: Be innovative and find car information fast with our state-of-the-art IntelliCarSearch technology developed by MyAuto.com research team.
- **Tips for Smart Consumers**: Smart consumers like you can find helpful car buying tips from our experts.
- **Send Email about User Website to Friends and Family**: Impress your family, friends, and/or colleagues by sharing your cool experience and latest information in MyAuto.com.
- **Join Our Internet-savvy User Community**: MyAuto.com supports an Internet-savvy user virtual community where you can find friends as well as their real car-buying experiences.

**Shopping Advice**

- **How to Get the Best Deal**
- **Buying**: Save Time, Money
- **Top 100 Best & Worst Lists**
- ** Financing**: Tips & Advice
- **Safety**: Crash Tests & More
- **Insurance**: Coverage Advice
- **Car Talk**: Maintenance Advice

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Contact Us | Site Index | About MyAuto.com | Employment Opportunities | Become a MyAuto.com Dealer

Please Click Here
APPENDIX J: COMPUTER SCREEN CAPTURE OF THE INDEX WEBPAGE FOR EXPERIMENT 1 AND 2

<p>| | | |</p>
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<td>M_1</td>
<td>M_2</td>
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<tr>
<td>M_4</td>
<td>M_5</td>
<td>M_6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Please read carefully the following instructions.

First of all, thank you much for your participation in this study. We would like to know your feelings and opinions about the homepages of three websites that you are going to view. Please take some time to read the homepage content of the first website (Please do not click any hyperlinks in the homepage. They were deactivated for this study). After viewing the homepage of the first website, fill out the questionnaire for the website. As mentioned before, your responses to the questionnaire will be kept confidential, to the extent allowed by law and will be used only for academic purposes. After completing the questionnaire, scroll down by using a scrolling bar in the browser and you may see the "Please Click Here" phrase in the bottom of the homepage. Click the hyperlink "Here" to proceed to the next website. You need to follow the same procedure until you complete the questionnaire for the third website. Thank you!

(If you do not understand the instructions above, please raise your hand now)

Please Click Here
APPENDIX L: COMPUTER SCREEN CAPTURES OF FILLER WEBSITES

Filler website 1: modified Bodyshapingwithherbs.com
Laptop Travel is a one stop laptop resource and marketplace for the traveling laptop consumer. Our website specializes in providing you with the most common and most necessary items required in order to ensure trouble free portability to your notebook as you travel. Foreign travel, laptop batteries and laptop cases are just a few of our best selling products that you will find in our extensive catalog. Our laptop Travel page has a complete searchable database of laptop batteries and laptop sleeves organized in an interactive menu based selection system. Laptop cases and laptop bags are another popular item among our varying options for all consumers. Whether you require a leather laptop case for your office or perhaps you would prefer a specially designed laptop bag, Laptop Travel has the product you need. If you are looking for a laptop hard drive or hard drive accessories for your notebook, we offer portable external hard drives and internal hard drives to upgrade or expand your storage capacity. If for some reason you do not find what you are looking for in our store, please contact us so that we can locate your product at the best possible price.
Please read the following excerpt:

The following description of the e-commerce company in the website you are going to view was taken from a recent *Wall Street Journal* article.

**MyAuto.com Corporation**

Founded in 1997, *MyAuto.com* is a division of Classified Ventures, LLC, a privately owned strategic joint-venture among six leading media companies: Belo Corp., Gannett Co. Inc., Knight Ridder Inc., The McClathy Co., Tribune Co., and The Washington Post Co. Myauto.com has experienced record growth across all aspects of its business. More than 5 million vehicle shoppers visit MyAuto.com each month. The company places online vehicle listings from nearly 10,000 auto dealers alongside nationwide classified advertising and private-party listings to offer the best selection of new and used cars online. Partnered with 175 leading newspapers, television stations, and their websites, MyAuto.com became one of the fastest-growing online automotive publishing companies. The company was ranked highest in a dealer satisfaction study conducted by J.D. Power and Associates for three consecutive years. Recently, MyAuto.com redesigned its consumer website making it easier than ever to buy, sell, and research. As a result, MyAuto.com connects a car buyer and a seller every 7 seconds.

Please click the hyperlink “Here” in the computer screen to view the website. After viewing the website, please turn this page.
Low corporate credibility manipulation condition.

Please read the following excerpt:

The following description of the e-commerce company in the website you are going to view was taken from a recent *Wall Street Journal* article.

**MyAuto.com Corporation**

Founded in 2004, *MyAuto.com* is a privately owned online automotive publishing company and the company is financially backed by First Venture Co., a new venture capital company also established in 2004. MyAuto.com has experienced slow but steady growth across all aspects of its business. Around 1,000 vehicle shoppers visit myauto.com each month. The company places online vehicle listings from nearly 50 auto dealers in several metropolitan markets in the US. Partnered with 25 local newspapers, 2 television stations and their websites, MyAuto.com has become one of new players in competitive online automotive publishing area. In 2005, the company was ranked “below average” in a dealer satisfaction study conducted by J.D. Power and Associates because it experienced a capacity problem with its server for two weeks. Recently, MyAuto.com redesigned its consumer website to increase online traffic and purchased new servers for its website. However, no immediate or remarkable increase in site traffic has been reported yet.

Please click the hyperlink “Here” in the computer screen to view the website. After viewing the website, please turn this page.
APPENDIX N: PRE-EXPOSURE QUESTIONNAIRE FOR EXPERIMENT 1

Hello! As mentioned earlier, the information collected from this questionnaire will be kept confidential and will be used only for academic purposes. It will take about 10 to 15 minutes to complete this questionnaire. Please read the following instruction carefully.

Section 1: Please select one choice that you think represents best your idea about the following statements (1 = Strongly disagree, 7 = Strongly agree).

Compared to most other people, I feel like I can find product related information easily on the Internet.
Strongly disagree Strongly agree
1 2 3 4 5 6 7
I consider myself an expert in using the Internet.
Strongly disagree Strongly agree
1 2 3 4 5 6 7
I consider myself knowledgeable about search techniques on the Internet.
Strongly disagree Strongly agree
1 2 3 4 5 6 7
I am very comfortable using computers and the Internet.
Strongly disagree Strongly agree
1 2 3 4 5 6 7
I search for car information on the Internet to get my money’s worth for purchase.
Strongly disagree Strongly agree
1 2 3 4 5 6 7
I search for car information on the Internet to get a better deal in my car purchase.
Strongly disagree Strongly agree
1 2 3 4 5 6 7
I search for car information on the Internet to get a gas-saving car.
Strongly disagree Strongly agree
1 2 3 4 5 6 7
I search for car information on the Internet to find a reliable car.

Strongly disagree  Strongly agree
1  2  3  4  5  6  7

I search for car information on the Internet to find a safe car for me and my family or friends.

Strongly disagree  Strongly agree
1  2  3  4  5  6  7

I search for car information on the Internet to find a good performance car.

Strongly disagree  Strongly agree
1  2  3  4  5  6  7

I search for car information on the Internet to get peace of mind about my new car.

Strongly disagree  Strongly agree
1  2  3  4  5  6  7

I search for car resale value information on the Internet to know the market value of my car.

