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What Is the Web-Based Interactive Advertising (WIA) to Consumers?: Consumer's Interpretation and Interaction with WIA

Jang-Sun Hwang
University of Tennessee - Knoxville

To the Graduate Council:

I am submitting herewith a dissertation written by Jang-Sun Hwang entitled "What Is the Web-Based Interactive Advertising (WIA) to Consumers?: Consumer's Interpretation and Interaction with WIA." I have examined the final electronic copy of this dissertation for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, with a major in Communication.

Sally J. McMillan, Major Professor

We have read this dissertation and recommend its acceptance:

Ronald E. Taylor, Eric Haley, David W. Schumann

Accepted for the Council:
Dixie L. Thompson

Vice Provost and Dean of the Graduate School

(Original signatures are on file with official student records.)

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Vice Provost and Dean
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What Is the Web-Based Interactive Advertising (WIA) to Consumers?:
Consumer's Interpretation and Interaction with WIA

A Dissertation
Presented for the
Doctor of Philosophy
Degree
The University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Jang-Sun Hwang
May 2003

DEDICATION

To all of my family who have given me

invaluable educational opportunities.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

ABSTRACT

Although numerous research has examined Web-based interactive advertising (WIA) in recent years, few studies have approached this topic from the consumers' own perspectives. Much of the literature employed managerial perspectives to examine the effectiveness of WIA with the aim of improving practitioners' performance. Studies that did deal with consumers often merely measured their uses of WIA and motives for using it without viewing the phenomenon from the consumers' point-of-view. Unfortunately, this one-sided research trend provides little insight into how consumers deal with interactive advertising in the World Wide Web environment and cannot answer a basic question - do consumers really care about WIA.

This study aimed to examine consumers' perspectives toward Web-based interactive advertising. Specifically, the study explored what WIA meant to consumers and how they interacted with it through the actual navigation process. One differentiating characteristic of WIA is that it enables consumers to have an active role in the communication process; therefore, it is necessary to investigate their thoughts and behaviors regarding WIA.

To pursue the research purposes, the following research questions were posed.

1) What does Web-based interactive advertising (WIA) mean to consumers?

2) How do consumers navigate through and interact with WIA in Web-based environment?

Qualitative research was employed to explore the research questions. Two specific methods were used for data collection: participant observation with an articulation procedure and depth interview. Throughout the participant's navigation

process, the researcher observed how participants interacted with Websites, heard how they articulated their specific navigation behaviors, and had sporadic short interviews regarding specific actions they made. Upon completing the navigation process, the participants were interviewed about their behavior and thoughts regarding how they dealt with WIA throughout the navigation process and what they thought about WIA.

Analysis was performed as the data collection was processed. Changes in data collection tactics were made based on the findings from analysis. Using scripts of interviews, articulations, and memos from observations, the consumers' perspectives were captured and analyzed. Thematic analysis was made with open, axial, and selective coding methods.

Nine themes representing consumers' interaction with and thoughts about WIA were found. They are 'Intrusive,' 'Annoying,' 'Informative,' 'Easy,' 'Controllable,' 'Relevant,' 'Fun,' 'Real-Time Communication,' and 'Reliable & Honest.' Each of these themes was interrelated with some of other themes, and most of them either positively or negatively related to consumers' evaluation of WIA. Various WIA formats emerged in addition to traditionally recognized formats such as banners and pop-ups. Two formats, 'Customer review' and 'News stories about products,' appeared frequently. The relationship between themes and WIA formats was also examined; in fact, each theme emerged with certain WIA formats. For example, 'Intrusive' was mentioned with traditional WIA formats such as banners and pop-ups, while 'Relevant' frequently emerged with corporate Websites and customer reviews.

This study found that consumers are very active when using the Web. Any forced-exposure or forced-viewing was actively avoided. With the benefit of taking consumers'

perspectives, some valuable insights were also captured. For example, highly informative and interactive Web content about products usually had a positive influence on preference for WIA (this also usually translated to positive attitude toward the site or banners); however, the preferable amount of information and preferable level of interactivity varied by consumers.

The study produced some valuable implications for a variety of stakeholders. Researchers can take full advantage of the findings in helping their theory building, and marketing professionals can apply the consumers' voices to their strategic planning for interactive marketing. College teachers can integrate the findings into their Internet advertising classes as they develop consumer-based modules in these newly popular classes.

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CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTION: WEB-BASED INTERACTIVE ADVERTISING:

CONSUMER-CENTERED MARKETING COMMUNICATION

Since ARPANET[1] days when the Internet was planned for researchers to share their information, the Internet has evolved and developed with the advances of various technologies. In the early 1980s, the Internet grew beyond its primarily research roots to include both a broad user community and increased commercial activity. Thanks to the active integration among these independent technologies during the 1990s, the Internet has penetrated throughout the society and located itself as one of the most critical contemporary media. At once, the Internet is a worldwide broadcasting capability, a mechanism for information dissemination, and a medium for collaboration and interaction between individuals and their computers without regard for geographic location (Leiner et al., 2000).

The Internet initially functioned as an information distributor, but it has recently become an effective tool for commercial activities. The commercialization of the Internet advanced rapidly during the last few years, and this infant medium that integrates a variety of technologies is regarded as a new commercial venue. In fact, despite the bursting of the "dot com" bubble, the e-commerce industry has sharply expanded during the last decade. Most companies have launched and maintained their own Websites, and

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[1] Advanced Research Projects Agency Network (ARPANET): The progenitor of the Internet operated by ARPA since 1968. In 1969, the U.S. Department of Defense began funding this project that would develop technologies to permit remote research and development sites to exchange information using networks of computers communicating with each other (Hauben, 1994)

use the sites to facilitate their promotion activities, sales and so forth. To summarize, the Internet started as the creation of small groups of researchers, and has grown to be a commercial success with billions of dollars of annual investment by many companies and a great deal of participation by the public. The era of interactive communication available to both companies and consumers has just launched.

INTERNET AND WWW AS ADVERTISING MEDIA

In the commercial sectors, the Internet has been considered as an advertising medium supplementing or replacing the traditional advertising media such as television, radio, magazine, newspaper, etc. In fact, one of the critical benefits companies can take from the Internet is using this new communication vehicle as an advertising medium.

There is abundant evidence suggesting that the Internet is or will be a powerful advertising medium. Many researchers argue that the Internet should substitute for or complement all of the major categories of existing media and it appears capable of serving a wide range of marketing communication objectives for a broad array of advertisers (Owen, 1999; Silk, Klein, and Berndt, 2001; Yoon, 2001; Sukpanich and Chen, 1999). The researchers generally support the competitive advantages the Internet has over the traditional media. The strength of the Internet as compared to traditional media includes: unlimited delivery of information unrestricted by time and space, unlimited amounts and sources of information, facilitating user control, the ability to target specific groups or individuals, relatively small initial budgets, and so on. Silk and his colleagues (2001) are optimistic about the future growth in Internet advertising

depending upon critical determinants: the interaction among the forces of changing media technology, economics, and regulation.

Based on the perspective of traditional media strategy, the Internet can be an effective advertising medium with its high reach and frequency rates. The number of Internet users, its capability of "reach," is 533 million throughout the world (approximately 8% of the population of the world), and is projected to be 1 billion by 2005 (approximately 15% of the world population). Moreover, wireless Internet, which can increase the "frequency" of usage, is used by 16% of the all Internet users as of 2001, and is expected to grow to 48% of the all users worldwide in 2005 (Computer Industry Almanac, 2002). With these attractive figures, most advertisers have paid a great deal of attention to the Internet.

This soaring popularity is based on several competitive benefits of the Internet as an advertising medium. Because the most powerful and comparative advantage of the Internet over other traditional media is its limitless space and time with relatively small budgets, advertisers can provide a variety of information to promote their brands as well as their companies themselves through the Internet. With the beneficial reach and frequency of the medium as reported above, these benefits are very attractive to advertisers. As of 2001, the Internet advertising industry[2] has a total revenue of $19 billion (IAB Press Release). Moreover, this figure does not include some invisible and long-term effects achieved with a variety of commercial messages found in Websites

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[2] IAB (Internet Advertising Bureau)'s estimation of the Internet industry limits its classification of the Internet advertising as: banners, sponsorships, interstitials, email, keyword search, referrals, classified, rich media, and others.

(e.g., corporate Websites' commercial messages to promote their brands). Briefly, various reasons why the Internet advertising will be more popular are abundant.

Of various formats of Internet technology (e.g., email, newsgroup), Websites are increasingly popular and important as advertising media (Berthon et al., 1996; Bruner II and Kumar, 2000; Burke, 1997; Chartterjee, 1998; Hoffman and Novak, 1996; Hoffman and Novak, and Chatterjee, 1995; Leong et al., 1998; Rogers and Thorson, 2000; Stevenson, Bruner II, and Kumar, 2000). In fact, the World Wide Web (referred to as the Web) has paved the way for commercial activities on the Internet. The Web is a distributed hypermedia environment within the Internet, which was originally developed by the European Particle Physics Laboratory (CERN). Since its creation in 1989 as a way to link multiple documents through hypertext and the introduction of Mosaic in 1993, the number of Internet hosts has exploded at a surprisingly fast pace during the last decade from 727,000 in January 1992 to 147.3 million by January 2002 (Internet Software Consortium, 2002). The inclusion of images, video, and sound with the development of Web browsers such as Netscape and Internet Explorer has helped the Web grow in public use and has activated a variety of commercial activities (Ellsworth and Ellsworth, 1995; Geissler and Zinkhan, 1998; Raman, 1997).

Web-based marketing communication activities are often more efficient and possibly even more effective than efforts mounted in traditional media (Hoffman and Novak, 1996; Hoffman, Novak, and Chatterjee, 1995). Much marketing literature supports this (e.g., Bakos and Brynjolfsson, 2000; Bickart and Schindler, 2001; Burke, 1997; Deighton, 1997; Hoffman and Novak 1996; Pennington, 2001; Peterson, Balasubramanian, and Bronnenberg, 1997; Steinfield, Chan and Kraut, 2000; Wind and

Rangaswamy, 2001). For example, Potter (1994) reported that marketing on the Web results in 10 times as many units sold with 1/10 the advertising budget. In short, the emergence of the Web has radically facilitated the commercial status of the Internet to complement or to replace traditional media. Bickart and Schindler (2001) found that consumers gathering product information from online discussion forums had greater interest in the product than did those consumers who acquired information from marketer-generated sources.

Nowadays, advertising on the Web (referred to as Web advertising) is synonymous with Internet advertising, even with interactive advertising. In fact, many researchers interchangeably use these terms to refer to Web advertising such as banners, pop-ups, and brand or corporate Websites. Web advertising has become the mainstream of interactive advertising in both academic and practical fields.

Interactivity is central to Internet advertising, for it differentiates the Internet from traditional media in general (Cho and Leckenby, 1999; McMillan, 2002; Roehm and Haugtvedt, 1999). The term, "interactive advertising" can be more theoretical and exhaustive than terms such as Internet advertising or Web advertising, which are medium specific. A variety of marketing communications activities could be labeled interactive advertising (e.g., telephone sales, direct mail, personal selling, etc.), because any advertising performed in interactive ways can be regarded as interactive advertising. For example, promotional activities through the telephone can be a form of interactive advertising, for this activity can satisfy several key concepts of interactivity (e.g., two-way communication enhanced, user's ability to control the communication without delay).

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Nonetheless, interactive advertising usually refers to the advertising on the Internet, especially Web advertising. This study focuses on Web-based interactive advertising (WIA), which can be broadly defined as <u>any product-related messages found on the Web</u>. This initial operationalization is not to limit the scope of the research, but to be flexible for any possible form of WIA as the study goes on. To be consistent, the term WIA is used in this paper to refer to any commercial messages found in the Web environment.

CURRENT STATUS OF WIA STUDY AND JUSTIFICATION

The Internet as an advertising medium has been much examined for the last several years. Specifically, Internet-related research work has increasingly dominated many academic conferences and major journals associated with consumer behavior and advertising. For example, the *Journal of Advertising* (*JA*) and the *Journal of Advertising Research* (*JAR*) each recently published a special issue on WIA, and frequently contain Internet-related work. *The American Academy of Adve*rtising (*AAA*) conferences have also increasingly established Internet-related sessions with many WIA studies. In fact, in its 2002 annual conference, four research presentation sessions out of twenty-four directly dealt with the WIA issue, and relevant studies were also presented in other sessions. Other marketing and communication publications have showed similar trends in recent years.

Nevertheless, Web-based interactive advertising (WIA) research has evolved in a few specific areas without broadly expanding the body of knowledge in the field. First, the body of WIA literature has been heavily skewed toward studies mainly pursuing

managerial implications without thorough consideration of consumers' perspectives. Although it is generally accepted that the active role of consumer should be emphasized in the computer-mediated environment, WIA researchers have devoted their efforts to examining the effectiveness of various WIA formats. Moreover, much effectiveness-oriented research implicitly assumes the passive role of consumers. For example, forced-exposures to banners and pop-ups in laboratory studies are popular methods in those literatures; however, consumers, when they are "surfing" as active participants in the natural environment of the Web, are less likely to be forced to view what they do not want to see. Considering the important role of consumers in the Internet, it is necessary for WIA researchers to understand consumers' view toward WIA at this infant stage of the field.

Second, in the same vein, the effectiveness-oriented WIA research has limited its research scope within a relatively narrow boundary. Although some researchers have argued that the entire Web commercial messages (e.g., Web page) should be recognized as a format of advertising (e.g., Singh and Dalal, 1999; Rodgers and Thorson, 2000), the majority of researchers have narrowed the definition of WIA to focus on banners, pop-ups, interstitials and hyperlinks. This perspective is based on, and modified from, the traditional definition of advertising, which could be conceptualized within the context of traditional media like television, radio, magazine and newspaper.

However, when considering the differences between the Internet and traditional media, this adaptation of traditional perspective may not be adequate. The Internet, as an advertising medium, enables advertisers to communicate with consumers with limitless places and time – traditional media do not. Advertisers do their marketing

communication through both traditional tactics such as buying space with limited time in certain appropriate sites (e.g., banner ad) and a new way to build their own place with limitless time (e.g., corporate site). The latter can replace the function which traditional direct marketing communication made. Thus, the Internet offers advertisers the opportunity to integrate a variety of marketing communication activities in a single medium. More grounding work to conceptualize WIA with a broader perspective should be conducted.

Therefore, a broader approach to the phenomenon relating to WIA is necessary. Specifically, consumer behavior (including thoughts as well as behavioral activities) with WIA messages should be investigated with considering its entire environment. Although Websites containing many product-related messages including banners and pop-ups have become increasingly important among all interactive advertising formats on the Internet, surprisingly little is known about how consumers interact with them. In fact, the current status of WIA literature can be epitomized by the lack of a phenomenological approach with a holistic view and the dominance of still-shot studies examining some specific WIA formats without considering the flow of navigation. Because WIA should be examined with consumers in the midst of their navigation process, it is necessary to understand how they interact with and think about WIA while they are online. The interaction between consumers and WIA can be better explored by phenomenological research.

Need for Conceptualization of WIA from the Consumer's View

The conceptualization or definition of Web-based interactive advertising (WIA) cannot be underestimated at this early stage of development of technology. Lack of

consistent and integrated conceptualization of WIA has resulted in confusing outcomes in many research fields. For example, in spite of many annual reports for interactive advertising revenue, the range varies from a low of $2.5 billion to a high of $19.0 billion for 2001. This huge discrepancy is largely due to different definitions used by researchers (IAB Press Release, 2002). Some reports do not include classified ads or email, while others includes these formats. The *IAB*'s (*Interactive Advertising Bureau*) annual and quarterly report of online advertising revenue includes exhaustive types of ads including banners, sponsorships, interstitials, emails, keyword search, classified, and so forth. Nevertheless, the commercial messages in Web pages including corporate and brand Websites are excluded from this report. Moreover, it is not assured that consumers regard all of these formats as advertising (or commercial message). It is beyond the scope of this study at this stage to judge which definition is more realistic and reliable. Instead, it is certain that a definition of WIA is needed.

Largely due to its infancy, the concept of WIA has differed from researcher to researcher. What is WIA? This cannot be answered straightforwardly, because many scholars have different perspectives on this. Briefly, some scholars limit WIA to include certain ad formats (e.g., banners, pop-ups, hyperlinks, interstitials, etc.), while others view general commercial content found in the Web pages as WIA. Nevertheless, these conceptualizations of WIA have been made from the effectiveness-oriented perspective without adopting consumers' own perspectives. While some types of traditional advertising (e.g., alcoholic ads, cigarette ads, etc.) have been viewed from the consumer's perspectives, few studies have approached WIA with consumers in mind. Although some studies argued that consumer's perspective should be employed in examining WIA, the

definition or conceptualization of WIA was rarely made from consumer's view. To be flexible, the current study does not limit the definition of WIA within some ad formats on the Web. Instead, any commercial messages found on the Web have possibilities to be considered a format of WIA. This study tries to conceptualize WIA based on what consumers think about the commercial messages found on the Web.

Need for Considering the Interactive and Continuous Process

In the same vein, as most Web advertising researchers have agreed, the role of consumers in the WIA process – from message creation to the consumer evaluation – is important. Due to its interactive characteristics, WIA can be effected by the consumers directly over time. Some commercial messages are unintentionally perceived (e.g., banners, pop-ups), while consumers may intentionally process other commercial messages (e.g., Web page contents). The choice is not the advertisers', but the consumers', especially in the latter case (Rodgers and Thorson, 2001). The consumer's interaction with Web advertising is central to this study. This interaction will be viewed from the consumers' standpoint.

It is necessary to understand WIA in its own context, the real interactive navigation process. Web advertising has many unique aspects, which differentiate it from traditional advertising media. The most critical aspect is, as many professionals (e.g., Schmetterer, 1999) as well as Internet researchers (e.g., Leckenby and Li, 2001) agreed interactivity, which this new medium enables – the interaction between users (or consumers) and message creators (or the advertisers). Although traditional media can partly facilitate this function, it is generally accepted that the Internet is one of the most

interactive media. The power of managing media content has been shifting from the original message creators (e.g., publishers, companies, advertisers, etc.) to the public (e.g., readers, consumers, etc.). The interactivity of Web advertising should be central to research about this new medium.

It is necessary to observe how consumers deal with WIA. One of the most critical aspects of the interactivity is the users' ability to control what they want to read (or listen to and watch). Many researchers agree that "Control" is a key to understanding interactivity, and it differentiates the Internet from various traditional media (e.g., Raman, 1997). As noted, the Web has an enormous amount of information without time and space limitation; therefore, the selective acceptance or avoidance of abundant commercial messages is inevitable. In fact, consumers can easily avoid or accept (e.g., pay attention, read) a variety of commercial messages during their navigation process with some Web browsing functions such as back and stop buttons (Raman, 1997). Without investigating how consumers control WIA through their own navigation route, it is demanding to understand how WIA works.