Strongly disagree  Strongly agree
1  2  3  4  5  6  7

I search for independent reports of cars on the Internet to get unbiased information about cars.

Strongly disagree  Strongly agree
1  2  3  4  5  6  7

I search for car information on the Internet to save time.

Strongly disagree  Strongly agree
1  2  3  4  5  6  7

I search for car information on the Internet to obtain car information with less effort.

Strongly disagree  Strongly agree
1  2  3  4  5  6  7

I search for car information on the Internet because it is a cool way to get information.

Strongly disagree  Strongly agree
1  2  3  4  5  6  7

I search for car information on the Internet because it is an innovative way to get information.

Strongly disagree  Strongly agree
1  2  3  4  5  6  7
I search for car information on the Internet because it is how smart people search for information.
Strongly disagree  Strongly agree
1  2  3  4  5  6  7

I search for car information on the Internet because it is a state-of-the-art way to get information.
Strongly disagree  Strongly agree
1  2  3  4  5  6  7

I search for car information on the Internet because I am Internet-savvy.
Strongly disagree  Strongly agree
1  2  3  4  5  6  7

I search for car information on the Internet because it is an intelligent way to get information.
Strongly disagree  Strongly agree
1  2  3  4  5  6  7

Highly educated people search for car information on the Internet.
Strongly disagree  Strongly agree
1  2  3  4  5  6  7

Working professionals search for car information on the Internet.
Strongly disagree  Strongly agree
1  2  3  4  5  6  7

I want my friends to know I search the Internet for car information.
Strongly disagree  Strongly agree
1  2  3  4  5  6  7

I want my family to know I search the Internet for car information.
Strongly disagree  Strongly agree
1  2  3  4  5  6  7

I want my colleagues or other students to know I search the Internet for car information.
Strongly disagree  Strongly agree
1  2  3  4  5  6  7
Section 2: Please select one choice that you think represents best your idea about the following statements (1 = Strongly disagree, 7 = Strongly agree).

It is my feeling that if everyone else in a group is behaving in a certain manner, this must be the proper way to behave.
Strongly disagree Strongly agree
1 2 3 4 5 6 7

I actively avoid wearing clothes that are not in style.
Strongly disagree Strongly agree
1 2 3 4 5 6 7

At parties I usually try to behave in a manner that makes me fit in.
Strongly disagree Strongly agree
1 2 3 4 5 6 7

When I am uncertain how to act in a social situation, I look to the behavior of others for cues.
Strongly disagree Strongly agree
1 2 3 4 5 6 7

I try to pay attention to the reactions of others to my behavior in order to avoid being out of place.
Strongly disagree Strongly agree
1 2 3 4 5 6 7

I find that I tend to pick up slang expressions from others and use them as part of my own vocabulary.
Strongly disagree Strongly agree
1 2 3 4 5 6 7

I tend to pay attention to what others are wearing.
Strongly disagree Strongly agree
1 2 3 4 5 6 7

The slightest look of disapproval in the eyes of a person with whom I am interacting is enough to make me change my approach.
Strongly disagree Strongly agree
1 2 3 4 5 6 7
It’s important to me to fit into the group I’m with.

My behavior often depends on how I feel others wish me to behave.

If I am the least bit uncertain as to how to act in a social situation, I look to the behavior of others for cues.

I usually keep up with clothing style changes by watching what others wear.

When in a social situation, I tend not to follow the crowd, but instead behave a manner that suits my particular mood at the time.

Section 3: Please select only one choice about yourself. The information collected here will be kept confidential. If you are asked to write answers, please write legibly.

What is your gender?

1) Female 2) Male

What is your academic classification?

1) Freshman 2) Sophomore 3) Junior 4) Senior 5) Graduate student 6) Other

How old were you on your last birthday? (Please print your age: _____________)

Which media do you use most in general?

1) Internet 2) Magazine 3) Newspapers 4) Radio 5) Television
What is your race/ethnicity?

1) Caucasian  2) African American  3) Asian

4) Hispanic/Latino  5) Other

Important! Please type your last four digits of social security number and first four letters of your last name. This will be used for giving you a credit for your course.

SSN (last four digits): ________________

Last name (first four letters): ________________

This is the end of the questionnaire. Please close your questionnaire booklet and wait until we collect your booklet. Thank you for your cooperation!
Please read the following instructions carefully.

Important: Please turn off your cell phone. Do not conduct other Internet activities such as email, Internet Messenger, or Web surfing while participating in this study.

Thank you for coming to participate in our website study. You are going to view some websites.

DO NOT TURN THIS PAGE until you view the first website. 1) Now, you may be watching the instruction webpage. 2) After you click the hyperlink Here, you are going to see the first website. Please take some time to view the content of the site. Don’t click the hyperlinks in the site. For the study purpose, they are currently deactivated. 3) After you view the content of the site, turn this page and fill out your responses in this booklet. 4) If you finish the questionnaire for the first website, please scroll down the scroll bar located in your right side of the web browser in order to find the hyperlink Here and click it to proceed to the next website. The same procedure should be repeated until you view the last website. It will take around 30 minutes to view the websites and complete the corresponding questionnaire.

Your responses are very important and make sure that you completed the questionnaire about the website you just viewed before you view the next website. Thank you again for your cooperation! (Please raise your hand if you have any questions)

If you have no questions, please read the instruction on the computer screen and click the Here button in the webpage.
We would like to know about how you feel and think about the website you just viewed. Please select one choice that you think represents best your idea about the following statements about MyAuto.com you just saw (1 = Strongly disagree, 7 = Strongly agree).

In general, the messages of the website emphasized the usefulness of online searching for information about cars.

Strongly disagree Strongly agree
1 2 3 4 5 6 7

The messages on the website were related to the usefulness of online searching for information about cars.

Strongly disagree Strongly agree
1 2 3 4 5 6 7

In general, the messages of the website emphasized how online searching for car information is related to the users’ image and style or others’ perceptions of the users.

Strongly disagree Strongly agree
1 2 3 4 5 6 7

The messages on the website were related to the users’ image and style or others’ perceptions of the users in terms of online searching for car information.

Strongly disagree Strongly agree
1 2 3 4 5 6 7

I dislike this site.

Strongly disagree Strongly agree
1 2 3 4 5 6 7

This site is entertaining.

Strongly disagree Strongly agree
1 2 3 4 5 6 7
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>This site is good.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This site is worthless.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This site is boring.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This site is useful.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This site is unpleasant.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This site supplies valuable information.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am likely to visit the site again.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am likely to tell a friend about the site.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If I was buying a car, I would probably visit</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
If a friend was buying a car, I would probably tell him/her about the site.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

MyAuto.com (as the brand of this website) is…

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>good</th>
<th>bad</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>pleasant</th>
<th>unpleasant</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>favorable</th>
<th>unfavorable</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

STOP! Do NOT turn this page yet.
As mentioned before, please scroll down to find “Please Click Here” in the bottom of the webpage you just viewed and click the hyperlink “Here” to proceed to the next website.
After viewing the website, you can turn this page to fill out the questionnaire. Thank you much for your cooperation!
You just viewed the second website. Please select one choice that you think represents best your idea about the following statements about Bodyshapingwithherbs.com you just saw (1 = Strongly disagree, 7 = Strongly agree).

In general, the messages of the website emphasized the usefulness of online searching for information about health products.

Strongly disagree Strongly agree
1 2 3 4 5 6 7

The messages on the website were related to the usefulness of online searching for information about health products.

Strongly disagree Strongly agree
1 2 3 4 5 6 7

In general, the messages of the website emphasized how online searching for information about health products is related to the users’ image and style or others’ perceptions of the users.

Strongly disagree Strongly agree
1 2 3 4 5 6 7

The messages on the website were related to the users’ image and style or others’ perceptions of the users in terms of online searching for health product information.

Strongly disagree Strongly agree
1 2 3 4 5 6 7

I dislike this site.

Strongly disagree Strongly agree
1 2 3 4 5 6 7

This site is entertaining.

Strongly disagree Strongly agree
1 2 3 4 5 6 7
This site is good.
Strongly disagree
1 2 3 4 5 6 7
This site is worthless.
Strongly disagree
1 2 3 4 5 6 7
This site is boring.
Strongly disagree
1 2 3 4 5 6 7
This site is useful.
Strongly disagree
1 2 3 4 5 6 7
This site is unpleasant.
Strongly disagree
1 2 3 4 5 6 7
This site supplies valuable information.
Strongly disagree
1 2 3 4 5 6 7
I am likely to visit the site again.
Strongly disagree
1 2 3 4 5 6 7
I am likely to tell a friend about the site.
Strongly disagree
1 2 3 4 5 6 7
If I was buying a health product, I would probably visit the site again.
Strongly disagree
1 2 3 4 5 6 7
If a friend was buying a health product, I would probably tell him/her about the site.

Strongly disagree                      Strongly agree
1          2          3          4          5          6          7

Bodyshapingwithherbs.com (as the brand of this website) is…

good                                      bad
1          2          3          4          5          6          7

pleasant                                   unpleasant
1          2          3          4          5          6          7

favorable                                   unfavorable
1          2          3          4          5          6          7

STOP! Do NOT turn this page yet.
As mentioned before, please scroll down to find “Please Click Here” in the bottom of the webpage you just viewed and click the hyperlink “Here” to proceed to the next website.
After viewing the website, you can turn this page to fill out the questionnaire. Thank you much for your cooperation!
You just viewed the third website. Please select one choice that you think represents best your idea about the following statements about LaptopTravel.com you just saw
(1 = Strongly disagree, 7 = Strongly agree).

In general, the messages of the website emphasized the usefulness of online searching for information about laptop computers.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The messages on the website were related to the usefulness of online searching for information about laptop computers.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In general, the messages of the website emphasized how online searching for information about laptop computers is related to the users’ image and style or others’ perceptions of the users.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The messages on the website were related to the users’ image and style or others’ perceptions of the users in terms of online searching for laptop computer information.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

I dislike this site.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This site is entertaining.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
This site is good.
Strongly disagree  Strongly agree
1      2      3      4      5      6      7

This site is worthless.
Strongly disagree  Strongly agree
1      2      3      4      5      6      7

This site is boring.
Strongly disagree  Strongly agree
1      2      3      4      5      6      7

This site is useful.
Strongly disagree  Strongly agree
1      2      3      4      5      6      7

This site is unpleasant.
Strongly disagree  Strongly agree
1      2      3      4      5      6      7

This site supplies valuable information.
Strongly disagree  Strongly agree
1      2      3      4      5      6      7

I am likely to visit the site again.
Strongly disagree  Strongly agree
1      2      3      4      5      6      7

I am likely to tell a friend about the site.
Strongly disagree  Strongly agree
1      2      3      4      5      6      7

If I was buying a laptop computer, I would probably visit the site again.
Strongly disagree  Strongly agree
1      2      3      4      5      6      7
If a friend was buying a laptop computer, I would probably tell him/her about the site.

Strongly disagree  1  2  3  4  5  6  7  Strongly agree

LaptopTravel.com (as the brand of this website) is…

good             bad
1     2    3   4  5   6    7

pleasant            unpleasant
1     2    3   4  5   6    7

favorable           unfavorable
1     2    3   4  5   6    7

Please check each space that represents most your feeling about the products specified in the phrase, “To me, (the specified products) are…”

Please mark the space to indicate your feeling about automobiles along the following dimensions.

To me, automobiles are…

Important       Unimportant
Of no concern    Of concern
Irrelevant       Relevant
Meaningful       Means to nothing
Matters to me    Doesn’t matter
Interesting      Not interesting
Significant      Insignificant
Boring          Exciting
Please mark the space to indicate your feeling about **health products** along the following dimensions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Important</th>
<th>Of no concern</th>
<th>Irrelevant</th>
<th>Meaningful</th>
<th>Matters to me</th>
<th>Interesting</th>
<th>Significant</th>
<th>Boring</th>
</tr>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Please mark the space to indicate your feeling about **laptop computers** along the following dimensions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Important</th>
<th>Of no concern</th>
<th>Irrelevant</th>
<th>Meaningful</th>
<th>Matters to me</th>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

131
1. What is your gender?
   1) Female       2) Male

2. What is your academic classification?
   1) Freshman   2) Sophomore   3) Junior   4) Senior   5) Graduate student   6) Other

3. How old were you on your last birthday? (Please print your age: _____________)

4. Which medium do you use most in general?
   1) Internet   2) Magazine   3) Newspapers   4) Radio   5) Television

5. What is your race/ethnicity?
   1) Caucasian   2) African American   3) Asian   4) Hispanic/Latino   5) Other

6. Do you have your own car?
   1) Yes       2) No (Skip to question 8)

7. Did you make the decision to get the car you have?
   1) Yes       2) No

8. Do you have your laptop computer?
   1) Yes       2) No

9. How long have you used the Internet?
   1) Less than six months
   2) Six to 12 months
   3) One to less than three years
   4) Three to less than six years
   5) Six years or more
10. How do you find out about new WWW pages/sites?

(Please check all that apply.)

☐ Books
☐ Friends
☐ Follow hyperlinks from other Web pages
☐ Internet search engines (e.g., Alta Vista, Lycos, etc.)
☐ Internet directories (e.g., Yahoo, McKinley, etc.)
☐ Usenet newsgroups
☐ Magazines/newspapers
☐ Signatures at end of email messages
☐ Television advertisements
☐ Other Sources

11. What is the TOTAL amount you spent on purchases through vendors on the World Wide Web during the past six months?

1) Less than $50  2) $50 to $99.99  3) $100 to $499.99  4) $500 or more

12. What do you think the purpose of this study? Please print briefly in the space provided below.


Important! Please type your last four digits of social security number and first four letters of your last name. This will be used for giving you a credit for your course.

SSN (last four digits): _____________________

Last name (first four letters): _____________________

This is the end of the questionnaire. Please close your questionnaire booklet and submit the booklet to the staff. Thank you for your cooperation!
Important: Please turn off your cell phone. Do not conduct other Internet activities such as email, Internet Messenger, or Web surfing while participating in this study.