Schrage (1994) predicted the interaction between the consumer and advertising in cyberspace. He mentioned, "We'll interact with advertising where once we only watched; we'll seek out advertising where once we avoided it. Advertising will not go away; it will be rejuvenated" (http://www.wired.com/wired/2.02/features/ advertising.html).

Another typical characteristic of WIA is the continuous and dynamic process of interaction with consumers as the navigation process is performed. Some users may view a single Website, while others process a variety of Websites with back-and-forward navigation. Moreover, the initial motive a consumer holds at the starting point of his (her)

navigation process can be easily changed (Rodgers and Thorson, 2000). Some ads show up between the Web pages (e.g., interstitials and pop-ups) unexpectedly, while others can be found after processing several precedent pages in a single Web domain (e.g., Web page commercial contents, hyperlinks and banners). In addition, in many cases, two or more Web ads are shown to consumers simultaneously. Overall information processing during the navigation, therefore, should be considered to see how Web advertising is evaluated and interacted with by consumers. An examination of a single ad in a Website can be less meaningful for these reasons.

This study investigated how consumers (or Web users) interact with WIA through their navigation process. This study is based on the belief that consumers interact with WIA actively (e.g., Roehm and Haugtvedt, 1999; Schrage, 1994). In the continuous online navigation process, it was observed how consumers interact with WIA. More importantly, the consumer's perspective toward WIA was explored. Specifically, the meaning of WIA was examined.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

As discussed above, the current study primarily aims to explore one of the most critical areas, which has been neglected by much of the WIA literature. The study outcome can enhance the level of understanding of consumers' perspective toward WIA. Therefore, the body of WIA literature will have a more balanced view that considers the perspectives of both consumers and advertisers.

Various stakeholders can benefit from this study. Academic researchers can benefit from this study, because their future studies about interactive advertising can be

firmly based on what consumers think, feel and do with WIA in a real computer-mediated environment. WIA researchers, based on the outcomes of this study, can pay more attention to some specific areas such as the consumers' evaluations about various features and messages found in the Websites throughout the navigation process. As noted previously, because existing literature has paid over-attention to some technical issues such as effectiveness of banners, Web page background, number of links, etc., it is necessary for researchers to explore other areas neglected so far. This study can enable researchers to have a holistic perspective of how consumers interact with a wide range of Web commercial messages.

Although the reader who can take the major benefit from the outcome of this study is the academic researcher, other stakeholders can also benefit from the study. Practitioners in the WIA field such as WIA message creators, managers, and advertisers can grasp consumers' insights about WIA. Without understanding consumers' role in the WIA process, it is demanding for practitioners to perform effective interactive marketing strategy. Some practitioners can have specific insights about how their products or brands can be promoted in the Web, for this study can have specific suggestions about how some product categories can be preferred by consumers as well as how they understand somewhat differently commercial messages for various product categories.

Additionally, college educators can also gain valuable insights from this study to help them teach their students about interactive advertising. The newly emerging area has attracted huge attention from college students including undergraduate as well as graduate students, and many academic programs offer some classes to teach WIA. Although many classes over different schools have a wide range of curriculum about

WIA due to its infancy, the role of consumers and their navigation activities should be one of the essential parts elements of the curriculum. College educators can teach their students about how consumers interact with WIA in realistic situations.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The consumers' perspective toward and behavioral interaction with Web-based interactive advertising (WIA) is the main subject of the study. As noted, due to the lack of pertinent literature, the current study primarily takes broad research questions to grasp consumers' perspectives toward WIA. The following research questions are explored in the study: 1) What does Web-based interactive advertising (WIA) mean to consumers?; and 2) How do consumers navigate through and interact with WIA in Web-based environment?

Research question 1 tries to conceptualize the meaning of WIA to consumers. The processing of WIA by consumers is not a single-shot activity, but a continuous process through multiple Websites. Without understanding this continuous navigation of consumers in the computer-mediated environment, it is difficult to understand how consumers interact with IA. Research question 2 explores this phenomenological issue.

ORGANIZATION OF THE STUDY

Chapter Two reviews the existing literature, which is pertinent to the current study's topic. It is divided into three broad sections: Web-based interactive advertising (WIA) itself, consumer behavior on the Web, and consumers' interaction with the Internet and WIA. Various literatures dealing with the concepts of WIA, computer-

mediated environment, and interactivity are reviewed to conceptualize WIA. Literature about consumers' perspective and interaction with the Web and WIA are reviewed followed by a review of consumer behavior on the Web in general.

Chapter Three describes the methodology used to investigate the research questions. The fundamental methodological issues this study considered are detailed. This supports why the study employed an interpretive approach with two qualitative research methods: participant observation and depth interview. Detailed descriptions about how data collection was performed are also described. The procedure of data analysis is also presented.

Chapter Four contains '*Thick Description*'[3] of the phenomenon the study investigated. What consumers think about WIA is presented with a conceptual model and nine specific themes representing their thoughts about and interactions with WIA are described with a variety of quotes from participants. The relationships among various themes are also presented in the section for each theme. These themes are also analyzed to see how they are associated with each WIA format.

Chapter Five presents a summary of the study, discussion about the outcomes, suggestions for stakeholders, and limitation of the study. The discussion section provides insights into how this study supports, contradicts, or implements the current WIA literature. Final remarks wrap up the study.

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[3] For detailed information about the term of 'Thick Description (Geertz, 1973),' see the last part of Chapter III.

CHAPTER II.

LITERATURE REVIEW: WIA – ITS CONCEPT AND CONSUMER BEHAVIOR

The review of literature is divided into three primary sections. The first section deals with the concept of WIA, while the last two sections focus on consumer behavior on the Web and with WIA.

The first section describes conceptual issues including the definition of WIA. Two distinct perspectives toward the conceptualization of WIA are contrasted and discussed. In comparison with traditional advertising, the concept of interactivity is identified as a core element of WIA.

The second section addresses consumer behavior on the Web. Because the existing WIA literature has usually narrowed its scope of research to focus on some WIA formats without considering the dynamic navigation process, it is necessary to review how consumers navigate and use the Web. Numerous literatures have dealt with how consumers behave on the Web. General consumer (or user) behavior in the computer-mediated environment is discussed. Literature from communication (e.g., uses and gratification studies) as well as marketing fields (e.g., consumer behavior with e-commerce) is briefly reviewed.

The third section focuses on the consumer's interaction with the Web and WIA. The section has two components: interaction with the technology including the Internet, and interaction with WIA. Interaction is considered from the consumer's perspective and examines how consumers deal with (view, perceive, think, behave, evaluate, etc.) each

subject. The majority of the literature in this section has descriptive purposes and employed qualitative approaches in general.

CONCEPTUALIZATION OF WIA

Although there is abundant literature about Web-based interactive advertising (WIA), a consistent and general definition of WIA is not available due to variant perspectives toward WIA. WIA scholars interchangeably use several terms when referring to WIA. They are "Internet advertising," "Web advertising," and "Interactive advertising." Even many articles in qualified academic journals in several disciplines (e.g., *Journal of Marketing*, *Journal of Retailing*, and *Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly*) frequently use these terms interchangeably. Although some research employs one of these terms to precisely designate a certain type of advertising activity or format, many articles fail to differentiate these terms.

Internet advertising is the most general and broad term in the literature. It is widely used across various academic disciplines such as marketing, retailing, communication, and so forth. Web advertising is more specific and excludes some advertising formats, which are not executed on the Web (e.g., e-mail, newsgroup commercials, etc.). Advertising scholars with a relatively practical perspective have preferred to adopt this term. For example, the *Journal of Advertising Research* has officially employed the term Web advertising to represent most kinds of advertising activities on the Web. Interactive advertising is more a theoretical term, and has come to be used to designate WIA. Although it does not limit its scope to the Web-based advertising, the majority of literatures employ this term primarily to designate WIA.

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The majority of the literature on WIA has focused on specific commercial formats such as banners, buttons, pop-ups, hyperlinks, interstitials, and so on (Bezjian-Avery, Calder, and Iacobucci, 1998; Brackett and Carr, 2001; Cho and Leckenby, 1999; Cho, Lee, and Tharp, 2001; Hoffman and Novak, 1996; Raman and Leckenby, 1998; Shamdasani, Stanaland and Tan, 2001; Sundar et al., 1998). This research resides within the mass-media research tradition that positions the Web as a medium, similar to newspaper, TV, magazine and so forth, which hosts advertising messages (Hwang, McMillan and Lee, 2002). From this perspective, the researchers regard the Website as a carrier of advertising messages in the formats referred to above. The Website functions like a newspaper or a television program that is accompanied by sponsored ads.

By contrast, other researchers have employed a broader stance toward the concept of WIA. Singh and Dalal (1999) insisted that home pages should be regarded as a form of advertising based on the comparison between the functional, physical, and conceptual characteristics of WIA and traditional advertising. They argued that corporate Websites "meet the conceptual definition of advertising, they resemble ads in physical appearance, and they perform the same basic functions – to inform and to persuade" (p.92). They argued, "one must realize that the most important online advertising of all is the home page itself" (p.96). Rodgers and Thorson (2000), in their conceptual model of Web advertising process, included the Website as well as other ad formats (e.g., banners) as part of Web advertising. They argued that the Website has more interactive features than any other online ad format, because it gives consumers more power to control the content. For example, unlike banners, consumers can seek and choose some of virtually limitless commercial messages on a Web page, while other ad formats often occur in

front of them accidentally. Hwang, McMillan and Lee (2002), in their examination of Website creative strategies, took this broader perspective to define the corporate Websites as advertising. Several researchers, in their examination of various advertising-related effects in the context of the Web, implicitly defined WIA to include Websites (Bruner II and Kumar, 2000; Coyle and Thorson, 2001; Lynn et al., 2002; Stevenson, Bruner II, and Kumar, 2000).

Specifically, there are numerous formats of commercial messages on the Web and they are usually referred to as Internet, Web, or interactive advertising, which together are termed WIA in this study. Each format has a somewhat different role. Ducoffe (1996) reported that 75% of surveyed respondents considered the following messages on the Web as advertising: free sample or trial offers; branded banners, branded messages, on-line catalogs; billboard-type logo; graphical displays of products; shopper guides; and sponsor identifications for Websites. Rodgers and Thorson (2000) describe many formats of WIA that seem to include all currently existing formats. They are banners, pop-ups, hyperlinks, interstitials, sponsorship, and Websites as shown in <Table 1>. The following table describes each WIA format (Rodgers and Thorson, 2000)

It is necessary to discuss the differences between Websites and the other five formats. As noted previously, the definition of WIA varies by researchers. The narrow perspective focuses on the first five WIA formats, while the broader perspective regards the Website as a format of WIA. Rodgers and Thorson (2000) clearly differentiate these two in terms of the manner in which they are used and visited. While the Website is sought by the users to fulfill their motives with their own intentions, users are often exposed to the other five formats in a more passive and less purposeful way.

<Table 1> Description of WIA Formats

WIA format	Description
Banners	Rectangular-shaped graphics, usually located at the top or bottom of a Web page. Although banners generally appear in a horizontal position, vertical banners have increasingly appeared in the left- or right- side of the screen. Larger banners are about 7 inches wide by 1 inch deep, and smaller banners are about half as wide by 1 inch deep.
Interstitials	Full-screen ads that run in their entirety between two content Web pages. Interstitials interrupt the user's interactive experience, because they tend to run while the user waits for a page to download. Users have less control over interstitials, for there is usually no exit option to stop or delete an interstitial.
Pop-ups and Pop-unders	A separate window over or under the content that is already on the user's screen. As compared to the interstitials, pop-ups are more likely to interrupt user's Web experiences by concealing the content a user interacts with. However, the pop-unders are less likely to interrupt the navigation due to their placement under the content a user experiences. Both can be easily avoided by clicking the exit button on the right upper corner of the window.
Sponsorship	An indirect form of persuasion that allows companies to carry out marketing objectives by associating with key content (Rodgers, 2000, p.1). The content of Web sponsorship is not much different from sponsorship in traditional media simply identifying brand name or slogan, the former can be interactive, such that a click of the mouse sends a visitor to the homepage of the sponsor.
Hyperlinks	Also referred to as hypertext link. Simply a highlighted word, phrase, or graphic that allows users to move to another Website by simply clicking on the hyperlink. Often embedded in the content itself without taking up large space like banners and pop-ups. Thus, relatively many hyperlinks can appear in a single Web page. It also enforces the user's control over the navigation.
Websites	A carrier of other WIA formats as well as a format of WIA itself. It affords greater opportunities of experiences than any other WIA formats (Rodgers and Frisby, 1998). Because WIA does not cover non-commercial messages, the Websites should include any commercial messages.

Furthermore, a Website may carry other formats of WIA, while others usually function as a tool to lead users to reach a Website. In fact, most WIA formats except the Website aim to attract users to visit a Website where an advertiser's further commercial messages are available. Nevertheless, the decision to interact with these (e.g., visiting a Website, clicking a banner, reading an interstitial ad) totally depends upon users' intentions.

Employing a metaphor taken from traditional print advertising, the first five formats may function as a headline, while a Website may function as the whole content of advertising including body-copy. Therefore the information processing of Websites is more complex than that of other WIA formats (Rodgers and Thorson, 2000).

WIA vs. TA

To better understand the concept of WIA, the difference between WIA and traditional advertising (TA)[4] needs to be considered. Because the characteristic of the advertising message depends greatly on the medium, in which it is contained, the differences between the Web and traditional media directly influence the differences between WIA and TA.

Many researchers support the idea that the marketing communication processes in this computer-mediated communication (CMC) environment is clearly different from traditional media (e.g., Hoffman and Novak, 1996; Hoffman, Novak, and Chatterjee, 1997; Walther, 1996, 1994).

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[4] Traditional advertising (TA) can be operationally defined as any advertising executed in traditional advertising media, which existed prior to the Internet including television, radio, magazines, newspapers, and so forth. More detailed discussion about the definition of advertising is provided in Chapter V.

Hoffman and Novak (1996) introduced a framework to conceptualize communication activity in the computer-mediated environment (CME). They compared marketing communications in CMC to that in traditional media. According to their models, one-to-many marketing communication is performed in traditional media, while many-to-many communication is facilitated in CME. Based on this inherent difference, many marketing researchers regard the Web as a new market that can significantly implement the traditional channel of marketing communication. Ricciuti (1995) stated that the development and the penetration of the Internet expanded beyond the utilization of a new communication medium to an important view of the Internet as a new market.

Accordingly, WIA literature indicates that the Web is a different and new advertising medium for various reasons. Coupey (1999) differentiated the Web from traditional advertising media in that the Web is an environment in which consumers and marketers can communicate more rapidly due to the relief from time and distance limitations. From the managerial perspective for marketing strategy, WIA's strengths are usually referred to as: unlimited delivery of commercial messages beyond time and space, unlimited amount of messages, effective target segmentation, and so forth (Yoon, 2001). Coupey (1999) suggested three points that differentiate the Web from traditional advertising media. First, the interactive technology enables the Web to utilize a variety of modalities such as video, audio, and text in a single context. The convergence of various media technology into the Web enables this. Second, due to the benefit of "control," users can tailor the commercial messages to their particular needs and preferences. Third, the range and depth of information is much greater with interactive technology than with traditional media.

Interactivity: the Major Distinction between WIA and TA

In the discussion of the difference between WIA and TA, it is necessary to understand a central construct of WIA: interactivity. Interactivity is central to WIA and is a key difference between WIA and TA (e.g., Cho and Leckenby, 1999; Hwang and McMillan, 2002; Roehm and Haugtvedt, 1999). The Web is significantly more interactive than traditional media (e.g., Bezjian-Avery et al., 1998; Cho and Leckenby, 1999; Steuer, 1992). Definitions of interactivity are abundant but somewhat mixed due to different research focuses (e.g., function, process and perception) and the subjects (e.g., human-to-human, human-to-documents, and human-to-system). Heeter (1989) used six elements to define interactivity: complexity of choice available; the amount of effort users must exert; the extent of responsiveness to the consumer; the capacity of monitoring information use; the ease of adding information; and the potential to facilitate interpersonal communication.

In general, interactivity enables consumers to control what information they see, for how long, how many times, in what order, and when. In fact, various benefits of the Internet to marketing communications stem from the form of interaction between the Website and the consumer (Roehm and Haugtvedt, 1999).

Regardless of the varying research focuses and the subjects of research, there are some essential characteristics of the interactivity. They are direction of communication, individual control, and time (McMillan and Hwang, 2002). The direction of communication encompasses the concepts of responsiveness and exchange; individual control includes functions such as participation as well as features such as search engines;

and the concept of time embraces issues such as timely feedback and time required for information retrieval.

Researchers who examine ways that new media can facilitate interactions between humans often focus on the importance of enabling two-way communication among individuals (Pavlik, 1998; Rafaeli and Sudweeks, 1997; Zack, 1993). Other scholars focus on the capability of new media for providing feedback (Day, 1998; Duncan and Moriaty, 1998). Some studies focus more on how humans control computers (Moon and Nass, 1996; Murray, 1997; Xie, 2000), while other studies focus on how control systems (such as navigation tools) are designed into new media environments (Laurel, 1990; Mahood, Kalyanaraman, and Sundar, 2000; Nielson, 2000; Schneiderman, 1998). A third type of interactivity identified in the literature is interaction with the messages received both from other individuals and from the computer. A key element of this interaction is time. The interaction with either human-based or computer-based messages is influenced by the speed with which messages can be delivered and the speed with which individuals process messages (Nielson, 2000; Vora, 1998).

These characteristics of interactivity enable WIA to be different from TA. Consumers can select (or click) any individual WIA whenever they want and search for commercial information to obtain more information they need. Moreover, consumers can give feedback or personal information about themselves (e.g., to get catalog, to ask for customer service, etc.). They also determine whether to stay long in a Website or to leave in a few seconds. In other words, the duration of advertising is up to consumers not to advertisers. In the case of a Website as a WIA format, consumers can revisit whenever they want.

Consumer-controlled commercial content is an important characteristic of WIA, and is enhanced by other benefits of interactivity such as two-way, timely communication. This co-participation by both marketers and consumers enables WIA to be customized to fit the consumer's needs and is one of the critical benefits of WIA (Roehm and Haugtvedt, 1999). While consumers can hardly control the marketing communication flow and messages in traditional media, the customization of commercial information for consumer's needs is increasingly allowed in the Internet. Marketing researchers (e.g., Sterne, 1995) also argue that the Web is a pull medium, not a push medium (pulling consumers to the messages instead of pushing messages to the consumers). It totally depends on consumer's volition to continue surfing to certain subsequent Web pages from a homepage or to quit the navigation. In short, the content as well as way WIA is viewed vary by consumers along with variant navigation flow across different consumers.

CONSUMER BEHAVIOR ON THE WEB

It is necessary to understand how consumers behave on the Web, the context of WIA. A complete review of the literature about consumer behavior in this environment is beyond the scope of this research. But, a review of some relevant literature gives insight to understand how consumers understand and interact with WIA.

Many studies exploring consumer behavior in the computer-mediated communication environment regard the Web as a representative form of CME (computer-mediated environment). In fact, the Web is the first and the most dominant networked global implementation among various forms of CME, which is referred to the dynamic

distributed computer network used to access, communicate and provide hypermedia content (Hoffman and Novak, 1996). Some studies explored how consumers navigate a series of Websites (e.g., Chartterjee, 1998; Coyle and Gould, 2002; Hoffman and Novak, 1996; Raman, 1997). The navigation, or the flow, in CME is an alternative term for the experiential behavior of consumption in traditional consumer research (e.g., Bettman, Luce, and Payne, 1998; Holbrook and Hirschman, 1982; Holbrook et al., 1984). Csikszentmihalyi and LeFerve (1989) defined "flow" as the process of optimal experience preceded by a set of antecedents necessary for the experience to be achieved and followed by a set of consequences that occurs as a result of the process. In a CME, the flow experience is defined as the state occurring during network navigation, which is characterized as a continuous sequence of responses; intrinsically enjoyable; accompanied by a loss of self-consciousness; and self-reinforcing (Hoffman and Novak, 1996).

Several antecedents to facilitate or discourage the flow of navigation are discussed in the literature. They are: "the ability or skill to navigate," "challenge," "interactivity," "vividness," "telepresence," "motives," "involvement," "need for navigation," and so forth (Hoffman and Novak, 1996; Raman and Leckenby, 1998). Hoffman and Novak (1996) offer a Network Navigation Model that conceptualizes consumer's response activity in terms of the ability to overcome obstacles, such as dead-end Websites, and challenges, such as low computer skills. In their model, they described how consumers navigate as: "consumers focus their attention on the interaction, narrowing their focus of awareness so that irrelevant perceptions and thoughts are filtered

out, and they much perceive a balance between their skills and the challenges of the interaction".

Consumer's Use of the Internet

Numerous researchers have examined the consumer's use of the Internet. Specifically, the studies examine: 1) antecedents of the Internet usage or preference (e.g., Sultan and Henrich, 2000; Luo, 2002), and 2) consequences of the Internet usage (e.g., Pavlov and Stewart, 2001; Cho, Lee, and Tharp, 2001; Chen and Wells, 1999). Researchers usually deal with both in a single research work to examine the influence of various antecedents on several consequences.

Why do people get online? The antecedents of Internet use can be classified into motives and modes (Rodgers and Thorson, 2000). The motive refers to the inner desire to actively fulfill a need or a want (Deci and Ryan, 1985; Papacharissi and Rubin, 2000), while the mode represents the extent to which Internet activities are goal-directed (Rodgers and Thorson, 2000). The motive of the Internet use is strongly based on the active role of users, and includes "Research or Information seeking" (Raman, 1997), "Shop" (Chen and Wells, 1999), "Entertainment / Surf" (Rodgers and Seldon, 1999), "Communicate / Socialize" (Korgaonkar and Wolin, 1999), "Relaxation" (Papacharissi and Rubin, 2000), and so forth.

A critical characteristic is that motives are dynamic and change over context. In fact, the dynamic nature of online navigation is driven by motive-switch (Rodgers and Thorson, 2000). An individual user enters the Web and starts his (her) navigation with one or more motives in mind, and throughout the course of navigation, can switch the

initial motives. This motive switch can be caused because the user became bored or frustrated with the initial motive, or because some other activities captured his (her) attention (Hoffman and Novak, 1996). The initial goal can change when Web content inspires goal changes or when obstacles, such as slow loading pages, are encountered (Coyle and Gould, 2002). For example, an individual user gets online to search for information about a laptop (research motive), but he (she) switches the motive and decides to shop for some other item that the user saw in a Web page or a pop-up window during the navigation. This dynamic characteristic of the motive in CME demonstrates the complex nature of the CME where WIA is contained.

Along with the motive, the mode determines how playful or serious each user's navigation activity is. Users in a highly goal-oriented mode tend to be more serious-minded with a future-focused mind, while others in a low goal-oriented (or high experience-oriented) mode are more likely to be playful and oriented more to the present than the future (Rodgers and Thorson, 2000).

The motive and mode as antecedent of navigation have been explored in the communication field with the functional approach mainly based on the uses and gratification (U&G) theory. In fact, the basic assumption of U&G theory – active audiences interacting with media – has encouraged researchers to adopt the theory to explain Internet use (e.g., Ebersole, 2000; Eighmey, 1997; James et al., 1995; Korgaonkar and Wolin, 1999; Lin, 1999). In the U&G literature, the most common dimensions are entertainment, informativeness, and irritation (Chen and Wells, 1999; Ebersole, 2000; Eighmey and McCord, 1998; Luo, 2002; Rubin, 1994). Entertainment refers to the extent to which the Web is fun and entertaining to media users (Eighmey and

McCord 1998; Eighmey, 1997). The U&G literatures supports the notion that providing higher entertainment value is likely to be an advantage for media users and to motivate them to use the media more often (e.g., McQuail, 1983; Eighmey, 1997). In the context of the Web, this positive relationship between the entertainment and the use of medium is also supported (Chen and Wells 1999; Ducoffe, 1996; Luo, 2002). The motive of entertainment can result in goal-oriented behavior on the Web.

In contrast to the entertainment construct, informativeness is more a goal-oriented motive and can be defined as the extent to which the Web provides users with resourceful and helpful information (Chen and Wells, 1999; Ducoffe, 1995). In traditional media contexts, this motive has been found to have a strong effect on media use (Bauer and Greyser, 1968). Researchers suggest that informativeness is the primary motive for people to use the Web (e.g., Maddox, 1998). Evans and his colleagues (2001), with a series of focus group interviews, reported that the primary use of the Internet is for gathering information. They specified the type of information as: 1) personal needs, which cover leisure, medical information, news and politics, local community and historical information, and 2) business needs covering technical resource information, academic research and company information.

The marketing literature also supports that the motives of entertainment and informativeness are important factors that drive navigation behavior (e.g., external information search) in the shopping environment (Babin, Darden, and Griffin, 1994; Baumgartner and Steenkamp, 1996; Hammond et al., 1998). While the utilitarian (informativeness) motive works out when a consumer has an initial goal to purchase a

product or to gain information about a product, while the hedonic (entertainment) motive facilitates navigation when the browsing session is for fun (Hammond et al., 1998).

Unlike these positive motives in terms of their impacts on media use, irritation is generally regarded as having a negative relationship with media use. Irritation can be defined as the extent to which the Web is messy and irritating to surfers (e.g., Eighmey and McCord, 1998). Ducoffe (1996) reports that irritating banner ads may cause human anxiety, distract consumer's attention, and dilute human experiences. This motive is a central reason for advertising to be criticized; in fact, consumers have negative attitudes toward advertising due to the annoyance and irritation that advertising causes (Bauer and Greyser, 1968).

Here, the review of the consequences of Internet use and exposure to WIA remains minimal, because it is less relevant to the current study. The consequences of exposure to WIA or navigation usually refer to the measurement of effectiveness of WIA or Websites such as attitude, comprehension, preference, purchase intentions, and so forth. Most literature simply applies the measure of consumer responses used in traditional contexts to measure the consumer responses (to WIA or to navigation experiences). In fact, most studies apply consumer responses used in traditional contexts to the Web environment (e.g., Bruner II and Kumar, 2000; Stevenson et al., 2000). Although it is reasonable that responses consumers make to traditional media and traditional advertising seem to remain relevant to the Web, some researchers argue that new measures should be used to evaluate the consumer's responses to WIA and navigation (Chen and Well, 1999; Pavlou and Stewart, 2000). Chen and Wells (1999) argue that attitude toward the site should be employed to measure the effectiveness of a

Website rather than the traditional attitude measures such as attitude toward ads. Pavlou and Stewart (2000) also argue that the interactive context should be considered to measure the effectiveness of WIA, and suggest modifying traditional measures to accommodate the typical characteristic of WIA. For example, they suggest that recall measuring the memory of advertising in the traditional media context can be less relevant in the interactive context due to the bookmark function in the Web browser to aid recall. New measures such as click-through rate (e.g., Cho et al., 2001; Kim and Leckenby 2002) are also frequently used in the effectiveness of WIA literature.

CONSUMERS' PERSPECTIVES AND INTERACTION WITH THE INTERNET

Some researchers investigated how individuals view or interact with the Internet by employing qualitative methods such as observation and interviews. They strongly support that consumer behavior in the Internet should be investigated in the context of usage (Raman, 1997; Silverstone, 1991; Geissler and Zinkhan, 1998; Hammond, McWilliam, and Diaz, 1998; Clark, 1998; Trocchia and Janda 2000). Silverstone (1991) argued that the use of communication and information technologies in the household should be understood in the context of the culture of the household, in so far as they mediate public and private meanings of technologies. In an earlier study, Silverstone and his colleagues (1990) investigated how communication and information technologies, especially television, are consumed in the household with an ethnographical approach. He offered a model of the media consumption process, which positioned the social, economic and technological aspects of the domestic sphere as central.

Some studies focused on specific groups of Internet users and explored relevant themes characterizing their behaviors and perceptions. Trocchia and Janda (2000) explored older users' Internet usage through phenomenological interviews in order to understand their attitudes' and motivations concerning Internet usage. By comparing users and non-users, they found six themes, which characterized differences between two groups. Those were: Reference group affiliation, Technology schema, Resistance to change, Nature of social relations, Perception of reality, and Physical dexterity. For example, the reference group was defined to serve as a point of reference in shaping an individual's values, attitudes, beliefs, and decision-making. An Internet user among informants associated himself (or herself) closely with the group whose members had the strongest technology skills, while non-using informants most closely associated themselves with contractual reference groups whose members displayed minimal affinity toward technology. Thus, the authors showed certain motivational attitudinal characteristics distinguishing Internet users from their non-user counterparts.

The interaction between the individual users in the Web seems as active as real life. Evans et al. (2001) focused on how consumers interact with each other in virtual communities. They emphasized that cyberspace is a social space and yields a variety of opportunities for both consumers and marketers to contact with each other directly. In order to explore in-depth and rich detail about people's attitudes towards virtual communities, they employed focus group interviews as the primary method of data collection. Clark (1998) examined how teens had dated on the Net. With employing the participant observation and focus group interviews, she explored the emergent practice of teenage dating on the Internet. The study found patterns and themes of online dating

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including "trust," "fun," "real life," "intimacy," and so forth. She concluded that Net relationships provide many routes to emotional satisfaction among their participants. McKenna (1998), with a series of depth interviews with newsgroup users, explored how the users build their relationship on the Internet. She argued that the Internet has become a new means of social interaction, and emphasized its convenience in forming relationships with a variety of unknown people as compared to traditional media such as the telephone.

In order to build a conceptual framework for the construction of click-streams, Coyle and Gould (2002) employed an interpretive approach to take consumers' (Web users') verbal reports, although it was somewhat controlled as a form of experimental study, and acquired narratives about the satisfaction of navigation. They found four major themes relating to the navigation process with various sub-themes under each major theme. The major themes include: "click-stream expectations," "text and hypertext expectation," "image and mapping expectation," and "analogies and distinctions between offline and online shopping." According to their findings, consumers disliked the redundancy in design, while they preferred Web icons. The consumers used the language of offline shopping to describe online shopping, and frequently identified virtual space with reality. The authors concluded that navigation involves the expectations, understanding, and experience consumers bring to each Internet shopping trip.

Consumers view the Web as very helpful for getting information, which leads to favorable impressions of the Web. Geissler and Zinkhan (1998), in their findings from focus group interviews, report that the consumers perceive the Web as a facilitator to do easier and quicker comparison shopping, especially for high-involvement products.

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According to users, the Web provided more information access easily and quickly, and they thought they could make more informed decisions. The control aspect of interactivity is perceived as a primary advantage of the Web, and users perceived that they had more control when using the Web than when using other media. A heavy user said to "It's good. You can choose to use it or not." In addition, another aspect of Web interactivity, the two-way communication, was also appreciated. For instance, a moderate user mentioned, "If you have any questions or whatever, you can leave it on their Website. Some sites have that and some don't, but that's a good thing." Balloffet and Boulaire (1999) explored various metaphors to understand how consumers, especially the non-users, represented Internet shopping. Subjects in their study seemed to adopt a certain distance and had a more benevolent reaction to electronic shopping. A variety of metaphors emerged. However, with regards to computers, images associated with a lack of warmth and dehumanization were common – for example, "glass," steel," "metal," and "ice" were evoked. For another example, the Internet was often compared to Formula 1 and sports cars, and the color red was often associated with it in representing the speed of the Internet.

Maignan and Lukas (1997) interviewed 25 Web users and explored the users' perceptions and social use of the Internet. They found that the Internet was seen as a source of information, place or object of consumption, a communication tool, and a social system. The users brought a variety of metaphors to represent each theme. For example, "giant data base," and "thick book" were used to describe the Internet as a source of information. As a place of consumption, the Internet was compared to "a big shopping plaza," "a large, noisy market," and so forth. The Internet, as a communication tool, was

represented by "Web," "TV," and "a place of exchange between people." Their social use of the Internet was quite varied. They used the Internet as a communication tool to keep in touch with friends, maintain old contacts, enjoy talking, exchange ideas, and so forth. They also used the Internet for fun, to travel, to buy a product, and so forth.

The navigation behavior of Web users seemed to have some certain patterns that are consistent among most users. Raman (1997) investigated the pattern of navigation with a phenomenological approach. In the participant observation and short interview, he observed the styles and ways of browsing the Web to understand the experiences Web users have in their Web navigation and homepage visits. Specifically, he found that the clicking behavior seemed to be purposeful rather than random. For example, the subjects (college students) were observed to start their browsing session by clicking open a link from the browser's homepage, or the default homepage. The first impression with a couple of sentences and graphics might drive the selection of subsequent Web pages. Most users did not stay long at the first page, and decided on the next page within a minute. Moreover, when a document or image took long to download, the users usually canceled the download by moving on to other pages and documents. Users liked to go online and thought that it was so easy to find information on any topic on the Web by using search engines such as Yahoo!. They also thought that the Web is very helpful for their lives including their work and careers. The study also investigated the use of Web browser functions. The "back" button was the most frequently used browser function, while the "stop" button was used to quit a downloading job when it took longer than expected. Overall, the style of navigation did not vary much when users navigated commercial homepages; however, this evaluation is limited within the navigation of a

Web page without considering the overall flow of navigation (the researcher requested the subjects to go to specific commercial homepages). Regarding WIA, most subjects felt bored during their stay in the commercial pages and were wary about marketer's messages.

A focus group study (Evans et al., 2001) found that Web users either found advertisements highly annoying, especially banners and pop-ups, or were immune to them and did not notice them any longer. One participant showed a strong tendency to stay at a particular Website, a commercial football Website, for on-line chat as well as for e-commerce. The variety of services the Website offered as well as his personal interests were heavily involved in this preference. Most participants wanted to see simpler sites with less graphics, quicker loading times and easy-to-use interfaces. This is fairly consistent with the findings of Stenvenson et al. (2000) who reported a negative relationship between the complexity of a Web page background and the attitude toward the Website.

To summarize, the current body of WIA literature lacks deep understanding about how consumers interact with and think about WIA in their everyday lives. Most research subjects, ranging from the conceptualization of WIA to examinations of many critical components relating to WIA, should be examined with proper and sufficient investigation about consumers' actual behavior on the Web.

Most literature about consumer behavior in general on the Web emphasizes the active role of consumers. The literature reported several factors affecting Web navigation and some of them (e.g., interactivity, telepresence) show that consumer behavior on the

Web differs from behaviors with other traditional media. In addition, consumers on the Web are considerably goal-oriented and they think that the Web is a helpful took for them to satisfy their various needs (e.g., information seeking, entertaining, social activity). Specific patterns of Web navigation are also reported in the literature and the majority of studies agreed that consumers behave in a purposive way and enjoy many benefits including convenience and variety of information.

Nevertheless, studies rarely dealt with consumer behavior with WIA, any product information on the Web, although a few authors reported that some representative formats of WIA (e.g., banners and pop-ups) are major causes of annoyance and are easily ignored. It is necessary to make deeper investigation about how consumers think about and interact with any possible WIA formats as well as these popular formats with naturalistic approach, which is termed "Qualitative approach" in the following chapter.

CHAPTER III.

METHODOLOGY:

A QUALITATIVE APPROACH TO UNDERSTAND THE CONSUMER'S MIND

This chapter presents the methodology used to collect and to analyze the data. Specifically, the chapter provides an overview of qualitative research of consumer behavior and two qualitative methods employed in this study: participant observation with articulation procedures, and depth interviews. The justification of using these methods is also discussed. It consists of two primary sections. The first section describes the basic but fundamental issues in methodology this study employed. The second section specifies the procedure of data collection. The description of participants is followed by the specification of each method. The study did not specifically structure the procedure of data collection activities with participants in advance in order to fully take the benefit of evolving characteristic of qualitative research design throughout the date collection. However, some general guidelines were used to help the researcher collect relevant data during the procedure.

RESEARCH DESIGN: A QUALITATIVE APPROACH

As an exploratory study to understand how consumers interact with WIA and what their perspectives toward WIA are, a qualitative approach was considered ideal. A brief summary of the underlying assumptions and characteristics of this research

paradigm is provided followed by the justification of employing this methodological approach and the specific methods used in this study.

Assumptions and Characteristics of Qualitative Approach

Among a variety of research traditions in social and behavioral science, two distinctive major paradigms of research methodology have been contrasted with each other. The methodology referred to here is not only the data-gathering techniques, but also research design, setting, subjects, analysis, reporting, and so on. Although numerous traditions are somewhat different from each other and have their own typical domains, most of them can be classified into either positivistic or interpretive approach (Hudson and Ozanne, 1988).

Several traditions of research inquiry can be categorized as the interpretive approach although there are some differences, especially in terms of their interests of inquiries and their approaches to the phenomenon. These research traditions are characterized by terms such as naturalistic (Belk et al., 1988; Lincoln and Guba, 1985), ethnographic (Schouten and McAlexander, 1995; Agar, 1986), subjective (Rubinstein, 1981), humanistic (Hirschman, 1986), constructive (Guba, 1990), qualitative (Taylor, 1994; Van Maanen et al., 1982), and so forth.