Thank you for coming to participate in our website study. Please read the following instructions carefully. 1) You are going to read information about an e-commerce company on the next page. 2) After reading the excerpt, you need to read the instruction webpage and find the hyperlink Here on the computer screen. 3) After you click the hyperlink Here in the webpage, you are going to see the first website. Please take some time to view the content of the site. Don’t click the hyperlinks in the site. For the study purpose, they are currently deactivated. 3) After you view the content of the site, turn the page containing the excerpt, read the questions on the following page and fill out your responses in this booklet. 4) If you finish the questionnaire for the first website, turn the page containing the questions and read the excerpt on the next page. After reading the excerpt, please scroll down the scroll bar located in your right side of the web browser in order to find the hyperlink Here and click it to proceed to the next website. The same procedure should be repeated until you view the last website. It will take around 30 minutes to view the websites and complete the corresponding questionnaire.

Your responses are very important. Please make sure that you completed the questionnaire about the website you just viewed before you view the next website. Thank you again for your cooperation! (Please raise your hand if you have any questions.)

If you have no questions, please turn this page and read the excerpt provided in the next page.
Please read the following excerpt:

The following description of the e-commerce company in the website you are going to view was taken from a recent *Wall Street Journal* article.

**MyAuto.com Corporation**

Founded in 2004, *MyAuto.com* is a privately owned online automotive publishing company and the company is financially backed by First Venture Co., a new venture capital company also established in 2004. MyAuto.com has experienced slow but steady growth across all aspects of its business. Around 1,000 vehicle shoppers visit myauto.com each month. The company places online vehicle listings from nearly 50 auto dealers in several metropolitan markets in the US. Partnered with 25 local newspapers, 2 television stations and their websites, MyAuto.com has become one of new players in competitive online automotive publishing area. In 2005, the company was ranked “below average” in a dealer satisfaction study conducted by J.D. Power and Associates because it experienced a capacity problem with its server for two weeks. Recently, MyAuto.com redesigned its consumer website to increase online traffic and purchased new servers for its website. However, no immediate or remarkable increase in site traffic has been reported yet.

Please click the hyperlink “Here” in the computer screen to view the website. After viewing the website, please turn this page.
We would like to know about how you feel and think about the website you just viewed. Please select one choice that you think represents best your idea about the following statements about MyAuto.com you just saw (1 = Strongly disagree, 7 = Strongly agree).

In general, the messages of the website emphasized the usefulness of online searching for information about cars.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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</table>

The messages on the website were related to the usefulness of online searching for information about cars.

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<tbody>
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</table>

In general, the messages of the website emphasized how online searching for car information is related to the users’ image and style or others’ perceptions of the users.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
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<tr>
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</table>

The messages on the website were related to the users’ image and style or others’ perceptions of the users in terms of online searching for car information.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The MyAuto.com Corporation has a great amount of experience.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The MyAuto.com Corporation is skilled in what they do.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The MyAuto.com Corporation has great expertise.

Strongly disagree          Strongly agree
1  2  3  4  5  6  7

The MyAuto.com Corporation does not have much experience.

Strongly disagree          Strongly agree
1  2  3  4  5  6  7

I trust the MyAuto.com Corporation.

Strongly disagree          Strongly agree
1  2  3  4  5  6  7

The MyAuto.com Corporation makes trustful claims.

Strongly disagree          Strongly agree
1  2  3  4  5  6  7

The MyAuto.com Corporation is honest.

Strongly disagree          Strongly agree
1  2  3  4  5  6  7

I do not believe what the MyAuto.com Corporation tells me.

Strongly disagree          Strongly agree
1  2  3  4  5  6  7

I dislike this site.

Strongly disagree          Strongly agree
1  2  3  4  5  6  7

This site is entertaining.

Strongly disagree          Strongly agree
1  2  3  4  5  6  7

This site is good.

Strongly disagree          Strongly agree
1  2  3  4  5  6  7
This site is worthless.

Strongly disagree          Strongly agree
1  2  3  4  5  6  7

This site is boring.

Strongly disagree          Strongly agree
1  2  3  4  5  6  7

This site is useful.

Strongly disagree          Strongly agree
1  2  3  4  5  6  7

This site is unpleasant.

Strongly disagree          Strongly agree
1  2  3  4  5  6  7

This site supplies valuable information.

Strongly disagree          Strongly agree
1  2  3  4  5  6  7

I am likely to visit the site again.

Strongly disagree          Strongly agree
1  2  3  4  5  6  7

I am likely to tell a friend about the site.

Strongly disagree          Strongly agree
1  2  3  4  5  6  7

If I was buying a car, I would probably visit the site again.

Strongly disagree          Strongly agree
1  2  3  4  5  6  7

If a friend was buying a car, I would probably tell him/her about the site.

Strongly disagree          Strongly agree
1  2  3  4  5  6  7
MyAuto.com (as the brand of this website) is…

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>good</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>pleasant</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>bad</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pleasant</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>favorable</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>unfavorable</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Please turn this page and read the excerpt of e-commerce company in the following page.
Please read the following excerpt:

The following description of the e-commerce company in the website you are going to view was taken from a recent *Wall Street Journal* article.

**Bodyshapingwithherbs.com Corporation**

Established in 2000, Bodyshapingwithherbs.com is a privately owned total wellness company. The company offers weight-loss, nutritional and personal-care products. The products are sold by independent distributors in the United States. Backed by a solid 5 years of success, the company conducts business in 25 states. It has a business plan to expand to a global market in the near future. According to a recent online security report by Consumer Reports ([www.consumerreports.org](http://www.consumerreports.org)), personal transactions via the company’s website have been encrypted using the one of the effective encryption solutions for online service (SSL encryption). Providing a variety of herbal health products, Bodyshapingwithherbs.com has helped its customers control their weight through its newly developed weight-management program. According to the company, it has employed “the Shape Specialists team” to help its customers to achieve individual goals.

After reading the excerpt, please scroll down to find the hyperlink “Please Click Here” in the computer screen and click the hyperlink Here to view the next website. After viewing the website, please turn this page. Thank you much for your cooperation!
You just viewed the second website. Please select one choice that you think represents best your idea about the following statements about Bodyshapingwithherbs.com you just saw (1 = Strongly disagree, 7 = Strongly agree).

In general, the messages of the website emphasized the usefulness of online searching for information about health products.

Strongly disagree Strongly agree
1 2 3 4 5 6 7

The messages on the website were related to the usefulness of online searching for information about health products.

Strongly disagree Strongly agree
1 2 3 4 5 6 7

In general, the messages of the website emphasized how online searching for information about health products is related to the users’ image and style or others’ perceptions of the users.

Strongly disagree Strongly agree
1 2 3 4 5 6 7

The messages on the website were related to the users’ image and style or others’ perceptions of the users in terms of online searching for health product information.

Strongly disagree Strongly agree
1 2 3 4 5 6 7

The Bodyshapingwithherbs.com Corporation has a great amount of experience.

Strongly disagree Strongly agree
1 2 3 4 5 6 7

The Bodyshapingwithherbs.com Corporation is skilled in what they do.

Strongly disagree Strongly agree
1 2 3 4 5 6 7
The Bodyshapingwithherbs.com Corporation has great expertise.

Strongly disagree  Strongly agree
1  2  3  4  5  6  7

The Bodyshapingwithherbs.com Corporation does not have much experience.