Among these various terminologies, this study uses the term "qualitative research" to refer the methodology employed. Specifically, in this paper, "Qualitative research" means not only how to collect the data but also how to process the research (research design), how to analyze the data (analysis), how to report the findings, and so forth. Usually, the current study takes relativistic (ontology), subjectivists

(epistemology), and qualitative methods (methodology), and the term of "Qualitative research" represents all of these different levels of inquiries. Qualitative research is widely used across a variety of traditions mentioned above. In fact, many researchers from these research traditions refer to the qualitative approach as an umbrella term that encompasses all of these traditions that share many fundamental assumptions (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994; Creswell, 1998; Patton, 1990; Strauss and Corbin, 1998; Taylor 1994). Qualitative research is defined as:

> *Any systematic investigation that attempts to understand the meanings that things have for individuals form their own perspectives (Taylor, 1994, 266).*

> *An inquiry process of understanding based on distinct methodological traditions of inquiry that explore a social or human problem. The researcher builds a complex, holistic picture, analyzes words, reports detailed views of informants, and conducts the study in a natural setting (Creswell, 1998, 15).*

As shown in these definitions, qualitative research primarily focuses on adopting the individual's perspective to understand the holistic meanings of things. Qualitative research has several critical assumptions in terms of its ontology, epistemology, and methodology, and they are distinctively different from those of positivistic approach as illustrated in the <Table 2>.

As shown in the <Table 2>, qualitative research assumes that there are multiple realities (constructed not by the theory but by the subjects) that can be studied only holistically (ontology).

The inquiry into these multiple realities inevitably diverges so that prediction and control are unlikely outcomes although some level of understanding can be achieved. These multiple realities can be understood by the interaction between the inquirer (or the researcher) and the object of the inquiry; therefore the knower and known are inseparable

<Table 2> Underlying Assumptions of Qualitative and Positivistic Approach

		Qualitative	Positivists
Ontology	Meaning	Meaning changes over time and with context in the process of social interaction	Meaning exists in the object, so it does not change (absolute meaning)
	Reality	Meaning is created through a process of interpretation (multiple realities)	Reality exists "out there" and is driven by immutable natural laws and mechanism.
Epistemology		The inquirer and the inquired interact with each other (Subjectivity).	It is both possible and essential for the inquirer to adopt a distant, non-interactive posture (Objectivity).

(epistemology). The inquiry in qualitative research is value and context bound (axiology). That is to say, the inquiry is not free from the inquirer as well as the context in which the inquiry takes place. More specifically, two major goals that positivistic inquiries usually aim to reach are absent from qualitative research: generalization and causal relationship. Qualitative researchers criticize generalization for its use in determinism, inductive logic, context-free assumption, reductionism, and so forth (for more information, see Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Anderson, 1983; Hesse, 1980). In short, to qualitative researchers, generalizations are not found in nature; they are the active creation of the mind and of the interaction between the subjects. In regard to the causal relationship problem, qualitative research argues that all entities are in a state of mutual simultaneous shaping so that it is impossible to distinguish causes from effects.

Qualitative research has several typical characteristics that are also contrasted to the positivistic approach (Bogdan and Biklen, 1992; Bogdan and Taylor, 1975; Creswell,

1998; Eisner, 1991; Denzin and Lincoln, 1994; Taylor, 1994): "natural setting," "researcher as a instrument," "intuitive knowledge," "adaptive qualitative methods," "purposive sampling," "inductive data analysis," "emergent and evolving design," and so forth. All of these characteristics are not necessarily requirements for a single qualitative research work; nevertheless, they are generally preferred and supported in the qualitative research paradigm. <Table 3> summarizes typical characteristics of qualitative research as compared to positivistic research, which has been dominant in most marketing and advertising literatures including the WIA field (Taylor, 1994; Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Denzin and Lincoln, 1994).

<Table 3> Comparison of Characteristics of Qualitative and Positivistic Research

Qualitative Research	Positivistic Research
Constructed meaning is a central concept	Absolute truth is a central concept
Data collection precedes theory (Inductive approach from particulars to generals)	Theory precedes data collection (Deductive approach from generals to specifics)
Data are primarily verbal and visual	Data are primarily numbers and assigned numerical values
Data collection is performed in natural settings	Data collection is usually performed in controlled setting
Relies on human insight	Relies on statistical measures and tests
Generalization is not claimed	Generalization is one of the core aims
Researcher is an instrument and interacts with the participant	Researcher creates instrument (e.g., questionnaire) with an objective stance

In consumer behavior and advertising research, qualitative research has been referred to be an alternative to the positivistic approach, and has gradually grown in popularity since the early 1980s (For more information about the tension between positivistic and interpretive approaches, see Anderson, 1986, 1983; Denzin and Lincoln, 1994; Hunt, 1989). Among the research areas that have employed the qualitative approach are studies of cultural values, consumption behavior, and decision-making. Qualitative research has been popular for empirical theory-building studies (Strauss and Corbin, 1994). But qualitative research is not used for theory-testing that usually utilizes a positivistic approach -- especially falsificationism-oriented studies. Several specific methods have been referred to as qualitative methods. They are case study, participant observation, ethnography, interview (long, in-depth, focus group), literary criticism, biography, and so forth.

The current study employed participant observation with articulation procedures, and depth-interviews and has the typical characteristics of qualitative research summarized in the table above. First, the natural setting was maintained throughout the data collection process. As a naturalistic inquiry, the natural setting should be held to observe the phenomena during the consumer's usual navigation behaviors. The natural setting is one of the most critical criteria to evaluate the quality of qualitative research. Most qualitative researchers (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994; Creswell, 1998; Lincoln and Guba, 1985) proposed that the naturalistic inquiry demands a natural setting as a prerequisite to pursue qualitative research. The inquiry must be carried out in a natural setting because phenomena of study take their meanings as much from their contexts as they do from themselves.

Second, the researcher functioned as an instrument and interacted with the participants to understand their perspectives. Taylor (1994) suggests, "qualitative researchers must suspend their own interpretations of what things mean and rely instead on sustained observation, conversations, and interviews with their research participants" (p.268). Throughout the data collection and analysis procedure, the current study's methods enabled the researcher to get as close to the phenomenon as he can.

Third, the research design evolved as the data collection and analysis continued without being limited by existing theories or literatures. The inductive approach from the data to the synthesis allowed the study to evolve by modifying the research design as it emerged from the analysis of continuing data collections. The researcher analyzed each set of data gained from each participant before the following session of data collection and reflect the findings to the following sessions.

Other benefits such as sufficient verbal data to improve the trustworthiness of qualitative research were also ensured during the data collection and analysis procedure. Improving the trustworthiness with 'thick description' is described in analysis procedure at the end of this chapter. A brief description of each method is presented with the procedure of data collection with each method preceded by the description of participants (or informants).

DESCRIPTIONS AND PROCEDURES OF METHODS

Participants and Recruiting

A total of twenty-seven participants[5] were recruited with a purposive sampling method. Most qualitative researchers have employed purposive sampling, and such a sampling method is also referred to as "interactional" (Ford, 1975), "theoretical" (Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Strauss and Corbin, 1998; Patton, 1980), and "emergent" (Stake, 1975). Patton (1980) identifies several criteria to use in purposive sampling. They are: "extreme or deviant cases," "typical cases," "maximum variation," "critical cases," "politically important or sensitive cases," and "convenience" (For more information, See Patton, 1980; Lincoln and Guba, 1985). To explore the research questions posed in this study, the participants' cases need to have maximum application due to their critical values (critical cases), and the sampling procedure needs to save time, budget, and some effort (convenience). <Table 4> shows detailed information about participants' profiles including their Web usages, favorite Websites used in the study, and other information.

The participants examined in this study had several defining characteristics. First, they were moderate- to heavy-users of the Internet. Many of them were likely to be heavy Internet users in the future. As previously described, the number of Internet users has sharply increased throughout the world, and most experts expect that this phenomenon will continue. Based on the diffusion of innovation studies, the diffusion of the Internet is in the middle stage between its infancy and maturation (e.g., White and Scheb, 2000). This technology is likely to mature in a short period of time. Thus, the proportion of

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[5] Although 'informant' is usually used to refer interviewee in method of interview, 'participant' is employed in this study to reflect the first session and get consistency throughout the paper.

< Table 4> Participant Profile

Names	Favorite Sites	Daily Internet usage	Frequency of Internet use	First Internet use	Place of getting online	Age	Gender
Jacob	- www.amazon.com - www.silon.com - www.enterprisemission.com - www.cabinessense.com	1-2 hours	once or twice a day	around 1993 with AOL	University labs	42	M
Joshua	- www.google.com - www.yahoo.co.kr - www.kbs.co.kr	3-4 hours	3-4 times a day	1997	Apartment and labs	35	M
Tom	- www.yahoo.com - www.marvel.com - www.twnpnews.com - www.CincinnatiReds.com - www.Fandango.com - www.Audiogalaxy.com - www.Pogo.com	Probably around 3 hours	Everyday, All the time	About 8 years ago	Generally at the apartment	22	M
Chris	- www.yahoo.com - www.ebay.com - www.yahooauctions.com	Maybe 2 hours	Maybe 5 times a day (mostly checking emails)	9 years ago (bulletin board)	Work or Home	40	M
Andrew	- www.knoxnews.com - www.govols.com - www.ajc.com	1.5 hours	2-3 times a day	8 years ago	Apartment with High-speed	27	M
Joseph	- www.harmonycentral.com - www.yahoo.com - www.google.com - www.sportsline.com - www.foxsports.com	3 hours	3 times a day	Around 6 years ago	Apartment with DSL	21	M

Names	Favorite Sites		Daily Internet usage	Frequency of Internet use	First Internet Use	Place of getting online	Age	Gender
Emily	-	www.google.com www.cnn.com www.hellomagazine.com	1-2 hours	4-5 times a day	5-6 years ago	Home (modem) and office	31	F
Daniel	-	www.amazon.com www.ebay.com www.msn.com	0.5 hours	3 times a week	1997	Apartment (dial modem)	22	M
William	-	www.govols.com www.theonion.com www.thesportingnews.com	1 hour	once every 2 days	1998	Computer labs or apartment	22	M
Ashley	-	www.yahoo.com www.threds.com www.parisian.com	2-3 hours	An average of twice a day	About 5 years ago	Library or Home	21	F
Sarah	-	www.yahoo.com www.google.com www.weather.com	1 hour	Once a day	1998	Apartment	22	F
David	-	www.google.com www.bestbuy.com www.ebay.com	About 1 hour	4 times a week	5 years ago	Apartment (modem)	22	M
Jessica	-	www.weather.com www.travelocity.com www.emode.com	2 hour	2 or 3 times a day	10 years ago	At home or library	20	F
Tylor	-	www.wbir.com www.usatoday.com www.espn.com	3-4 hours	15 times a day	1998	Home or Labs	56	M

< Table 4> Participant Profile (Continued)

Names	Favorite Sites	Daily Internet usage	Frequency of Internet use	First Internet use	Place of getting online	Age	Gender
Olivia	- www.dogbreeds.com - www.foxnews.com	1 hour	once a day	4 years ago	apartment	22	F
Lauren	- www.google.com - www.msn.com - www.nytimes.com	1-2 hours	everyday 5 times	3 years ago	at home (cable modem)	45	F
Ryan	- www.imdb.com - espn.go.com - www.mtv.com	1 hour	once or twice a day	around 6 to 7 years ago	apartment	21	M
Anthony	- www.snopes.com - espn.go.com - www.cnn.com	about 1 hour	at least once a day	probably 5 years ago	primarily university labs, at home	22	M
Liz	- www.google.com - www.artschools.com - www.knoxnews.com	1-3 hours	on average, 3 times a day	4-5 years ago	apartment, lab, or work	22	F
Ethan	- espn.go.com - www.nascar.com - www.eastbay.com	1 hour	Three times a day	6 years ago	Home (DSL)	23	M
Grace	- www.netscape.com - www.audiogalaxy.com - www.yahoo.com	1-2 hours a day	It varies, sometimes twice a day but usually just once	about 6 years ago	Usually dorm room	21	F
Anna	- www.google.com - www.jcrew.com - www.xoxo.com	1 hour	Twice a day	7 years ago	Apartment	22	F

< Table 4> Participant Profile (Continued)

Names	Favorite Sites	Daily Internet usage	Frequency of Internet use	First Internet use	Place of getting online	Age	Gender
Dylan	- www.t-mag.com - www.yahoo.com - www.google.com	1-2 hours	Usually 2-3 times per day	4 years ago	university labs or home	23	M
Nick	- www.maximonline.com - www.hollywood.com - www.weather.com	1 hour	3 or 4 times a day	4 years ago	University labs or apartment	20	M
Rachel	- www.bluefly.com - www.enn.com - www.eonline.com	1 hour	3 times a day	probably 7 years ago when I started high school	Apartment	22	F
Lori	- www.donga.com - www.daum.net - www.google.com - www.amazon.com - www.travelocity.com - www.priceline.com	3-4 hours	5-6 times a day but don't use over the weekend	1999	Office (LAN)	34	F
Jasmine	- www.expedia.com - www.travlocity.com - www.concertwire.com - www.ebay.com - www.amazon.com	5-6 hours	everyday 4-5 times	1993	At home (modem)	43	F

heavy users will be higher than today. These consumers know how to handle information found in their favorite and frequently visited Websites or the sites that match their interests.

Second, every participant had his (her) favorite and frequently visited Website and experienced visiting a couple of commercial Websites. Because the participants were asked to go to his (her) favorite and frequently visited Websites in the participant observation session, this criterion was required. Because the study aimed to observe what consumers did with Web-based interactive advertising (WIA) in their everyday lives, it ensured more natural settings to ask them to navigate familiar Websites rather than the Websites that the researcher could command and they were not familiar with. The previously experienced Websites were used in cases for which participant-selected Websites did not help explore the research phenomenon of this study (for details about the specific procedure, see the participant observation section).

In terms of demographic profile, the majority of the sample were young adults in their 20s with almost even distribution of gender. They were either undergraduate or graduate students in the *University of Tennessee Knoxville* (*UTK*) campus. A few were 30 to 50 year old adults who were graduate students at *UTK*. Students are usually heavier Internet users than general population. Recent qualitative research works, especially employing the phenomenological approach, also relied on a small set of rather homogenous respondents (e.g., Fournier, 1998; Mick and Buhl, 1992; Thompson, 1996; Thompson et al., 1990). Furthermore, the enormous size and economic potential of college students as a market segment demand marketers' most sincere consideration of

students both in the present and into the future (Brackett and Carr, 2001; Gannon, 1999; Kessler, 1998).

The enrollment in institutions of higher education has increased by 12.8 percent from the 1994 level of 14.28 million to the projected 2007 level of 16.11 million (National Center for Education Statistics, 1996). More importantly, students represent an important proportion of the Internet users. Most college students are currently online, representing, by far, the most active single group on the net (eUser & Usage Report, 1999). Moreover, the current college students as well as faculty and staff have been immersed in the computer-mediated communication environment, which has surrounded U.S. academic institutions since the early 1990s (Ebersole, 2000; White, 1996). In fact, the use of the Internet technology has been increasingly popular in the American classrooms. Specifically, teens are online for an average of 8.5 hours per week, which is 27% more than average Web users are. Briefly, the college students are the heaviest and most active users among a variety of Internet user groups. Their online consumer behavior now may help to suggest what the future holds for online consumer behavior. Because students are said to be the first generation raised with the Internet, they are already familiar with this technology, which is very new to individuals who are currently adults. That is to say, students have grown into the Internet without having to make the major change of "adopting innovation" that has affected adult consumers because the Internet has been, for the adults, a discontinuous innovation. The Internet has deeply penetrated into the everyday lives of young people. For example, young people have built relationships online, and they even expand their online-built relationship to actual life (Clark, 1998).

Overall Procedure

Participants chose the setting in which the participant observation and follow-up interviews were conducted in order to create a relaxed atmosphere that precipitate an open dialogue (McCracken, 1988). To ensure the setting is as natural as possible, the first preference was the personal computer each participant uses, either at home or at the office, but a university computer lab was often used when a home-visiting session was not possible. Contacted by the researcher a few days prior to the main session, participants were asked to choose a comfortable place for the study (for details about the setting, see participant observation section).

The researcher stopped data collection when it was relatively apparent that a point of information saturation had been reached (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). Data collection was completed after 27 sessions.

The amount of time spent for the session, including both navigation (for observation) and a depth interview, ranged from a minimum of fifty minutes to ninety minutes. Most sessions were completed in an hour. The majority of participants spent more time on the depth-interview session than navigation, which usually took 20 to 30 minutes. Navigation of each Website took usually five to ten minutes, but this varied dramatically by Websites.

Participant Observations with Articulation Procedures

Participant observation, one of the phenomenological methodologies, is appropriate for studies of almost every aspect of human experience. This method can fully satisfy most assumptions and has the characteristics of qualitative research

described previously. Taylor (1994) stated, *"Participant observation is often regarded as the purest form of qualitative research because it occurs in the natural setting and requires the researcher to do and to understand things as the research participants to do"* (p.271). Through participant observations, a qualitative researcher can describe what goes on, who or what is involved, when, where, and why things happen, and how they occur as they do in particular situations. Jorgensen (1989) argued that participant observation is especially appropriate for exploratory studies, descriptive studies, and studies aimed at generating theoretical interpretations. He specified some conditions where the qualitative researcher can fully benefit from participant observation as (pp.12-13):

- *the research problem is concerned with human meanings and interactions viewed from the insiders' perspective*
- *when little is known about the phenomenon*
- *there are important differences between the views of insiders as opposed to outsiders*
- *the phenomenon is somehow obscured from or hidden from the view of outsiders*
- *the phenomenon of investigation is observable within an everyday life situation or setting*
- *the research problem can be addressed by qualitative data gathered by direct observation and other means pertinent to the field setting.*

The research questions this study posed could be fully explored with these benefits of participant observation. As addressed in the Chapter I, the core phenomenon of this study is how consumers interact with WIA through their natural navigation process. The researcher could participate in this navigation activity and observe the phenomenon with the insider's perspective. Moreover, because there are numerous details and variations in the consumer's navigation process, the entire outlook of this

phenomenon is hardly understood with most quantitative approaches, which take the outsider's perspective. The phenomenon, the interaction with WIA, could be well observed, and the interaction between the researcher and the participant helped the researcher maintain the insider's viewpoint and understand and uncover the meaning participants used to make sense out of their interaction with WIA in their daily lives.

Prior to conducting the participant observation session, each participant was contacted in order to build rapport and get some information relating to his (her) Internet use and preferences. Students in an undergraduate class were encouraged to participate in the study. Additionally, initial explanation about the purpose and procedure of the study were made during a class session. Other participants who were not in the class were contacted by email or phone to solicit participation. Upon getting their consent for participating in the study, two emails were sent to each participant who had agreed to join in the study. The first email contained the welcome and appreciation message as well as a brief explanation of the procedure. Each participant was asked to set up an appointment to participate in the study. The researcher responded to their emails to arrange the time and the place to conduct the observation. The second email was individualized to confirm the place and time each participant wanted to participate in the study. More importantly, all participants were asked to refer to at least three Websites they had frequently visited or preferred to visit. An instruction to exclude a few irrelevant Websites such as the university email site and chat room sites was also provided in the email. Participant-selected Websites were primarily used to navigate in the observation session. In addition, participants were also asked to refer to a couple of previous experiences of visiting commercial Websites (e.g., online purchase, getting product or brand information from

Websites, etc.). If the researcher did not observe any product-related messages in any of the favorite and frequently visited Websites a participant visited in the session, these additional commercial Web sites were used for getting a sense of how the participant navigates through commercial spaces. These pre-questions enabled the researcher to prepare for the observation session. The researcher thoroughly reviewed each Website a participant had provided prior to the session. In the second e-mail message, participants were informed that they would be asked to navigate two to four of their selected Websites when they met with the researcher. In fact, in the observation session, they were usually asked to navigate any of the sites they had previously identified.

During data collection, some infrequent changes were made to the site-selection procedure. Specifically, some participants' were asked to navigate Websites that they had not previously provided to the researcher. This occurred when participants mentioned Web sites during the navigation session. If the researcher sensed that these sites were important to the participants, especially if they seemed to provide participants with product information, they were reviewed.

Not all Websites participants referred to were used in the session. The primary purpose of this study is not to observe the general navigation behavior but to observe and to understand individuals' interactions with WIA. Therefore, as operationally defined in Chapter I, Websites that were unlikely to contain product-related messages (e.g., university email site, chat-room site, etc.), were excluded. Nevertheless, to maintain the naturalistic inquiry, the exclusions were minimal. A few participants were additionally contacted to get more Websites they preferred or frequently visited, because a few of the Websites they initially selected were evaluated tp be non-commercial (e.g., email

Websites, personal Websites, etc.). As the navigation process proceeded, the researcher decided if the research question had been fulfilled with each participant. Before beginning navigation of Websites, the researcher asked participants to talk about their experiences with the sites. Some background information about their navigation of commercial sites (e.g., when, how and why they visited the site) was gained in this procedure. Then, the participants were asked to navigate on the site they visited most often.

Each participant was asked where he (she) usually got online and if the session could be conducted in that place. There were several places for students to use the Internet. Dormitory rooms and apartments were the most frequent places, and university labs were also popular among them. Due to the broadband Internet service with top quality computers, many students got online from the university labs. If their most natural places were not available for the observation (for privacy or other reasons), a computer lab in *the College of Communications* was used. Although students were more likely to be familiar with general university computer labs, the lab could hardly avoid some possible interruption made by other lab users. Thus, a computer lab in the *College of Communications* with broadband Internet service was reserved to secure the observation setting without interruption and to help participants feel comfortable. This lab, due to its similarity to other university labs, was considered an appropriate place.

The observation session started after establishing rapport between the researcher and the participant (ice-breaking). Each participant was asked to go online to one of the Websites he (she) had referred to in previous email. In the navigation of each Website, the participant was asked to navigate as he (she) usually does. In order to avoid a quick

skipping due to his (her) over-familiarity with the site, the researcher asked some questions about the site during the navigation. Basically, the researcher, pretending to be a novice to the site, asked the participant to guide him through the site. This guidance procedure helped the researcher understand how a participant had previously navigated the site.

As a focused and overt participant observation, another procedure termed "*Articulation Procedure*" was performed during the session. Prior to starting the navigation, participants were asked to articulate their behaviors in Websites. They explained their specific behaviors at Websites (e.g., clicking a hyperlink, clicking a exit button to avoid a banner, etc.) throughout the session. The researcher also encouraged the participants to do this activity while they navigated . This enabled the researcher to capture the click-stream within a Website and the overall navigation process a participant made. Moreover, psychological states underlying specific participants' behaviors, which could hardly be understood in the participant observation procedure, were often revealed. The researcher as an observer took a role to encourage the participants to talk if they stopped talking.

During the session, the researcher observed how the participant dealt with various product-related messages, the WIA. Additionally, several situational questions were asked sporadically as a kind of short interview in order to catch the participants' psychological states through the navigation and to encourage their natural navigation. Regarding WIA, the participants were asked their thoughts about some product-related messages found in the Website. Specifically, they were asked, upon showing some specific behaviors such as clicking specific links or buttons, to say why they decided to

do so. When the participant finished the navigation of each site, additional questions were sometimes asked while re-visiting the site. Specifically, the researcher asked participants to explore what kinds of messages found in the site they felt were "commercial," "promotional," or "product-related." Every product-related message they had not mentioned was also examined to determine if they cared about it and what they thought about.

The data were collected with field notes, audio-recording tapes, and screen-capturing software. The researcher started taking notes as the participant started the navigation process; however, it remained minimal and focused primarily on what the researcher felt and thought about the participant's specific behaviors. Some types of behaviors could work as cues, which enabled the researcher to confirm the participant's psychological status when facing a specific content on the Web. In fact, some participants kept silent for a while when being asked certain questions with body expressions showing hesitance (e.g., finger snapping), and gave answers. These answers after a delay were evaluated as less qualified. All conversation during the session, especially the articulation procedure as well as the guidance procedure, were audio-recorded. To help participants feel more comfortable as well as to ensure the quality of voice recording, a small clip-on microphone was attached to participants' and researcher's shirts. This was considered better than placing a larger audio-recorder in front of a participant that could make him (her) continuously aware of being interviewed during the whole session. A screen capturing software package, *Camtasia Studio*, was installed on a computer system located in the College computer lab. From the beginning to the end of navigations, every mobile behavior was recorded with this software in the type of "*.avi*" file. Because some

participants did their sessions at places convenient to them, including their apartments and offices, screen-capturing activities were not performed for these participants. In this case, field notes were more actively taken to substitute for recording the screens.

Depth Interviews

The depth interview was performed immediately after the participant observation session. The primary purpose of conducting the depth interview was to address research question 1, which explored the consumer's thought about WIA. Although the participant observation session also enabled the researcher to explore this question as noted above, psychological aspects of consumers' interaction with WIA were better understood in the depth-interview process. Moreover, during the participant observation session, the participants' online navigations were less interrupted in order to maintain as natural an environment as possible. Therefore, the depth interview session was not conducted during the observation session, but a few questions that helped the researcher understand details in the interaction with WIA were asked during the participant observation session.

The depth interview, like the participant observation, also served most assumptions that were previously noted about qualitative research. The interview session allowed the researcher to widen and deepen understanding about the meaning of WIA to consumers. The meaning and preference of WIA, which changes over time and under various contexts and user experiences, were primarily explored in the depth-interview session. In this procedure, the researcher also served the role of instrument. Specifically, the researcher considered what the interviewee's reactions to and thoughts about WIA

were during the interview, and he could develop follow-up questions, adopting them for subsequent sessions.

Technically, an interview is defined as "*a face to face verbal interchange in which one person, the interviewer, attempts to elicit information or expressions of opinions or belief from another person or persons*" (Denzin, 1989, 103). Usually, while quantitative approaches employ the interview with structured format – asking the same questions to samples in general – the qualitative researchers do not structure the format of interviews prior to collecting the data (McCracken, 1988). In this study, therefore, the interview session was not strictly pre-structured to a set of questions. Interview questions varied by participants evolving as the data collection continues. An interview guide (See Appendix), as a reminder to the researcher, was used not to ask identical questions but to cover general areas. The researcher determined how to phrase questions and when to ask them in each session. Furthermore, the depth interview session was largely based on the outcomes of the preceding participant observation session. Some questions to explore the meaning of WIA were formulated based on what was observed and interpreted during the preceding observation session. Some examples gained from the observation were also used in the interview session.

Nevertheless, most major questions prepared in the guideline (See Appendix) were asked repeatedly over different sessions. These questions were about individuals' preference for the Websites (e.g., Why do you like this site?), behavioral aspects (e.g., How long do you usually stay here?), their thoughts about the Web in general and specific WIA formats, prior experiences of product information-gathering and purchase, and so forth.

During the interview session, the typical interaction between the researcher and each interviewee was maintained. Because every participant had his (her) own typical procedure and behavior shown in the observation session, the researcher had to ask different questions from interviewee to interviewee. For a simple example, "*Why did you skip the pop-up?*" was asked to a participant who immediately closed off a pop-up ad, while "*Why do you spend time looking at the banner?*" was asked to another participant who articulated he watched an animated banner. By virtue of being interviewed, participants developed new insights and understandings of their experiences (Bogdan and Taylor, 1975). They told their stories somewhat differently each time and constructed the meanings of events and experiences differently. The researcher encouraged participants to articulate ambiguous things by asking questions and probing for meanings. Furthermore, the researcher needed to capture the meanings that informants were not able to articulate.

In the same vein, to take full advantages of the depth interview, the interaction between the interviewee and others (e.g., friends, parents, etc.) was also investigated. Participants represented a variety of contextual meanings of WIA based on their experiences; therefore, versatile understanding of WIA could be achieved in the depth interview. In fact, some participants described how they experienced various product-related messages with other people such as family and friends. In short, the depth interview aimed to supplement the participant observation as well as to get deeper psychological understanding. In fact, in terms of the amount of data, the majority of analysis was heavily based on the data from depth-interview rather than those from

participant observation sessions. Nevertheless, participant observation sessions could help provide various contextual meanings of WIA.

Specifically, the interview session started with a wide-open question such as "What do you think about commercial messages on the Web?" or "Did you enjoy surfing the site you've just visited?" Following questions encouraged the participant to provide his (her) own experiences about the commercial messages in the Web. Being different from everyday conversation, the probing clarified the meaning each participant implicitly provided, setting aside what the researcher thought he knew. This continuous process of clarification and elaboration helped the researcher understand the participants' own perspectives.

Member-checks were conducted to ensure the trustworthiness of the research findings (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994). Most participants were presented with copies of their completed interview transcripts.[6] They were asked to state whether any remarks were misquoted, and encouraged to add any comments they felt would enhance the clarity of their previous thoughts. Most critical notes taken from observation were confirmed during the interview session.

DATA ANALYSIS PROCEDURE

The qualitative research data analysis proceeded through the methodology of reduction, the analysis of specific statements and themes, and a search for all possible meanings (Creswell, 1998). The primary purpose of the analysis was to find various themes and patterns of the consumer's interaction with and thoughts about WIA. The

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[6] A few of participants were not available to contact for following member-check activities.

behavioral patterns were examined from the field notes taken, the transcript of the articulation procedure, and screen behavior captured while the themes relating to the meaning and preference of WIA were analyzed from the transcripts from the depth interview as well as the short interviews performed during the participant observation session.

Coding Procedure

Adopting the analysis procedure from grounded theory (Strauss and Corbin 1994), three coding methods were employed: open, axial, and selective coding. Briefly, the open coding aimed to explore and identify as many themes and patterns as possible, and conceptualized them into several meaningful categories representing phenomena. The following axial coding, at the level of properties and dimensions, related categories to subcategories explaining and specifying its high-order category (e.g., when, where, who, why, how, and with what consequences). Finally, the selective coding integrated and refined these various categories with their subcategories into a theoretical framework, which explained the meaning of, the interaction with, and preference of WIA from the consumer's standpoint.

In this study, these overall coding procedures were maintained but it does not mean that each step was separately conducted (For detailed information about the coding procedure, please see Appendix E). As Strauss and Corbin (1994) guided, open and axial coding procedures were combined as microanalysis, which is also called line-by-line analysis. Even in the final stage with selective coding stage, axial coding results were modified and reprocessed. As shown in the Appendix 5, six major steps were taken to

reach the final stage of analysis in each of nine theme categories. They are "line-by-line analysis," "Grouping Individual Themes by Subjects," "Classifying Themes: Abstracting of Theme Categories," "Delving Into Individual Theme Categories," "Investigating Theme Categories Across Different Contexts," and "Investigating the Relationship Among Different Themes." The overall procedure is described below.

Every transcript was thoroughly read and any themes relating to overall context as well as WIA were detected. In the very beginning stage of the analysis after getting initial individual themes with open coding procedure, each theme was classified based on existing subjects such as Web usage in general, navigation behavior, and thoughts about WIA. Then, themes were grouped with similar ones. The themes presented in each major category in the following chapter were grouped in this stage. For example, "Irritating," "Hate," "Ignoring," "Useless," and more similar themes were group under "Annoying."

Through the abstraction process, several major categories representing some sub-themes were found. Initially, there were thirteen categories and these were reduced to final nine categories. Some initial categories were collapsed into other categories. For example, "two-way communication" and "real-time conversation" were collapsed into a single category named "Real-Time Communication," and "customizable" and "manageable" were grouped into "Controllable." Other themes, "unique" and "self-confident" appeared frequently, but these were evaluated less related to the WIA. They were about the Web in general, so these themes are presented in some major categories to help understand the context. Direct quotes about individual themes were labeled one or more of these major categories.

Finally, each category was sophisticatedly examined. The pattern of their emergence (e.g., Relationship with specific WIA formats) and the relationship among these categories were examined. Multiple labels of individual quotes were specifically analyzed to see the relationship among different categories. Each theme operates as individual central category (for more information about "Central category," see Strauss and Corbin, 1994) in the current study.

Enhancing the Quality of the Data and the Analysis

Numerous criteria to evaluate the quality and the credibility of qualitative research have been suggested. Due to different philosophical assumptions, qualitative research has different criteria from positivistic criteria such as traditional terms of validity and reliability.

The traditional concepts of validity and reliability are less meaningful to qualitative researchers. Because reliability is associated with the assumption of an objective researcher, qualitative research usually does not claim this concept of reliability due to the role of researcher as an instrumental tool of research activity (data collection and data interpretation). In fact, qualitative researchers can take their unique personal characteristics into consideration when designing and interpreting their research. The reproduction of research testing the reliability of a study is hardly possible and meaningless to qualitative researchers, for the contextual meaning changes over time and various contexts are central to qualitative research. The external validity is also not the concern of a qualitative researcher, for generalization is not usually claimed. However, the concept of construct validity about the theoretical consistency through a research

procedure can be accepted and translated to the concept of trustworthiness: "*How can a qualitative researcher persuade the audiences that the findings of an inquiry are worth paying attention to, worth taking account of?*" (Lincoln and Guba, 1985, p.290). This concept of trustworthiness also contains the concept of traditional reliability as a form of dependability. Several criteria are suggested to evaluate the trustworthiness of a qualitative research: authenticity, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Description of each concept is beyond the scope of this research (For more information, See Patton, 1990; Denzin and Lincoln, 1994; Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Kirk and Miller, 1986). Instead, the following procedures explain how this study enhanced the trustworthiness of the data and analysis.

First, the data gained from the observation with articulation procedure and depth interview were checked with each other to get consistency where available. This functioned as a sort of triangulation to enhance the trustworthiness of this study. Straightforward interpretations without checking the psychological aspects of their behaviors with WIA could distort or misunderstand informants' interaction with and thoughts about WIA. The consistency between what was observed and what was said was well maintained through this process.

Second, the data collection process was finished when the redundancy of themes and patterns appeared. As noted earlier in this chapter, the analysis procedure was accompanied with the data collection procedure, so the redundant emergence of themes and patterns were detected as the analysis and data collection continued. When the researcher evaluated that most themes and patterns were found and started showing redundancy in the latest data, the data collection stage was terminated. Because of time

and budget limitations, the data collection was stopped with a minimal redundancy at twenty-seven sessions.

Third, the result of interpretation was taken back to participants. Each participant was asked to review the field notes and transcripts and corrected them if there were any misunderstandings. Some ambiguous things found in the transcripts and the field notes could be clarified through this back-and-forward process. The audiotapes and screen behavior recorded during the observation session also helped the researcher not omit critical comments each participant made.

Fourth, experienced qualitative researchers were contacted and asked to guide the analysis. They reviewed the initial analysis and advised the researcher to develop further analysis. Because the researcher's role and ability is critical to conduct qualitative research, people who experienced using qualitative techniques can help enhance the quality of the analysis by refining and expanding the interpretation.

Fifth, transferability of the findings was enhanced by the volume of data collected from participants. In fact, in terms of the quantitative amount of data, the screen captured files held more than 1.5 GB movie file, and the transcripts reached almost five hundred pages. As Geertz (1973) argued, a "thick description" helps readers understand the finding and draw their own interpretation. Description is thought to be fundamental to understanding or interpreting social interactive phenomenon, and many qualitative inquirers emphasize the importance of 'thick' as opposed to 'thin' description (Schwandt, 1997). The "thick description" is not a simple accumulation of relevant details. Rather, Geertz (1973) called for "thick description" of particular events, rituals, and customs, and interpreting them by describing the circumstances, meanings, intentions, and so forth.

Along with this full descriptive data, critical participants' words are quoted to represent each theme and pattern in the finding section.

CHAPTER IV.

FINDINGS:

WHAT THEY THINK ABOUT AND HOW THEY INTERACT WITH WEB-BASED

INTERACTIVE ADVERTISING

This chapter presents findings and analysis about how participants thought about and interacted with Web-based Interactive Advertising (WIA) based on empirical data. A total of nine theme categories are presented and each category is described by investigating its different aspects with various contexts. In order to understand broad contexts of their interactions with and thoughts about WIA, it is necessary to understand individuals' uses, thoughts, and interactions with the Web in general. Thus, in the section for each category, participants' thoughts and interactions with the Web in general are also integrated to provide holistic views in understanding the main research queries. A brief description of the nine theme categories and the conceptualization of WIA is followed by presentation of each theme category.

WHAT IS WIA: FORMATS, THEMES AND DEFINITION

As noted in Chapter I, this study began with a broad initial definition of WIA – "Any message relating to products, services, and companies on the Web." Thus, the analysis focused on every format on the Web, which contains product (including service, company, etc.) information. It is beyond the scope of this research to develop a succinct yet complete definition of WIA. Rather, this study aims to understand what consumers

think about various (possible) WIA formats. This study describes what formats participants labeled "advertising" on the Web. However, it also goes beyond the fairly traditional labeling provided by participants to explore other advertising-like content on the Web. It investigates participants' thoughts about various formats of product information on the Web. As noted before (See Chapter I), every message containing product information could function as advertising and this study tries not to lose the opportunity of understanding consumers' thoughts about a variety of product information formats. For convenience, every format containing product information is called WIA hereafter.

WIA Formats

As the data collection procedure continued, several WIA formats were captured. As shown in <Table 5>, some of them are formats that the literature presented including banners, pop-ups (or unders), interstitials, and so forth. These formats are called, in this study, "Traditional WIA formats." These formats were clearly called "advertising" on the Web by participants (See the following section, especially "Intrusive" and "Annoying").

The corporate Website was an important WIA format from which consumers acquired their product information. Some participants labeled this "advertising," while others did not. So, it is still controversial whether to label corporate Websites as advertising. However, it was clear that the corporate Website was one of the most popular and critical sources of product information.