Strongly disagree  Strongly agree
1  2  3  4  5  6  7

I trust the Bodyshapingwithherbs.com Corporation.

Strongly disagree  Strongly agree
1  2  3  4  5  6  7

The Bodyshapingwithherbs.com Corporation makes trustful claims.

Strongly disagree  Strongly agree
1  2  3  4  5  6  7

The Bodyshapingwithherbs.com Corporation is honest.

Strongly disagree  Strongly agree
1  2  3  4  5  6  7

I do not believe what the Bodyshapingwithherbs.com Corporation tells me.

Strongly disagree  Strongly agree
1  2  3  4  5  6  7

I dislike this site.

Strongly disagree  Strongly agree
1  2  3  4  5  6  7

This site is entertaining.

Strongly disagree  Strongly agree
1  2  3  4  5  6  7

This site is good.

Strongly disagree  Strongly agree
1  2  3  4  5  6  7
This site is worthless.

Strongly disagree
1 2 3 4 5 6 7

This site is boring.

Strongly disagree
1 2 3 4 5 6 7

This site is useful.

Strongly disagree
1 2 3 4 5 6 7

This site is unpleasant.

Strongly disagree
1 2 3 4 5 6 7

This site supplies valuable information.

Strongly disagree
1 2 3 4 5 6 7

I am likely to visit the site again.

Strongly disagree
1 2 3 4 5 6 7

I am likely to tell a friend about the site.

Strongly disagree
1 2 3 4 5 6 7

If I was buying a health product, I would probably visit the site again.

Strongly disagree
1 2 3 4 5 6 7

If a friend was buying a health product, I would probably tell him/her about the site.

Strongly disagree
1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Bodyshapingwithherbs.com (as the brand of this website) is…

|           | good |          |           |           |           |           |           | bad |
|-----------|------|----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|------|
| pleasant  | 1    | 2        | 3         | 4         | 5         | 6         | 7    |
| favorable | 1    | 2        | 3         | 4         | 5         | 6         | 7    |

Please turn this page and read the excerpt of e-commerce company in the following page.
Please read the following excerpt:

The following description of the e-commerce company in the website you are going to view was taken from a recent *Wall Street Journal* article.

**LaptopTravel.com Corporation**

Based in Minneapolis, Minnesota, *LaptopTravel.com* was formed in the spring of 2000. It is a privately owned company specializing in the distribution of laptop computers. According to the company, it offers “solutions for international laptop connectivity with some of the good values in the marketplace.” Partnered with Access USA, a leading international mail forwarder, the company provides modest savings on its international shipments. The partnership with Access USA, according to Mr. James West, vice president of marketing in the company, “provides large potential savings for international customers that foresee making either large or repeated purchases” from the company. A recent review of mobile computing-related companies released by PC World, a widely-read computer magazine, reported that the savings from using the company was an industry average. The review also reported that the company’s sales in 2005 increased in 10 percent.

After reading the excerpt, please scroll down to find the hyperlink “Please Click Here” in the computer screen and click the hyperlink **Here** to view the next website. After viewing the website, please turn this page. Thank you much for your cooperation!
You just viewed the third website. Please select one choice that you think represents best your idea about the following statements about LaptopTravel.com you just saw
(1 = Strongly disagree, 7 = Strongly agree).

In general, the messages of the website emphasized the usefulness of online searching for information about laptop computers.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1  2  3  4  5  6  7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The messages on the website were related to the usefulness of online searching for information about laptop computers.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1  2  3  4  5  6  7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In general, the messages of the website emphasized how online searching for information about laptop computers is related to the users’ image and style or others’ perceptions of the users.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1  2  3  4  5  6  7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The messages on the website were related to the users’ image and style or others’ perceptions of the users in terms of online searching for laptop computer information.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1  2  3  4  5  6  7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The LaptopTravel.com Corporation has a great amount of experience.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1  2  3  4  5  6  7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The LaptopTravel.com Corporation is skilled in what they do.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1  2  3  4  5  6  7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The LaptopTravel.com Corporation has great expertise.
Strongly disagree
1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Strongly agree

The LaptopTravel.com Corporation does not have much experience.
Strongly disagree
1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Strongly agree

I trust the LaptopTravel.com Corporation.
Strongly disagree
1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Strongly agree

The LaptopTravel.com Corporation makes trustful claims.
Strongly disagree
1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Strongly agree

The LaptopTravel.com Corporation is honest.
Strongly disagree
1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Strongly agree

I do not believe what the LaptopTravel.com Corporation tells me.
Strongly disagree
1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Strongly agree

I dislike this site.
Strongly disagree
1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Strongly agree

This site is entertaining.
Strongly disagree
1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Strongly agree

This site is good.
Strongly disagree
1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Strongly agree
This site is worthless.

Strongly disagree  Strongly agree
1 2 3 4 5 6 7

This site is boring.

Strongly disagree  Strongly agree
1 2 3 4 5 6 7

This site is useful.

Strongly disagree  Strongly agree
1 2 3 4 5 6 7

This site is unpleasant.

Strongly disagree  Strongly agree
1 2 3 4 5 6 7

This site supplies valuable information.

Strongly disagree  Strongly agree
1 2 3 4 5 6 7

I am likely to visit the site again.

Strongly disagree  Strongly agree
1 2 3 4 5 6 7

I am likely to tell a friend about the site.

Strongly disagree  Strongly agree
1 2 3 4 5 6 7

If I was buying a laptop computer, I would probably visit the site again.

Strongly disagree  Strongly agree
1 2 3 4 5 6 7

If a friend was buying a laptop computer, I would probably tell him/her about the site.

Strongly disagree  Strongly agree
1 2 3 4 5 6 7

148
LaptopTravel.com (as the brand of this website) is…

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>good</th>
<th>bad</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>pleasant</th>
<th>unpleasant</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>favorable</th>
<th>unfavorable</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Please check each space that represents most your feeling about the products specified in the phrase, “To me, (the specified products) are…”

Please mark the space to indicate your feeling about automobiles along the following dimensions.

To me, automobiles are…

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Important</th>
<th>Unimportant</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Of no concern</th>
<th>Of concern</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Irrelevant</th>
<th>Relevant</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Meaningful</th>
<th>Means to nothing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Matters to me</th>
<th>Doesn’t matter</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interesting</th>
<th>Not interesting</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Significant</th>
<th>Insignificant</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Boring</th>
<th>Exciting</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

149
Please mark the space to indicate your feeling about **health products** along the following dimensions.

To me, health products are…

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Important</th>
<th>Unimportant</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Of no concern</td>
<td>Of concern</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irrelevant</td>
<td>Relevant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meaningful</td>
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<tr>
<td>Matters to me</td>
<td>Doesn’t matter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interesting</td>
<td>Not interesting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Significant</td>
<td>Insignificant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boring</td>
<td>Exciting</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Please mark the space to indicate your feeling about **laptop computers** along the following dimensions.

To me, laptop computers are…

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Important</th>
<th>Unimportant</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Of no concern</td>
<td>Of concern</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irrelevant</td>
<td>Relevant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meaningful</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Not interesting</td>
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<tr>
<td>Significant</td>
<td>Insignificant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boring</td>
<td>Exciting</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Please select one choice that you think represents best your idea about the following statements (1 = Strongly disagree, 7 = Strongly agree).