Similarly, another type of Websites appeared frequently to contain product information: "Third-Party Websites." All Websites containing product information other

< Table 5 > The WIA Formats Shown in This Study

Label	Formats and Descriptions	Examples
Traditional WIA formats	Banners (Static & Moving), Pop-Ups, Pop-Unders, Interstitials	Upper banners, any pop-up window ads, etc.
Corporate Websites	Websites maintained by corporate organizations for their own products (including services and companies).	nikon.com, dell.com
Third-Party Websites	Websites containing product information but not maintained by manufacturers of the products.	amazon.com, buy.com, ebay.com
Commercial Emails	Any email messages sent by sellers including newsletters as well as general emails to sell or to inform products.	Parisian's periodical newsletter email "Save 50%, Buy…"
Customer Reviews	Opinions and reviews about products written by other consumers. Usually, consumers who already bought and used the product post their opinions in Websites.	Customer review at amazon.com Seller ratings at ebay.com
Other Miscellaneous Formats	A few more formats containing product information but not mentioned much in the study - Online Classifieds - Sponsorship (Can be shown as traditional formats) - News stories about products	- Apartment classified at online newspaper Websites - NASCAR's sponsorship for car race event - Enron's story at cnn.com

than corporate Websites, which are maintained by companies, are included in this category. Specifically, they were online store Websites (e.g., amazon.com), product review Websites (e.g., epinion.com), and so forth. Regardless of their purposes to contain product information, these kinds of Websites have product information and participants acquired a variety of product information from these sources.

There was a critical and powerful but non-paid WIA format created by other consumers. "Customer review," as it is called in this study, was abundant in various Websites and participants also confessed that they acquired product information from what other consumers wrote on the Web. Other formats, although not frequently mentioned, include commercial emails, news stories about products, online sponsorship, and so forth. The news story about products is just an online version of the publicity function that has long been associated with public relations. This format is not different from others in this study in terms of the fact that the news story about products is also a kind of product-related messages on the Web.

These WIA formats appeared across various themes of consumers' thoughts about WIA. Some formats appeared in most themes, while others appeared in only a few themes. How each of these WIA formats relates to each theme is also presented in the last section, "Summarizing: Integrating Theme by WIA Formats." Before delving into the description of themes, an overview of themes is presented as follows.

An Overview of Theme Categories

As shown in <Figure 1>, a total of nine themes relating to WIA emerged. Although the Figure, for convenience, shows each theme exclusively, most of themes

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Negative

Intrusive   Annoying

Mixed

Informative

Easy   Controllable

WIA

Relevant   Fun

Positive   Real-Time Communication   Reliable & Honest

Note)
1. Although all themes also represented their opposite meanings, the classification of their characteristics into three classes of affective responses from negative to positive is based on their apparent meaning (e.g., "Controllable" is usually positive, but "Uncontrollable" is usually negative). In addition, each theme can emerge with two or more different affective responses, and the grouping in this Figure simply shows their usual trends.
2. Each valence – positive, mixed, and negative – does not necessarily represent a variety of different dimensions including most affective responses (e.g., attitudes, mood) and behavioral reactions (e.g., acceptance, rejection). The variety of these dimensions in each theme should be investigated in future research.

< Figure 1 > Nine Themes of WIA

have strong associations with some of other themes. The details of these associations are described in the next section. A brief description of each of the nine themes is presented as follows.

"Intrusive" represents participants' responses about WIA's intrusions. They mentioned that some WIA formats intrude on their Web navigations and try to grab their attention. "Intrusive" WIA formats usually appear in front of (or under) the participants' screen and yield negative responses.

"Annoying" represents negative responses about WIA. It varies from moderate levels of negative feelings such as "ignoring" to very severe negative feelings including "hate," "stupid," and so forth. This theme category was the most prevalent one with traditional WIA formats.

"Fun" includes emotional positive responses, which participants enjoyed interacting with (reading, viewing, playing, etc.) the WIA message. Having "Fun" does not necessary mean that participants enjoyed reading or viewing WIA messages. In fact, they enjoyed some different aspects of WIA formats (e.g., playing card game provided by banners). Themes in this category are "entertaining," "interesting," "enjoying," and the like.

"Informative" is about how informative participants thought about WIA. Usually "Informative" WIAs were positively evaluated, although there were some exceptions such as "Overloading information." "Informative" also include both depth and breadth of information. Thus, themes that emerged included "variety," "spec (Specifications)," "informative," and so on.

"Easy" emerged whenever participants thought WIAs to be "Easy." There were multiple subjects of "Easy" including "easy to find," "easy to understand," and "easy to navigate." Overall, this category can be epitomized as "efficiency" of WIA from consumers' points of view.

"Relevant" represents whether WIA messages could serve participants' purposes of navigation. In fact, participants tended to have goals, regardless of the fact that the goals were initially setup or changed dynamically during the navigation. Most contents including WIA messages were rejected (or ignored) if they are not "Relevant." Thus, "Relevant" was a kind of criteria to judge if they accept or reject WIA message.

"Controllable" is based on a typical characteristic of the Web as compared with other mass media. Participants tended to prefer what they could control. A variety of options and functions could enhance the level of "Controllable" with which participants were satisfied. Whether a WIA is "Controllable" also varied by contexts as well as by participants. Themes within this category include "manageable," "choice," "customizable," "personalized," and so forth.

"Real-Time Communication" also represents a differential characteristic of the Web. As a more interactive media, the Web offers product information, in the "Real Time Communication" fashion. This category includes and integrates two somewhat different themes, "two-way communication" and "time delay." There are a variety of WIAs in terms of the level of these two concepts. Participants, in most cases, showed more positive responses to WIAs that were "two-way communication" without "time delay," than ones having "one-way communication" with some "time delay."

"Reliable & Honest" emerged when participants evaluated the source of WIA contents. Because there is abundant and virtually limitless information on the Web, participants usually liked to evaluate how trustworthy, reliable or credible each source was. The impact of "Reliable & Honest" WIA was relatively high and it was used as a critical factor for participants to accept and to reflect to their decision-making.

As noted before, the emergence of each theme category showed some typical patterns. In fact, some theme categories were strongly associated with each other and emerged together in many contexts. As shown in <Figure 2>, each theme has close relationships with multiple theme categories. As noticed in following sections describing the nine theme categories, some associations between theme categories shown in <Figure 2> did not necessarily emerge in discussion of each of the individual theme categories. In other words, an association between two categories may have only arisen in discussion of one of the two themes. The section for describing each of nine theme categories focuses on each theme and tries to view the phenomenon from the theme described. Therefore, some associations described in a section for a theme category are not described in the other section for the other theme category. Nevertheless, this does not mean that the association is valid for only one of two theme categories. For example, "Real-Time Communication" showed frequent relationships with "Intrusive" theme descriptions. In other words, when participants described their "Intrusive" feelings with WIA formats, "Time Delay (See Real-Time Communication)" was one of the main complaints about "Intrusive" WIA formats. This linkage was dominant in the "Intrusive" category; however, once moving the focus to "Real-Time Communication," the "Intrusive" theme was not often detected. In this case, it does not mean that "Real-Time Communication"

< Figure 2 > Relationships Among Nine Themes about WIA

does not emerge with "Intrusive." In following sections, "Real-Time Communication" was described as a related theme category with "Intrusive," but the vice versa case is not described in "Real-Time Communication" section.

In regards to the WIA formats classified before, each theme category emerged with certain WIA format(s). At the end of this chapter, integration among various theme categories based on individual WIA format is presented. The following section describes details of each theme category with the examples from the data that illustrate participants' thoughts and behaviors.

WHAT THEY THINK AND DO: THEMES ABOUT WIA

During the participant observation sessions, as described in Chapter III, participants were asked to articulate their behavior and thoughts about a variety of components on the Web. The in-depth interview sessions following the navigations also explored their thoughts about a wide range of Web components, especially product information on the Web. As previously noted, this study explored as many formats of product information on the Web as possible because it aimed to understand the characteristics of WIA firmly based on the interpretation made in the analysis of the data.

In this section, each of the nine theme categories is introduced. A graphic representation of each shows sub-themes, relations to other theme categories, and application to WIA formats. Each category was either mentioned by participants or labeled by the researcher.

<u>Intrusive</u>
Themes: Intrusive, Presentable, Get in My Way, Unpredictable, Unintended
     R (Researcher):   *Why do you ignore them (banners and pop-ups)?*

> **P (Participant):**   *Uh, they're just clutter and they get in my file and*
> *they jut waste my time*

(*Jasmine*)

Although the term, "intrusive" itself or other forms of this term (e.g., "intrude," "intrusion," etc.) was not frequently used by participants, many of their descriptions about WIA can be classified into this category. Similar themes - "presentable," "not-in-one's-way," "aggressive," etc. - were referred to frequently. In most cases, "Intrusive" accompanied negative responses, which are represented by "Annoying" (See the following section). As shown in <Figure 3>, the theme of "Intrusive" has strong associations with "Real-Time Communication," "Controllable," and "Annoying." "Intrusive" WIA deters participants' navigation, which should be fast without any interferences (negative "Real-Time Communication"). The theme of "Controllable" can describe participants' behavioral interactions with the "Intrusive" WIA formats. They usually wanted to control "Intrusive" ones. "Intrusive" formats were the objects that should be controlled and if they are not participants find them "Annoying." When faced with "Intrusive" formats, participants had negative feelings, represented as "Annoying."

> *The ones that pop up in the middle of the screen or things I get irritated by*
> *them but I just close them. The pop up ones that pop up in the middle of*
> *the screen I find that irritating because now I have to go and close it*
> *before I can finish what I'm doing. I know they're doing to try and get my*
> *attention but still (Nick).*
>
> *This blasted oracular thing pops out sometimes into a big box that you*
> *have to close* (*Chris*)

"Intrusive" proved to be a critical characteristic of what is called "Advertising" on the Web. In other words, "Intrusive" was a criterion to call a format of WIA advertising.

Note) Oval shape represent "theme categories," and boxed shapes shows WIA formats

< Figure 3 > Intrusive – Relating Themes and WIA Formats

R: *What is the advertisement on the Web to you?*

P: *Sometimes I see it as something that's more distant and an intrusion then I would in news paper that would be more of a local and something that I know is there and I look at that as not quite as an intrusion. But in Internet sometimes like the popup things after you click off comes up it's more like an intrusion.*

R: *So, what do you think and feel about when you meet the banners and pop-ups?*

P: *I guess the natural thing is that it's intrusion as I am looking for one thing and something else is diverting my attention. Sometime it's eye catchy and eye retains it. And one thing I haven't say it, there are too many places particularly at ads, for having my email address suddenly become sold to others and I start getting Spams.*

(Tylor)

This participant conceptualizes what consists of advertisement on the Web and he showed an important difference between ads on the Web as referred to "pop-ups" and ads on traditional media such as newspapers. The "intrusive" theme is a criterion to differentiate WIA from traditional ads.

R: *What do you think about these [pop-ups]?*

P: *The commercials? It's kind of like those little you know when you open a magazine and they have those stupid little cardboard things that fall out in your lap.*

(Chris)

P: *Yell the artist name. And I'm usually this quick when I'm going through.......I usually don't look at the advertisements..*

R: *What do you mean advertisements?*

P: *What the ads are?*

R: *Uhm…*

P: *Pop-up stuffs, these banners and the like…*

(Joseph)

R: *Okay, to the last section, what do you think and feel about the advertising on the Web?*

P: *Well, I think that you can make it presentable, you can have banner ads, like the one at Marvel, where they have the banner at the top that wasn't really annoying or anything it was just up there*

> *but popup ads, I really hate popup ads especially when they'll have*
> *the code that'll put it behind the screen*

(*Tom*)

Among various themes relating to WIA, "Intrusive" is critical to differentiate traditional WIA formats such as banners and pop-ups from other formats of product-related messages (e.g., corporate Websites, consumer reviews, etc.). In fact, the level of "Intrusiveness" varied by formats of WIA. Some formats were more intrusive than others to participants. Specifically, traditional WIA formats were perceived to be intrusive while other formats (e.g., corporate Websites, Emails) were not.

> ***R:*** *What do you think about banners and pop-ups?*
> ***P:*** *Banners are just way too many of them. I think that they should be*
> *regulated. Instead of having them on every single page like may be*
> *having on them on the home page of yahoo.com. And then once*
> *you going to the search and specify what you are looking for may*
> *be you don't have them. Because they just distract me and confuse*
> *me as there so much caught up on the pages already. And they are*
> *just too much to look at. The pop up ones are just irritating and*
> *obnoxious. Because you are reading something and then a*
> *Discover card pops up in your face and you just want it get away*
> *from it. Its make me saying its so irritating. I am never going to get*
> *a Discover card. But that sort of in my mind that's good is that*
> *Discover is in your mind. I think they are irritating.*

(*Sarah*)

Among traditional WIA formats, different levels of "Intrusive" were found. Like the case of preceding theme category, "Annoying," interstitials were the most intrusive format. In fact, regarding the traditional WIA formats, these two theme categories yielded similar results. Thus, pop-ups were the second-most "Intrusive" format followed by pop-unders and banners.

> ***R:*** *How do you feel about that [interstitial]?*
> ***P:*** *I don't really like that. It's worse than pop-ups. I feel like It's just*
> *in my way.*
> ***R:*** *Could you exit by yourself?*
> ***P:*** *Yeah, I would just hit the X.*

> **R:** *In some cases there actually are no exit buttons and you may have to wait til they go away.*
>
> **P:** *I haven't really had that problem. I've always just hit the x. I just feel like it getting in my way and I don't think that's really good for the brand or product or whatever they're trying to do.*
>
> **R:** *How would you describe that type of stuff?*
>
> **P:** *It seems like it would be worse for their brand. For whatever the advertisement that comes up because it just gets on my nerves and it slows me down like if I'm in hurry or something.*
>
> *(Olivia)*

> **R:** *Can you compare the banners and popups? Which one do you dislike more?*
>
> **P:** *Popups,*
>
> **R:** *Because…*
>
> **P:** *Because I look at what I want to look at and then popup it gets right in my way and that annoys me a lot more."*
>
> *(Daniel)*

The concept of "Intrusive" is strongly related to other theme categories described in the following sections. For example, it is linked "Controllable." Participants wanted to control most contents they browse on the Web, but some of contents, especially "Intrusive" formats of WIA, were not what they intended and these formats are less controllable than intended contents. Participants usually predict what kinds of contents would appear in their navigation steps, but "Intrusive" formats such as pop-ups and banners are beyond their predictions. "Intrusive" formats are often regarded as unintended contents and participants want to "Control" (remove) them.

> **R:** *Can you explain why you don't pay it [pop-up] attention?*
>
> **P:** *Mainly because I have a specific purpose or something that I am looking for on the Web and if I'm surfing through the Web and I've got you know I'm thinking okay I'm trying to load the vanilla coke Website and it's taking longer because this little box keeps trying to come up in the middle of my screen then it's kind of frustrating because actually my computer at home is slow enough as it is but a lot of times when those try to load it freezes up my computer and I have to shut my whole computer down.*
>
> *(Jessica)*

This example also shows how "Intrusive" relates to "Time"-related themes. Accordingly, losing their control on the navigation led to time-delay, which they also disliked very much. As participant perceived, unintended and intrusive contents are time-wasting barriers to their navigation process. In addition, it drives negative responses, "frustrating," for this participant to load this useless content with her slow connection context. In fact, "intrusive" objects are not what they intended to look at and they usually want to be free from what they do not intend.

> **R:** *Yeah, it's a new different Website like this information has a lot of banners pop-ups or that kind of*
> **P:** *Yeah, it would stop me using it.*
> **R:** *If you stop…*
> **P:** Well with this one maybe it went through a period of a few weeks where it was there was so many of them and now it seems to calmed down and I wonder if somebody did something about it now it's not as bad but for a while there every single they would just keep popping up and would it make me not to, maybe not stop me from that site but it would depend on because it my motive to get into the site so it's not gonna stop me but if everyday it was popups all the time, that would stop me from going to a Website
>
> *(Emily)*

The response of "Intrusive" to the unintended and unpredicted WIA formats is strongly related to the Web navigation style, especially "Goal-directed" navigation. Although there were some reasons and motives to go online, many participants could articulate rationales for visiting their frequently visited or favorite Websites. In fact, in most cases, they had some purposes and expectations for the Websites they visited.

> **R:** *During the navigation do you think your feelings have been changed a lot?*
>
> **P:** *No, not really my interests, that's I mean that's the only thing I can say and it's not really that much because I still have the the what I'm looking for in my mind and I wanna go back to that after I kinda look around at something else.*

(Daniel)

R: How did you know that you want to see that movie?
P: The first time I saw it, it was in a movie theatre like the poster of it and I like Freddie Prince Jr. so it interests me and I like Scooby Doo or I did when I was little this isn't what I want here so I'm going to look through here to see if I can find anything else. ..... I want looking through just to see if I can okay I'll click on this one movie theatres and show times see if I can find any of the other movie theatres that I want to go to in Knoxville and I want to go to the Carmike Windsong 'cos that's closer to me and I'll click on there and see what, if it will give me the times and it does. And Spiderman is the first one and that tells me what I want to know.
(Liz)

Goal-directed navigations were often referred to as "purpose-serving" navigation. Participants usually had specific or somewhat abstract purpose(s), which they expected to serve in their Website(s). *Tom*'s expectation about his favorite Website for comic cartoons was very clear. He expected that he could get information about every available comic book published in the near future. Similarly, *Joshua*'s case shows the linkage between his usual shopping pattern and searching for product information online. Although they regarded some other types of navigation "Not Goal-directed" (See "Fun" section for "Pleasure pursuing" – this is also a "goal-directed" one as this study observed), most of their navigation motives were to serve some purposes.

R: Why do you like this Website?
P: Uh, well, it tells me everything that's gonna be coming out, it's not, it's fairly in depth, and it serves a purpose for me, so that when I go into the comic book store I know what to look for.
(Dylan)

R: In your experience, do you get those kinds of product information on the Web [his information achievement from amazon.com for his previous purchase] by your own volition? Not accidentally?
P: Yes (without hesitance), very intentional. When I buy something, I have to buy. There're some needs for the product….
(Joshua)

The "Intrusive" format of WIA directly links to negative feelings as noted. A variety of words appeared to express participants' negative feelings about what intruded on their Web navigations. These negative responses were due to several aspects of what was intrusive. For example, participants disliked when they lost their controlling power in part (or totally).

> **R:**   *What do you think about the banners and pop-ups?*
> **P:**   *It's aggressive. Well, it's it can get in your way, I mean, it, 'cos it really depends on the individual, if there's, if there was like every, I think it was like, everybody in the country was like me on the Internet, let's just say, 180 million individuals just like me, if, if, it probably, I don't think it would be very effective 'cos I just kinda, they'd be like man, we're not doing anything, just…*
> *(Tom)*

> *Sometimes it[pop-up]'s annoying. If I am trying to get through and when I click off I want to be off and there is suddenly click off and sometimes there is even another click off (Jasmine).*

Sometimes, participants are confused with intrusive WIA formats. Due to their unpredictable and highly intrusive characteristics, pop-ups and interstitials make participants lose their ways on the Web. The following participant felt confused with an intrusion of an interstitial. "Pop up" means "intrude" in this case and temporarily the participant loses his navigation control.

> **R:**   *It [interstitial] takes up the whole screen*
> **P:**   *Yeah*
> **R:**   *What did you feel about that?*
> **P:**   *Uh, it's confusing 'cos usually you'll click on something and you'll be traveling the site and that pops up first and you'll be like where, what, or where'd this come from?*
> *(Ryan)*

"Intrusive" was a dominant theme about WIA, especially traditional WIA formats. During their "Goal-directed" navigation, participants recognized many

traditional WIA formats intruded on their behavior and yielded negative responses. This category represented the thoughts participants had whenever they felt they were being intruded on by WIA formats. Briefly, "Intrusive" WIAs are just obstacles and barriers to their Web navigation.

<u>Annoying</u>

__Themes: Ignoring, Don't pay attention, Irritating, Annoying, Angry, Hate, Useless__

> *__R:__* *Okay, let me get your opinion about the banners and pop-ups.*
> *__P:__* *I find them very annoying.*
> (*Rachel*)

This category is a kind of consequences of the previous theme, "Intrusive" as noted. A variety of terms represent this category and "Annoying" can be a representative one. Other negative themes are "Ignoring," "Irritating," "Hate," "Angry," and so forth. All of these themes were used to express participants' negative feelings about (e.g., irritating, hate) and their following behavioral interactions with (e.g., ignoring, rejecting) WIA formats, especially traditional ones. This category also related with some of other categories including "Intrusive," "Controllable," and "Real-Time Communication." Generally, a WIA, which is "Intrusive," "Uncontrollable," and keeps their navigations from being "Fast (Real-Time Communication)," is "Annoying" to consumers (Figure 4).

> *__R:__* *Have you seen any kind of popup while you navigate this site?*
> *__P:__* *Not with this site. But on another site that I do use frequently is a*
> *newspaper a UK newspaper from Britain and recently I've noticed*
> *that there's a lot of pop-ups and they're very irritating to me.*
> (*Emily*)

The negative response about the traditional WIA formats leads accordingly rejection of them. The rejection of WIA formats has a wide spectrum from passive to active rejection. The most passive form of rejection activity would be "Ignorance" without any direct interaction with WIA formats.

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Controllable

Intrusive

-

+

ANNOYING
- Ignoring
- Irritating
- Hate
- Useless

Unintended
Junk

Information
Overloading

Commercial
Emails

Traditional WIA Formats

Interstitials

Pop-Ups

Pop-Unders

Banners

More
Annoying

Less
Annoying

Websites

Corporate

< Figure 4 > Annoying – Relating Themes and WIA Formats

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> **R:** *What do you think about banners and pop-ups?.*
> **P:** *Usually I'll close them out before they even load all the way just because a lot of time I'm just not willing to look at [them].*

(*Grace*)

The "ignorance" and all rejecting activities about "Annoying" WIA formats could be well understood by observing usual Web navigation process. As described before, the Web navigation is considerably "Goal-directed." In the same vein, the navigation behavior throughout the whole sessions was very fast. Regardless of the type of navigation process (e.g., Straightforward navigation style was popular across different domains, while back-and-forward style was dominant when navigating within a domain), the moving from one content (e.g., a new story, a review of a product, a Website) to the other was quickly performed. Additionally, participants usually did not go back to the Website that they had already visited, while they sometimes revisited a specific content page (e.g., a product description). Whenever they thought they did not have to pursue their goals any more (because the purposes were served or replaced with others, etc.), they went straight to the next step. However, they frequently went back and forward within a Website.

> **R:** *In most your navigation, do you usually go to one site and then the other site and back to the first site….like back-and-forward process?*
> **P:** *I usually go to enterprisemission first, and then probably silon.com, then cnn.com and finish up with cabinetessense.com. Just one after the other.*
> **R:** *And then do you go back to the enterprisemission.com again?*
> **P:** *Probably not. Very straight-forward.*
> (*Jacob*)

Okay, well I've seen as much as I want to see on that Cranbrook, so I'm going to go back to use the back um, scroll down the button to go back to art schools dot com and keep looking on that (Liz)

Moreover, they often skipped the majority of contents in their favorite or frequently visited Websites very quickly. This "Skipping" activities were observed in most navigation processes across all participants and their skipping skills were efficient enough to serve "Goals" they wanted to reach as quick as possible.

> ***R:*** *But, do you usually directly go to the discussion page?*
> ***P:*** *Yes, I sure do. This is the Website dedicated to Brian Wilson, the musician, leader of Beach Boys.*
> (*Jacob*)

> ***R:*** *You usually go directly to just you used to go to this darker part of a book information and you used to go to the lower part for customer reviews?*
> ***P:*** *Well, I do, go to the customer review pretty quickly.*
> (*Lori*)

> ***R:*** *Do you go through the whole article?*
> ***P:*** *Not really. Just scan them. I'm looking to see the Celtic and Nets series.*
> (*Ethan*)

As observed, their Web navigations, both moving from a site to the other site and scrolling within a site, were considerably fast enough to skip many components (e.g., banners, pop-ups, headlines, links, etc.) on a Web page regardless of their styles (e.g., straight-forward, back-and-forward). Unless reading stories on a Web page, they usually scanned through the whole screen by using scrolling down with mouse and quickly decided the next step. Thus, any contents they did not want to see were ignored in very fast ways.

> ***R:*** *What do you think about the promotional things on the Web?*

> **P:** *Are you talking about banners and pop-up ads? I just ignore them. When they pop up I don't even notice them and I think a lot of people are like that. It probably gets on peoples nerves more than anything. Like when something comes up and you try to click out of it and something else comes up and you just can't get away from it and your trying to look up something else on the Web.*
> *(Olivia)*

In many cases, traditional WIA formats are ignored without getting any attention. These examples show that participants sometimes do not even notice traditional WIA formats although these formats are intrusive. Although they got annoyed, participants quickly rejected banners and pop-ups. Participants usually showed somewhat active rejection of "Annoying" traditional WIA formats. The popular method to reject them was clicking the exit button and this was performed in a very fast way. The following participant even did not realize that he clicked off a pop-up ad.

> **R:** *You clicked off a small popup window a minute ago*
> **P:** *Oh really?*
> **R:** *You just*
> **P:** *Uh, when I didn't even notice that*
> **R:** *Just a popup small window popped up*
> **P:** *Oh, yeah I a lot of times when I go to sites that happens and I*
> **R:** *Without looking at the detail you just click the X button?*
> **P:** *Yeah, yeah I do it every time. I never look at them. Anyway.*
> *(Ryan)*

> **R:** *Oh, so what do you, do you click the X button or just ignore it or....?*
> **P:** *Um, if it pops up right here I would just click over here and then if it disappears there or sometimes I press the X button but I never I don't think I have ever followed through with one of those I see them and it's over I I've never followed through with one of them and I never these kind of ads here anything like that I never press*
> *(Emily)*

Because most pop-ups are considered as something that should be removed, participants also brought up the issue of their effectiveness. "Useless" and "Ineffective"

were the dominant themes about pop-ups. To participants, what they have to delete or to

click off is useless, and they considered traditional WIA formats ineffective.

> **R:** *Okay let's talk about the banners or pop-ups first, what do you*
> *think about these type of things?*
> **P:** *I think they're I think they're useless.*
> **R:** *Useless?*
> **P:** *I mean if they popup, I click right off of them I hate them.*
> *(Daniel)*

Regardless of whether they reject in active or passive ways, they perceived that

traditional WIA formats were useless. See a passive rejection case as below.

> **R:** *What do you think about the kind of banner?*
> **P:** *I don't even look at it. I think it's completely ineffective.*
> *(Ethan)*

This theme of "Useless" was strongly confirmed in the following examples.

Participants thought that they would not accept banners or pop-ups even if they have

some needs for or interests in the products that banners or pop-ups contain. In fact, some

participants were asked how likely they would be to accept or reject WIA formats, which

they found to be "Annoying," if the WIA formats had content they needed. The following

example illustrates a typical reaction:

> **R:** *Do you like these kinds of sidebars [vertical banners]?*
> **P:** *The ads? I don't really notice them. It's the same ones every time.*
> **R:** *Do you ignore it?*
> **P:** *Yeah, pretty much. I'm not very perceptive because a lot of times I*
> *think you know I'm not going to buy it. I already know that so. A*
> *lot of it is junky stuff that they're trying to push on the market*
> *……………………..*
> **R:** *Let me ask you one more question. If you have a need to buy*
> *something… let's say if you need to buy a music CD in the near*
> *future and you get online and you see a banner or pop up for that*
> *music. Would you like to click that?*

P:　　*Usually I buy most of my products within stores and so like buying a CD I would go to a store for it and so knowing that I'm going to the store to buy that CD I would probably ignore it.*
(Jessica)

R:　　*Okay I have one more question. If you have a need to buy something and during navigation and you see a banner or pop up which is about the product in your mind, what are you likely to do with it?*

P:　　*If it was something I was really looking for then I probably would look at it but it doesn't really work out that way most of the time.*
(Olivia)

These participants showed that they are not likely to accept any banners or pop-ups under the most "accepting-likeable" contexts. As previously noted Web navigation is mainly goal-oriented (e.g., information seeking, entertainment, etc.). Therefore, banners and pop-ups, even though they can meet consumers' needs, are likely to be ignored. The following example also shows how much consumers do not want pop-ups due to their "Intrusive" and "Uncontrollable" characteristics.

P:　　*I really don't like them. I uh, they're just annoying and like I said on my computer at home it's slow and 'cos I'm just running on a modem with phone lines and uh whenever those things pop up it slows it down a whole lot and sometimes it'll even freeze up so they just get in the way*

R:　　*If they came out with software that could delete all the banners or all pops automatically are you likely to install that kind of program?*

P:　　*Depending on the price of it*

R:　　*If it's free*

P:　　*If it's free, yeah definitely*
(Ryan)

Pop-ups and banners are annoying because they interrupt navigation. Most participants thought that they enjoyed getting online, but traditional WIA formats, especially pop-ups ads, made their navigation session less enjoyable. Thus, they thought that they had to click off those formats.

> **R:** *During you're online do you feel you enjoy it?*
> **P:** *Ye...but sometimes it's frustrating. Uhm*
> **R:** *Why?*
> **P:** *Uh, well, at home when I get on AOL a lot of ads pop up that I don't care about and I feel like I have to click over and over to get them off before I can go where I want to go. Sometimes it can be annoying.*
>
> *(Ashley)*

As noted in the preceding section, this category has a strong relationship with "Intrusive." The more intrusive a WIA format is, the more annoyed participants get. Similar to the "Intrusive" phenomenon, among a variety of formats, participants showed slight differences in terms of the degrees of annoyance. Briefly, interstitials were most annoying, and pop-up ads seem to be the second-most annoying format. Pop-under ads were less annoying and banners got the least annoyance responses. This order of "Annoyance" is same as that of "Intrusive."

> **R:** *Okay, do you feel always that they're annoying?*
> **P:** *Yeah, not all advertising is, but the pop-ups like they're what's annoying. Banner ads don't bother me so much*
>
> *(Tom)*
>
> **R:** *Okay, what do you think about the banners?*
> **P:** *Uh, usually I don't mind it um, but I usually never click on them*
>
> (*David*)
>
> **R:** *How do you feel about the Web advertisements, banners and pop ups?*
> **P:** *....The small ones that are just banner ads don't bother me. I don't really like the pop ups. I wish they would do away with those because they're just kind of irritating when they pop up. I know times I've signed off the Web and I'd have like four or five little minimized things I've got to bring up and close and I just find that irritating.*
>
> *(Chris)*

As shown in these examples, the pop-up is the most common format among traditional WIA formats causing annoyance in general. Banners evoke less annoyance

than pop-ups. When pop-ups intruded, participants got annoyed and -clicked off immediately. In most cases, pop-ups were clicked off even before the content was fully loaded.

Similar to pop-ups, pop-under ads also yield annoyance but less than pop-ups. Because pop-unders are less intrusive and participants often do not recognize them during their navigation, they did get too bothered by pop-under ads.

> *R:*   *What do you think about this [pop-under ads] after finishing?*
> *P:*   *Yeah, I just usually click them off. I really don't really read them.*
> *R:*   *What do you feel about this sort of pop-under windows?*
> *P:*   *I think it's good but*
> *R:*   *Good?*
> *P:*   *I think it's good maybe for I don't know I'm just one person I don't*
> *know how other people act but I like that a lot better than the pop*
> *up things. Because you really don't notices them until the end and*
> *you're kinda where did I go to makes you look at it a little bit more.*
> (*William*)

Another recent WIA format, the slide-through banner, was also related to "Annoyance" or similar themes. This moving format seems similar in level of annoyance to pop-unders, although it seemed to produce more annoyance than general banners which are static. The following example shows how more intrusive slide-through banners yielded more annoyance.

> *R:*   *What do you think or feel about this [slide-through banner]?*
> *P:*   *They're ok. Sometime they can be a little bit annoying if they set*
> *there blinking in your face when you're trying to scroll down read*
> *an article. Yeah, if it's something I like….*
> (Nick)

Certainly, the most annoying WIA format is interstitial, which takes the whole screen during navigations. It is viewed as "a big version of pop-up ad," which causes

high levels of annoyance. This highest level of "Intrusive" advertising seems to be associated with the highest degree of annoyance.

> **R:**   *Did you experience any whole screen ad [interstitial], which is inserted between two different site and which is a full screen ad?*
> **P:**   *Yes, I experienced it. I don't know its name….but, an whole site was covered by the advertising.*
> **R:**   *What did you feel about it?*
> **P:**   *Oh….it's so annoying…very much*
> *(Joshua)*

> **P:**   *I guess I've seen a couple [of interstitials], but that's really annoying.*
> **R:**   *The entire screen…popup thing?*
> **P:**   *Yeah, especially when you close the window and they adjust the form of your future windows so then they take up the whole screen and then you have to try to reduce them and it's silly.*
> *(Jasmine)*

> *There, that's the D60 I was talking about. See this is one of those irritating things. Why do I need that? I want to know about the camera I don't need all these junks (Chris)*

Accordingly, like its relationship with "Intrusive," "Controllable" also showed a strong relationship with this category. Participants usually want to control what they look at on the Web, and they regarded most traditional WIA formats as obstacles, which could make their navigation less controllable.

> *Yeah, if I can find what I'm looking for, if I can't that's really annoying to me. Or if I get bogged down in popup ads, I hate that (Tom).*

> **R:**   *Could you tell me a little bit more about banners and pop ups, your personal feelings? Big screen ads.*
> **P:**   *Those get on my nerves more than anything because if I'm on the Internet I'm not really trying to find different products unless that's the actual product that I'm going on their site and looking for. I don't want single things come up and stuff like that I don't' really want to be bothered with and I don't like that you have to click out of it and then something else will be underneath that one that you have to click out of.*
> *(Olivia)*

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Although not intended, some components were perceived as reasonable and predictable to appear. In the following case, traditional WIA formats with relevant sponsorship can be considered less annoying if they have some relevant links to the context (e.g., Webpage) where they appear.

> **R:**   *What do you think about this kind of small ad [banner]?*
> **P:**   *Well, since it's Nascar Nascar has a sponsorships you know, they sponsor the cars and uh, so these type ads I'd expect on a page like this but in general on a regular page, I don't I don't really like looking at those.*
> *(Nick)*

The "Annoying" aspect of traditional WIA formats was strongly based on participants' previous experiences on the Web. In their Web histories, they experienced many negative consequences when accepting those WIA formats and finally decided not to accept them again. See a typical case below.

> **R:**   *Why [haven't you clicked the banners or pop-ups]?*
> **P:**   *Just 'cos sometimes like you click on them you know bring up something else uh, sometimes like with my uh, like my Compuserve um, screen I go through Explorer but usually when my Compuserve screen once I click on something else sometimes it will go away and I hate clicking back or trying to get it back or go back to the site and sometimes they might popup with something you know that says win a car today if I click on it, it might be something really crappy site they might try take me somewhere else or something like that and I just don't like it but if sometimes I'll find a couple of ads or banners that might be interesting to me you know um, but usually I hardly ever click on them I just don't*
> *(David)*

Most participants had similar experiences when accepting banners or pop-ups in the past. Their expectations were not met with consequent Websites led by pop-ups or banners and they got annoyed. Thus, they thought that similar negative and unexpected consequences would happen if accepting any banners or pop-ups again.

R:	What do you think about this kind of small windows [pop-under]?
P:	Sometimes I can see what's there.
R:	What do feel about this?
P:	Sometimes it's annoying. If I am trying to get through and when I click off I want to be off and there is suddenly another click off and sometimes there is even another click off.

(Tylor)

Especially, banners and pop-ups were thought to produce unintended additional pop-ups continuously and they got more annoyed as subsequent pop-up ads appear. The participant in the following example gives a metaphor to express his negative feeling about unintended continuation of pop-up ads: "*Sucked into this whirlpool.*" This also shows how "Controllable" and "Annoying" are associated with each other.

P:	I don't even look at it because once you click on one of those banners all these other things start popping up and you get sucked into this whirlpool.
R:	That kind of continuous banner that pops up?
P:	Yeah, it's very annoying.
R:	Is that normal?
P:	Yes, that is. It happens on here and every other Website I've been on

(Anthony)

Traditional WIA formats are not the only "Annoying" product-related components. Other features also annoyed participants. The following example shows strong negative feelings about the requirement of personal information to enter a site, although it was a free site. Many participants worried about disclosing their personal information to commercial sites and some of them expressed that such sites were "Annoying."

P:	I go to here…..it's annoying and disturbing…they now ask me login. They didn't do that. I think that they started membership yesterday or today…
R:	Is it paid?

> **P:**   No, it's free. But I have to give my information, my personal
>   information
> *(Sarah)*

Some corporate Websites started with so-called "Intro" page with graphical flash designs before letting visitors enter the main homepage. Most participants tried to skip the "Intro" page and some of them mentioned that those components are "Annoying." As noted in the relationship of "Intrusive" and "Annoyance," more intrusive components made for more annoyance in this case.

> **R:**   Why do you avoid flash things [a banner with flash animation]?
> **P:**   It irritates my eyes and I am tired with them.
> *(Tylor)*

Feelings of annoyance also emerged with the structural aspect of Website. Participants preferred well-structured and organized Websites for their convenience. The following participant showed how a Major League Baseball team homepage, a kind of corporate Website, made him annoyed.

> **R:**   Which player do you like most?
> **P:**   Um, well I like Barry Larkin, he's played there for a long time and
>   uh, I used to like Ken Griffey but he can't stay without getting an
>   injury, so and um, actually, where is he, let's see, uh, hold on,
> **R:**   It's not in alphabeticcal order
> **P:**   Yeah, it's annoying, um, well
> *(Tom)*

Another dominant component perceived as "Annoying" was commercial emails, which are frequently referred to "Junk." Most commercial emails, to which they did not intend to subscribe produced negative feelings and were deleted immediately. Participants were also very good at screening "Junk" from their "Emails."