It is my feeling that if everyone else in a group is behaving in a certain manner, this must be the proper way to behave.

Strongly disagree          Strongly agree
1  2  3  4  5  6  7

I actively avoid wearing clothes that are not in style.

Strongly disagree          Strongly agree
1  2  3  4  5  6  7

At parties I usually try to behave in a manner that makes me fit in.

Strongly disagree          Strongly agree
1  2  3  4  5  6  7

When I am uncertain how to act in a social situation, I look to the behavior of others for cues.

Strongly disagree          Strongly agree
1  2  3  4  5  6  7

I try to pay attention to the reactions of others to my behavior in order to avoid being out of place.

Strongly disagree          Strongly agree
1  2  3  4  5  6  7

I find that I tend to pick up slang expressions from others and use them as part of my own vocabulary.

Strongly disagree          Strongly agree
1  2  3  4  5  6  7

I tend to pay attention to what others are wearing.

Strongly disagree          Strongly agree
1  2  3  4  5  6  7

The slightest look of disapproval in the eyes of a person with whom I am interacting is enough to make me change my approach.

Strongly disagree          Strongly agree
1  2  3  4  5  6  7
It’s important to me to fit into the group I’m with.

Strongly disagree  Strongly agree
1  2  3  4  5  6  7

My behavior often depends on how I feel others wish me to behave.

Strongly disagree  Strongly agree
1  2  3  4  5  6  7

If I am the least bit uncertain as to how to act in a social situation, I look to the behavior of others for cues.

Strongly disagree  Strongly agree
1  2  3  4  5  6  7

I usually keep up with clothing style changes by watching what others wear.

Strongly disagree  Strongly agree
1  2  3  4  5  6  7

When in a social situation, I tend not to follow the crowd, but instead behave a manner that suits my particular mood at the time.

Strongly disagree  Strongly agree
1  2  3  4  5  6  7

Please select only one choice about yourself. The information collected here will be kept confidential. If you are asked to write answers, please write legibly.

1. What is your gender?
   1) Female  2) Male

2. What is your academic classification?
   1) Freshman  2) Sophomore  3) Junior  4) Senior  5) Graduate student  6) Other

3. How old were you on your last birthday? (Please print your age: ____________)

4. Which medium do you use most in general?
   1) Internet  2) Magazine  3) Newspapers  4) Radio  5) Television
5. What is your race/ethnicity?
   1) Caucasian  2) African American  3) Asian  4) Hispanic/Latino  5) Other

6. Do you have your own car?
   1) Yes  2) No (Skip to question 8)

7. Did you make the decision to get the car you have?
   1) Yes  2) No

8. Do you have your laptop computer?
   1) Yes  2) No

9. How long have you used the Internet?
   Please write the number of year ____________.

10. What is the TOTAL amount you spent on purchases through vendors on the World Wide Web during the past six months?
    1) Less than $50  2) $50 to $99.99  3) $100 to $499.99  4) $500 or more

11. What do you think the purpose of this study? Please print briefly in the space provided below.

   __________________________

Important! Please type your last four digits of social security number and first four letters of your last name. This will be used for giving you a credit for your course.

SSN (last four digits): __________________________
Last name (first four letters): __________________________

This is the end of the questionnaire. Please close your questionnaire booklet and submit the booklet to the staff. Thank you for your cooperation!
Important: Please turn off your cell phone. Do not conduct other Internet activities such as email, Internet Messenger, or Web surfing while participating in this study.

Thank you for coming to participate in our website study. Please read the following instructions carefully. 1) You are going to read information about an e-commerce company on the next page. 2) After reading the excerpt, you need to read the instruction webpage and find the hyperlink Here on the computer screen. 3) After you click the hyperlink Here in the webpage, you are going to see the first website. Please take some time to view the content of the site. Don’t click the hyperlinks in the site. For the study purpose, they are currently deactivated. 3) After you view the content of the site, turn the page containing the excerpt, read the questions on the following page and fill out your responses in this booklet. 4) If you finish the questionnaire for the first website, turn the page containing the questions and read the excerpt on the next page. After reading the excerpt, please scroll down the scroll bar located in your right side of the web browser in order to find the hyperlink Here and click it to proceed to the next website. The same procedure should be repeated until you view the last website. It will take around 30 minutes to view the websites and complete the corresponding questionnaire.

Your responses are very important. Please make sure that you completed the questionnaire about the website you just viewed before you view the next website. Thank you again for your cooperation! (Please raise your hand if you have any questions.)

If you have no questions, please turn this page and read the excerpt provided in the next page.
Please read the following excerpt:

The following description of the e-commerce company in the website you are going to view was taken from a recent *Wall Street Journal* article.

**MyAuto.com Corporation**

Founded in 1997, *MyAuto.com* is a division of Classified Ventures, LLC, a privately owned strategic joint-venture among six leading media companies: Belo Corp., Gannett Co. Inc., Knight Ridder Inc., The McClathy Co., Tribune Co., and The Washington Post Co. Myauto.com has experienced record growth across all aspects of its business. More than 5 million vehicle shoppers visit MyAuto.com each month. The company places online vehicle listings from nearly 10,000 auto dealers alongside nationwide classified advertising and private-party listings to offer the best selection of new and used cars online. Partnered with 175 leading newspapers, television stations, and their websites, MyAuto.com became one of the fastest-growing online automotive publishing companies. The company was ranked highest in a dealer satisfaction study conducted by J.D. Power and Associates for three consecutive years. Recently, MyAuto.com redesigned its consumer website making it easier than ever to buy, sell, and research. As a result, MyAuto.com connects a car buyer and a seller every 7 seconds.

Please click the hyperlink “Here” in the computer screen to view the website. After viewing the website, please turn this page.
We would like to know about how you feel and think about the website you just viewed. Please select one choice that you think represents best your idea about the following statements about MyAuto.com you just saw (1 = Strongly disagree, 7 = Strongly agree).

In general, the messages of the website emphasized the usefulness of online searching for information about cars.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The messages on the website were related to the usefulness of online searching for information about cars.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In general, the messages of the website emphasized how online searching for car information is related to the users’ image and style or others’ perceptions of the users.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The messages on the website were related to the users’ image and style or others’ perceptions of the users in terms of online searching for car information.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td></td>
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</table>

The MyAuto.com Corporation has a great amount of experience.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
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<tr>
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</table>

The MyAuto.com Corporation is skilled in what they do.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The MyAuto.com Corporation has great expertise.

Strongly disagree | Strongly agree
1 2 3 4 5 6 7

The MyAuto.com Corporation does not have much experience.

Strongly disagree | Strongly agree
1 2 3 4 5 6 7

I trust the MyAuto.com Corporation.

Strongly disagree | Strongly agree
1 2 3 4 5 6 7

The MyAuto.com Corporation makes trustful claims.

Strongly disagree | Strongly agree
1 2 3 4 5 6 7

The MyAuto.com Corporation is honest.

Strongly disagree | Strongly agree
1 2 3 4 5 6 7

I do not believe what the MyAuto.com Corporation tells me.

Strongly disagree | Strongly agree
1 2 3 4 5 6 7

I dislike this site.

Strongly disagree | Strongly agree
1 2 3 4 5 6 7

This site is entertaining.

Strongly disagree | Strongly agree
1 2 3 4 5 6 7

This site is good.

Strongly disagree | Strongly agree
1 2 3 4 5 6 7
This site is worthless.

Strongly disagree Strongly agree
1 2 3 4 5 6 7

This site is boring.

Strongly disagree Strongly agree
1 2 3 4 5 6 7

This site is useful.

Strongly disagree Strongly agree
1 2 3 4 5 6 7

This site is unpleasant.

Strongly disagree Strongly agree
1 2 3 4 5 6 7

This site supplies valuable information.

Strongly disagree Strongly agree
1 2 3 4 5 6 7

I am likely to visit the site again.

Strongly disagree Strongly agree
1 2 3 4 5 6 7

I am likely to tell a friend about the site.

Strongly disagree Strongly agree
1 2 3 4 5 6 7

If I was buying a car, I would probably visit the site again.

Strongly disagree Strongly agree
1 2 3 4 5 6 7

If a friend was buying a car, I would probably tell him/her about the site.

Strongly disagree Strongly agree
1 2 3 4 5 6 7
MyAuto.com (as the brand of this website) is…

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>good</th>
<th>bad</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>favorable</th>
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<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
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<tr>
<td>7</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Please read the following excerpt:

The following description of the e-commerce company in the website you are going to view was taken from a recent *Wall Street Journal* article.

**Bodyshapingwithherbs.com Corporation**

Established in 2000, Bodyshapingwithherbs.com is a privately owned total wellness company. The company offers weight-loss, nutritional and personal-care products. The products are sold by independent distributors in the United States. Backed by a solid 5 years of success, the company conducts business in 25 states. It has a business plan to expand to a global market in the near future. According to a recent online security report by Consumer Reports ([www.consumerreports.org](http://www.consumerreports.org)), personal transactions via the company’s website have been encrypted using the one of the effective encryption solutions for online service (SSL encryption). Providing a variety of herbal health products, Bodyshapingwithherbs.com has helped its customers control their weight through its newly developed weight-management program. According to the company, it has employed “the Shape Specialists team” to help its customers to achieve individual goals.

After reading the excerpt, please scroll down to find the hyperlink “Please Click Here” in the computer screen and click the hyperlink Here to view the next website. After viewing the website, please turn this page. Thank you much for your cooperation!
You just viewed the second website. Please select one choice that you think represents best your idea about the following statements about Bodyshapingwithherbs.com you just saw (1 = Strongly disagree, 7 = Strongly agree).

In general, the messages of the website emphasized the usefulness of online searching for information about health products.

Strongly disagree                      Strongly agree
1  2  3  4  5  6  7

The messages on the website were related to the usefulness of online searching for information about health products.

Strongly disagree                      Strongly agree
1  2  3  4  5  6  7

In general, the messages of the website emphasized how online searching for information about health products is related to the users’ image and style or others’ perceptions of the users.

Strongly disagree                      Strongly agree
1  2  3  4  5  6  7

The messages on the website were related to the users’ image and style or others’ perceptions of the users in terms of online searching for health product information.

Strongly disagree                      Strongly agree
1  2  3  4  5  6  7

The Bodyshapingwithherbs.com Corporation has a great amount of experience.

Strongly disagree                      Strongly agree
1  2  3  4  5  6  7

The Bodyshapingwithherbs.com Corporation is skilled in what they do.

Strongly disagree                      Strongly agree
1  2  3  4  5  6  7
The Bodyshapingwithherbs.com Corporation has great expertise.

Strongly disagree                      Strongly agree
1  2  3  4  5  6  7

The Bodyshapingwithherbs.com Corporation does not have much experience.

Strongly disagree                      Strongly agree
1  2  3  4  5  6  7

I trust the Bodyshapingwithherbs.com Corporation.

Strongly disagree                      Strongly agree
1  2  3  4  5  6  7

The Bodyshapingwithherbs.com Corporation makes trustful claims.

Strongly disagree                      Strongly agree
1  2  3  4  5  6  7

The Bodyshapingwithherbs.com Corporation is honest.

Strongly disagree                      Strongly agree
1  2  3  4  5  6  7

I do not believe what the Bodyshapingwithherbs.com Corporation tells me.

Strongly disagree                      Strongly agree
1  2  3  4  5  6  7

I dislike this site.

Strongly disagree                      Strongly agree
1  2  3  4  5  6  7

This site is entertaining.

Strongly disagree                      Strongly agree
1  2  3  4  5  6  7

This site is good.

Strongly disagree                      Strongly agree
1  2  3  4  5  6  7
This site is worthless.

Strongly disagree  
1 2 3 4 5 6 7

This site is boring.

Strongly disagree  
1 2 3 4 5 6 7

This site is useful.

Strongly disagree  
1 2 3 4 5 6 7

This site is unpleasant.

Strongly disagree  
1 2 3 4 5 6 7

This site supplies valuable information.

Strongly disagree  
1 2 3 4 5 6 7

I am likely to visit the site again.

Strongly disagree  
1 2 3 4 5 6 7

I am likely to tell a friend about the site.

Strongly disagree  
1 2 3 4 5 6 7

If I was buying a health product, I would probably visit the site again.

Strongly disagree  
1 2 3 4 5 6 7

If a friend was buying a health product, I would probably tell him/her about the site.

Strongly disagree  
1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Bodyshapingwithherbs.com (as the brand of this website) is…

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>good</th>
<th>bad</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>pleasant</th>
<th>unpleasant</th>
</tr>
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<td>2</td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>favorable</th>
<th>unfavorable</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Please turn this page and read the excerpt of e-commerce company in the following page.
Please read the following excerpt:

The following description of the e-commerce company in the website you are going to view was taken from a recent Wall Street Journal article.

LaptopTravel.com Corporation

Based in Minneapolis, Minnesota, LaptopTravel.com was formed in the spring of 2000. It is a privately owned company specializing in the distribution of laptop computers. According to the company, it offers “solutions for international laptop connectivity with some of the good values in the marketplace.” Partnered with Access USA, a leading international mail forwarder, the company provides modest savings on its international shipments. The partnership with Access USA, according to Mr. James West, vice president of marketing in the company, “provides large potential savings for international customers that foresee making either large or repeated purchases” from the company. A recent review of mobile computing-related companies released by PC World, a widely-read computer magazine, reported that the savings from using the company was an industry average. The review also reported that the company’s sales in 2005 increased in 10 percent.

After reading the excerpt, please scroll down to find the hyperlink “Please Click Here” in the computer screen and click the hyperlink Here to view the next website. After viewing the website, please turn this page. Thank you much for your cooperation!
In general, the messages of the website emphasized the usefulness of online searching for information about laptop computers.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
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<td>3</td>
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<td>5</td>
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<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The messages on the website were related to the usefulness of online searching for information about laptop computers.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
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<td>5</td>
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<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In general, the messages of the website emphasized how online searching for information about laptop computers is related to the users’ image and style or others’ perceptions of the users.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
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<td>3</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The messages on the website were related to the users’ image and style or others’ perceptions of the users in terms of online searching for laptop computer information.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
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<td>3</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The LaptopTravel.com Corporation has a great amount of experience.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
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<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The LaptopTravel.com Corporation is skilled in what they do.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The LaptopTravel.com Corporation has great expertise.

Strongly disagree                      Strongly agree
1  2  3  4  5  6  7

The LaptopTravel.com Corporation does *not* have much experience.

Strongly disagree                      Strongly agree
1  2  3  4  5  6  7

I trust the LaptopTravel.com Corporation.

Strongly disagree                      Strongly agree
1  2  3  4  5  6  7

The LaptopTravel.com Corporation makes trustful claims.

Strongly disagree                      Strongly agree
1  2  3  4  5  6  7

The LaptopTravel.com Corporation is honest.

Strongly disagree                      Strongly agree
1  2  3  4  5  6  7

I do *not* believe what the LaptopTravel.com Corporation tells me.

Strongly disagree                      Strongly agree
1  2  3  4  5  6  7

I dislike this site.

Strongly disagree                      Strongly agree
1  2  3  4  5  6  7

This site is entertaining.

Strongly disagree                      Strongly agree
1  2  3  4  5  6  7

This site is good.

Strongly disagree                      Strongly agree
1  2  3  4  5  6  7
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Strongly disagrees</th>
<th>Strongly agrees</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>This site is worthless.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This site is boring.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This site is useful.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This site is unpleasant.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This site supplies valuable information.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am likely to visit the site again.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am likely to tell a friend about the site.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If I was buying a laptop computer, I would probably visit the site again.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If a friend was buying a laptop computer, I would probably tell him/her about the site.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
LaptopTravel.com (as the brand of this website) is…

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>good</th>
<th>bad</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>1</td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>pleasant</th>
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<td>1</td>
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<td>7</td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>favorable</th>
<th>unfavorable</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
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<td>3</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
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<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Please check each space that represents most your feeling about the products specified in the phrase, “To me, (the specified products) are…”

Please mark the space to indicate your feeling about automobiles along the following dimensions.

To me, automobiles are…

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Important</th>
<th>Unimportant</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Of no concern</th>
<th>Of concern</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Irrelevant</th>
<th>Relevant</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Meaningful</th>
<th>Means to nothing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Matters to me</th>
<th>Doesn’t matter</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interesting</th>
<th>Not interesting</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Significant</th>
<th>Insignificant</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Boring</th>
<th>Exciting</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Please mark the space to indicate your feeling about health products along the following dimensions.

To me, health products are…

Important    ______:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____        Unimportant
Of no concern ______:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____        Of concern
Irrelevant    ______:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____        Relevant
Meaningful    ______:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____        Means to nothing
Matters to me ______:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____        Doesn’t matter
Interesting    ______:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____        Not interesting
Significant    ______:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____        Insignificant
Boring        ______:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____        Exciting

Please mark the space to indicate your feeling about laptop computers along the following dimensions.

To me, laptop computers are…

Important    ______:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____        Unimportant
Of no concern ______:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____        Of concern
Irrelevant    ______:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____        Relevant
Meaningful    ______:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____        Means to nothing
Matters to me ______:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____        Doesn’t matter
Interesting    ______:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____        Not interesting
Significant    ______:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____        Insignificant
Boring        ______:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____        Exciting
Please select one choice that you think represents best your idea about the following statements (1 = Strongly disagree, 7 = Strongly agree).

It is my feeling that if everyone else in a group is behaving in a certain manner, this must be the proper way to behave.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

I actively avoid wearing clothes that are not in style.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

At parties I usually try to behave in a manner that makes me fit in.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When I am uncertain how to act in a social situation, I look to the behavior of others for cues.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

I try to pay attention to the reactions of others to my behavior in order to avoid being out of place.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

I find that I tend to pick up slang expressions from others and use them as part of my own vocabulary.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

I tend to pay attention to what others are wearing.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The slightest look of disapproval in the eyes of a person with whom I am interacting is enough to make me change my approach.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
It’s important to me to fit into the group I’m with.

Strongly disagree Strongly agree
1 2 3 4 5 6 7

My behavior often depends on how I feel others wish me to behave.

Strongly disagree Strongly agree
1 2 3 4 5 6 7

If I am the least bit uncertain as to how to act in a social situation, I look to the behavior of others for cues.

Strongly disagree Strongly agree
1 2 3 4 5 6 7

I usually keep up with clothing style changes by watching what others wear.

Strongly disagree Strongly agree
1 2 3 4 5 6 7

When in a social situation, I tend not to follow the crowd, but instead behave a manner that suits my particular mood at the time.

Strongly disagree Strongly agree
1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Please select only one choice about yourself. The information collected here will be kept confidential. If you are asked to write answers, please write legibly.

1. What is your gender?
   1) Female       2) Male

2. What is your academic classification?
   1) Freshman   2) Sophomore   3) Junior   4) Senior   5) Graduate student   6) Other

3. How old were you on your last birthday? (Please print your age: _____________)

4. Which medium do you use most in general?
   1) Internet       2) Magazine       3) Newspapers       4) Radio       5) Television
5. What is your race/ethnicity?
   1) Caucasian       2) African American       3) Asian       4) Hispanic/Latino       5) Other

6. Do you have your own car?
   1) Yes       2) No (Skip to question 8)

7. Did you make the decision to get the car you have?
   1) Yes       2) No

8. Do you have your laptop computer?
   1) Yes       2) No

9. How long have you used the Internet?

   Please write the number of years ______________.

10. What is the TOTAL amount you spent on purchases through vendors on the World Wide Web during the past six months?

   1) Less than $50       2) $50 to $99.99       3) $100 to $499.99       4) $500 or more

11. What do you think the purpose of this study? Please print briefly in the space provided below.

   _______________________________________________________

   Important! Please type your last four digits of social security number and first four letters of your last name. This will be used for giving you a credit for your course.

   SSN (last four digits): _____________________
   Last name (first four letters): _____________________

   This is the end of the questionnaire. Please close your questionnaire booklet and submit the booklet to the staff. Thank you for your cooperation!
REFERENCES


Greenwald (Eds.), *Attitude structure and function* (pp. 275-309).


Hong, C., Park, Y., & Kim, K. (2005). *Content analysis of automotive company websites as Internet advertising: A cross-cultural study*. Presented at the annual meetings of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication, San Antonio, TX.


BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Chan-pyo Hong is originally from Seoul, the Republic of Korea (South Korea). He majored in western philosophy with psychology minor and received his Bachelor of Arts degree with honors from Sogang University in Seoul, South Korea. He studied advertising and received his Master of Arts degree in Advertising from the University of Texas at Austin. He received a doctorate of Philosophy in Mass Communication from the Florida State University in Tallahassee, Florida. During his graduate study in Tallahassee, Florida, Chan-pyo Hong has been employed as an instructor, a teaching and research assistant, a computer lab staff by Department of Communication, an online mentor, a statistics and research consultant by a master’s candidate, a document editor by the vice dean of College of Education, and a research and program assistant for reporters sent by the Korean Press Foundation. He was a member of Interdisciplinary Teaching Society at the Florida State University. He was elected as student president and served for Korean Catholic Community in Tallahassee, Florida.