> *I normally just don't look at them. My Web mail is usually cluttered with*
> *advertisements and junk mail….. It irritates me, cause sometimes I'll*

delete an actual email that I want to look at...it irritates me and I've actually tried to go to the end of it and try to get my name off of the database. And I'll do that. Every once in a while.......but then it just seems like more come up....so, huh I don't know. (Joseph)

R: How do you deal with those emails [junk]?
P: I just clean it all out without opening it at all.
R: Do you delete a few of your valuable emails and all spams?
P: Oh, I don't delete everything, I go individually in the inbox. I look
*   at the titles.*
R: Just the title of the email
P: Right and I delete it like that.
(Lauren)

Although most participants showed negative responses about traditional WIA formats, some of them reported that they had accepted a few of these WIA messages in the past. The reason why they accepted varied by contexts. Sometimes, participants accidentally accepted annoying traditional WIA formats. In this case, participants usually could hardly remember or recall why they accepted WIA. In fact, they could not clarify why they once accepted banners or pop-ups before.

R: Have you ever clicked that kind of thing [banner]?
P: Once or twice.
R: Why did you?
P: I just think they are kind....I guess I did do it accidentally cause I
*   don't remember what brand of product it was but….*
(William)

Producing annoyance, pop-ups and banners still sometimes attract some attention. The attention referred to here does not imply any affective responses but only cognitive response.

R: What do you think about general advertisements on the Web?
P: Are you talking about popups, banners?
R: Whatever
P: In general I look at general Internet advertising as an
*   annoyance….it is too static…that's really grab my attention.*
(Jacob)

This participant revealed the possibility that banners and pop-ups could get his attention, but this attention seems to lead to negative consequences. Another example confirms the fact that these intrusive WIA formats can get attention.

> **P:** And here is a huge thing about Mock 3 [slide through banner].
> **R:** Do you ignore them? No you don't have too? Usually?
> **P:** No, yeah, I just kinda look at it and go on. I'm pretty sure it's the same you gotta click here and it will show some guy shaving or something.
> **R:** Do you like it?
> **P:** No, no. not really. You see enough on TV. It's kinda. Yeah, that's the new turbo they have out. So….
> **R:** Do you read this kind of ad?
> **P:** Yea, if it's right here within the text of everything.
> **R:** On the side?
> **P:** Yea, somewhere right here that keeps on following me. After a while I just don't even pay attention to that. But this gets your attention ever time you go over it. Plus, they've also put other ads on the same page right here.
> *(William)*

Among WIA formats, banners and pop-ups are worse than other types of product information in getting attention to their contents. The following example shows how different format of product information on the Web could get more attention than banners and pop-ups.

> **R:** Let's think about a few products or brands you already familiar with and do you think any source of that of knowledge of that brand will come from the Internet?
> **P:** In terms of just advertisement, for say, I don't invest as much of my attention but if there is something like an article about a particular company that produced a product that might attract my attention. I watch from Internet to television most commercials, they just pass through my mind. I have been imagining that there is something that captures my visual contact more then anything else.
> *(Tylor)*

This example also shows that slide-through banner ads could get more attention than other intrusive formats. However, again, this success in getting attention does not guarantee any positive consequences. In fact, paying attention happens before accepting (e.g., clicking banners) WIA formats. Thus, attracting attention could be more "Annoying" than simple ignorance. The following example shows how a participant got annoyed ("bothered") after accepting banners.

> ***R:*** *What do you feel about banners?*
> ***P:*** *Well they don't bother me unless I accidentally click on them. Just because you kind of get sucked into it and more and more banners start popping up. I don't even deal with them I don't notice them.*
> ***R:*** *Okay what do you think about the pop ups?*
> ***P:*** *I don't like them I close them as soon as they pop up.*
> *(Anthony)*

Negative feeling about traditional WIA formats seemed to force participants to prefer the Websites with less pop-ups or banners than other competitive Websites. Some participants compared competitive similar Websites and praised the ad-free ones over others with relatively many ads.

> ***R:*** *Is this your primary search engine?*
> ***P:*** *This is I used to go to Ask Jeeves.com where it's now Ask.com I used to go there to look but a lot of times like here I like it Google better because on Ask Jeeves they keep having this screen at the top that says Ask Jeeves and has flyers and promos and stuff floating around and you gotta keep clicking off the, you know take of the screen and everything, I just like to go to the site you know and look around I don't like I don't like ads to popup around me 'cos I usually don't click on them, if it's something really interesting then I might that goes along with something that I'm doing and I might, but other than that, you know buy a car, I don't care about that crap usually if I'm not looking for it so I don't like popup ads usually I like, even though I'm in advertising I don't like it.*
> *(David)*

"Annoying" is the most representative theme of negative feeling about WIA. A variety of negative evaluations about several WIA formats were found and their relationships also emerged. Other themes associating with "Annoying" confirms the findings in the preceding theme, "Intrusive." So far, two themes representing consumers' negative responses about WIA were presented. In the following sections, relatively positive evaluations about WIA are presented with each unique theme.

Fun

Themes: Fun, Enjoying, Entertaining, Interesting

> *It gives me pleasure to tell other people what I think of a particular book.*
> *(Jacob)*

Participants made some positive responses about WIA. There are several themes representing the positive responses and "Fun" is the most apparent theme. This category is generally related to positive responses to WIA but less popular than "Annoying," especially for traditional WIA. Several different themes related to "Fun" emerged and all of them have in common the participants' motives of enjoying the interaction with WIA itself. For example, some participants referred to "interesting to see" graphical banners and brand logos on card games, and others enjoyed interactive games offered in pop-up windows or on banners. As contrasted with "Annoying" and "Intrusive" phenomena, participants showed positive responses with the theme of "Fun" to some new possible formats of WIA other than traditional formats. Those were "Customer reviews," "Corporate Websites," "Third-Party Websites' product information," and the like (Figure 5).

Other theme categories associated with "Fun" were "Controllable," "Informative," and "Real-Time Communication." Participants enjoyed interacting with

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Real-Time
Communication

Informative

Controllable

+

+

+

FUN
- Entertaining
- Interesting
- Enjoying

Posting &
Reading

Finding depth-
information

Interactive
Physical Features
& Ways to Appear

Fun to read
and interact
with

Websites

Corporate
Third-Party

Customer
Review

Traditional
WIA Formats

Other Formats
- Sponsorship
- News stories

Note) Thick lines between the category and formats represent stronger association.

< Figure 5 > Fun – Relating Themes and WIA Formats

what they could control in a real-time fashion and obtaining their product information in "Informative" Websites.

The theme of "Fun" emerged not only with WIA but also the usage of the Web in general. As described in the "Intrusive" section, most Web navigations were for serving specific purpose(s). In contrast, participants regarded "Pleasure-pursuing" navigation as not serving any specific purposes. However, they could serve their somewhat abstract purpose or goal: pleasure pursuing or stress relieving, even though they did not realize or articulate it.

> *I really don't use the Internet that much for just for like pleasure it's usually for a purpose (Lori)*

Nevertheless, one of the most popular goals or purposes they wanted to serve on the Web was "Fun." In fact, participants use the Web to serve their own purposes, which can be "information seeking," "getting pleasure," and so forth. Although "Not Goal-directed" navigations were mentioned, the majority of them could be also interpreted as "Goal-directed." For example, participants often mentioned that they enjoyed surfing itself and also referred to the navigation as "Fun." They, in fact, were actually trying to serve their goals, which were "Fun-seeking" or "Stress relieving." See the following example. The initial purpose of navigation is not for specific information seeking but for enjoying themselves. They just did not realize the fact that they had "Purposes."

> **R:** *When you get bored do you get online?*
> **P:** *I have occasionally and just surf around and check email or just start looking and see what comes up. That's sometimes fun. It's not very often I'll do it, but I'll type in a search word and just to see what all categories come up and then I'll click on some of them.*
> *(Sarah)*

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In addition, participants often went online without any specific goals predetermined. In fact, their initial drive to connect the Web is likely to be "having a goal," but they also "run across" a variety of content, which they did not intend to view at the starting point of navigation.

> **R:** *Okay. When you search the product information on the Web, do*
>   *you think you did that intentionally or accidentally?*
> **P:** *I think I'm intentionally searching for something but a lot of times*
>   *I accidentally run across*
> *(Liz)*

Participatory activities on the Web included "Fun." There are many types of participations on the Web (e.g., online community, questioning and answering on the bulletin board, emailing to content creators and getting feedback) and some participants enjoyed their activities on those Websites that enabled them to participate (e.g., posting messages, reading others' opinions, emailing).

> *It may be there are other people like me who like to visit the site for books*
> *they enjoy and see what other people saying about them. So I guess more*
> *than convincing other people to purchase a book…I think I am writing for*
> *myself and to let other people who enjoy that book that I enjoyed as well*
> *(Jacob).*

Jacob enjoyed posting as well as reading messages about books he was interested in. He also hoped to let others enjoy reading what he wrote. This kind of participation often drove positive responses. Especially, like this example, participants enjoyed posting their opinions about products on the Web. While reading others' reviews are usually for the purpose of their purchase decision, posting their own messages is for "Fun" or similar feelings (e.g., enjoyable, entertaining). This is, for some participants, not a special case

but the reason for general usage of certain WIA formats (e.g., Online stores' product information, Corporate Websites, Customer reviews).

> **R:** *So, do you usually visit amazon.com for entertainment purpose*
> *rather than for shopping?*
> **P:** *I do look at it as a marketplace but it is an entertainment… ye…*
> *that's what I used to do…*
> *(Daniel)*

There were several miscellaneous WIA formats evoking "Fun." The following examples show that other types of product-related contents could be perceived as interactive and consumers could enjoy the interactive features on the Web while obtaining product information.

> **R:** *What does it show?*
> **P:** *Oh, it shows you right here the pictures and some of the rings they*
> *designed. Uhm, let's see, before and afters. That shows you what*
> *the room looked like before...*
> **R:** *After they remodel it.*
> **P:** *After they change it and make it kinda trendy. Uhm. Okay, so*
> *there's....*
> **R:** *Do you enjoy this kind of change?*
> **P:** *Well, it's interesting, it gives you ideas. Kinda like place to*
> *decorate.*
> **R:** *Aha….what kind of ideas? Do you get some product information*
> *from here?*
> **P:** *Yes, often times…I mean, I don't know the brands they use but… I*
> *can catch… how to decorate with what stuffs…and it's fun to see*
> *it's kinda like real TV. See like real people interact with each*
> *other.*
> *(Ashley)*

This case shows how a sponsorship for interactive program could make her enjoy interacting with product information presented in "Fun" ways. Viewing the process of remodeling a room is fun to her and she can obtain some ideas about what kinds of

products are useful. The "Fun" of this program could attract her while getting product information by watching the transition from "before" to "after."

Some participants enjoyed online games and showed the possibility that product-related messages inserted in the game process could evoke their positive responses. The following example shows how a sponsorship ad shown in a card-gambling site led to the participant's positive responses, the "Fun."

> *.....Well, like uh, at Pogo.com I play, they have different card games there and they have like solitaire and I think that they do a really clever job 'cos on the back of the solitaire cards they have a logo for like I think a cellular phone company and I think that's a really clever way to advertise without annoying and like, I'm in favor of something like that, especially because their advertisements let you play games for free on that Website but as far as banner ads and stuff like that I understand why they're there but I don't ever use them so.*
> *(Tom)*

This example also shows that "Fun" can be opposite to "Annoying" which he felt with "*banners ads and stuff like.*" Another sponsorship on the Web could let a participant enjoy reading stories about the brand. Although the following participant did not seem much involved in this product-related story, it could be funny for him to read.

> ***R:*** *What are these sponsors for?*
> ***P:*** *Says they're sponsors but it also looks like they have articles in here.*
> ***R:*** *Do you click a couple of links here?*
> ***P:*** *Yea, usually look at a couple.*
> ***R:*** *Did you read any stories from here about any company or brands?*
> ***P:*** *Yea, they have brands and stuff on here I am pretty sure.*
> ***R:*** *Like this?*
> ***P:*** *Yea, I think that is supposed to be making fun of what is like adolescent or products and stuff, and then they turn into something nasty.*
> ***R:*** *Are you interested in them?*
> ***P:*** *Not much…. Millerlite virtual racing. I'm not really into NASCAR car racing of anything like that. Ok.*

> **R:** Why did you click that (button) link?
> **P:** I just thought the story might be fun to read.
> (*Anthony*)

"Fun" often emerged when participants were highly involved in content (e.g., reading stories, playing games) rather than scanning and skipping screens – as they scroll down and up to select the next content. The following story shows how a participant enjoys reading product-related fictitious stories in a liberal newspaper site.

> **R:** *What are these stories about?*
> **P:** *Area man criticizes hazelnut coffee, Volvos, New Mexico's flag, pretty much I guess it's talking about some guy that hates the world. It's pretty fun.*
> **R:** *Are all these stories reliable and true?*
> **P:** *No, well they are true in a way they're about like stories that go on in the news. And that parts real. Like they will say the news bombing Afghanistan but then they will stretch the truth and make fun of what's going on.*
> **R:** *Is it true?*
> **P:** *I think this is true. I'm pretty sure it is. But you know that again… also but on stuff that makes fun of him*
> **R:** *Just fun?*
> **P:** *Yea. I don't think they really mean for it to be reliable type of news.*
> *…….*
> *(William)*

As shown here, this participant expected some enjoyable things from product-related stories in this Website. He also revealed that there were some interactions with his friends about what they read in this site. As the following dialogue shows, he and his friend exchanged their thoughts about products portrayed in the stories offered in this site.

> **R:** *What kind of stories? What did he talk to you? What do you talk to him?*
> **P:** *It's and everyday thing like something like they will making fun of something like Budweiser. And then if I walk into our house and he sitting there drinking a Budweiser or something. I'll pop in and starting thinking about hey Budweiser this is going on. They're*

cutting back all those workers' and stuff like that. Kinda making
fun of it……They say if you drink this type of beer that you are
probably lower class. Huh, drunk, it leads to certain stereo types.
That you wreck a home and that you do whatever. So.

R: *Stereotype of Budweiser?*
P: *Yea. I was kinda like telling him you're kinda like lower class.*
R: *Did you agree with that?*
P: *No, but it was in just good fun. Yea, I have been there, I've drunk*
that before it's not that bad. Just a title it's been labeled. So.
R: *And you talked about Budweiser?*
P: *Humm, huh.*
R: *Do you find that kind of products stories here often?*
P: *Yea, pretty frequently.*
R: *How do you feel about that?*
P: *It doesn't really bother me if I'm pretty much liberal to it. Often*
times, it's funny.
R: *Do you like Volvo [the story also included Volvo]?*
P: *Huh, not brand loyal to Volvo no not really, Volvo yeah, you could*
take that into example. It's still a good car you see a lot of people
driving them pretty influenced type of people. So they must be
doing something right. So, I don't really hold with what they say
relate to what's actually going on.
R: *Popular brands?*
P: *Yea, they are all pretty popular brands, Volvo which is huge.*
Hazelnut coffee… not really a brand?
R: *A sort of coffee?*
P: *Yea, then they're talking about Millerlite racing and they do like to*
make fun of a lot.
R: *What kind of things do you usually look at only news stories?*
P: *Yea, pretty much they have merchandise, books I guess you can get*
your T-shirt but I don't wanna be walking around with an onion T-
shirt.
R: *Why do you like this site?*
P: *Just cause it's something different after sitting, reading text,*
management, marketing you kinda want a break. And this is
usually pretty fun to read.
R: *When you feel bored?*
P: *Yes, yes I do.*
(*William*)

Considering the fact that increasing the level of product exposure is an important

objective for most advertising campaigns, the stories containing various products and

portraying their images in this site are very powerful advertising to consumers. As

revealed, this kind of story telling requires readers (consumers) higher involvement. Thus, regardless of consumers' intentions, product information in this format is more exposed to and retrieved by readers. Especially, interactions with other people (a friend in this case) could let a consumer retrieve the product information later.

The case above implicitly showed how consumers could be heavily exposed to product names and images accidentally. Although the purpose of the product-related stories that appeared in this Website did not seem to promote those products, consumers could enjoy reading stories containing some brands in many contexts.

Many WIA formats showed up in relation with "Fun." Other dominant product-related content, which require consumers' relatively higher involvement, can be "corporate Websites," "product reviews (by consumers, by third-parties, or by manufacturers)" and so forth. The following examples support that participants could enjoy interacting with the contents of these formats. In these examples, the associations with other theme categories are also presented.

> **R:** *Do you think some parts of the information about products from the Web?*
> **P:** *I think so, like the Coke Website I've visited that Website several times. They're such a large corporation and doing things in so many other countries that I do find it interesting to go on real fast and just see what they've done in the past week.*
> (*Jessica*)

In *Jessica*'s case, she enjoyed reviewing what a famous brand, *Coke*, did in the past week. Because she confessed being a loyal consumer, she often visits its corporate Website and looks for some product information. The affection for the brand could lead her to enjoying interacting with Coke-related contents on its Website.

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Checking "Updated" information about the product (including the company) was the main reason for her to visit the Website for "Updated" information (See "Real-Time Communication" for detailed information about the "Updated"). In fact, this behavioral trend of checking "Updated" and "Latest" information is prevalent in consumers' frequently visited Web usages. Because the Web can offer contents in real-time fashion, consumers expect to get the latest and current information they need. See the following examples about participants' behavioral tendencies to obtain "Updated" information on the Web in general.

> **R:** *Do you usually start from these links of news stories?*
> **P:** *Yeah, I always start at the latest headlines.*
> (*Olivia*)
>
> *I'll go to news, right up here and that takes you to like the latest like gossip I guess kinda and just what's going on in the entertainment industry and like here's something about Richard Gere and I just look through here and just and usually click on more headlines so I can see a full list and here's a popup ad so I'll close it and like I look I'll look through here and just see uh, if there's, like there's a Star Wars thing I might click on that and uh I'll just look through here and see if there's anything I'm interested in and if there is I'll click on it if that's, and there usually is quite a bit more than this but uh, I'll click on it and read it I mean I stay here for like 30 minutes (Ryan).*

"Informative" also showed strong association with "Fun." Although the themes seem to be two distinctive concepts, participants often experienced "Fun" when obtaining information they needed. The following example shows the usage of one of the most frequently mentioned Web sites participants used for information: Movie-related Websites. Consumer reviews were available in some movie-related Websites and this participant enjoyed reading what other people wrote about the movie he was interested in.

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Although the primary purpose to visit this kind of Website is information seeking, what consumers often feel is "Fun."

> **P:** *...and it [a movie review and theater finding Website] gives what like other people will come here and they've seen the movie and they'll....*
> **R:** *Do you review them?*
> **P:** *Yeah, all the time.*
> **R:** *Are they user comments?*
> **P:** *Yeah, this is somebody who's been to see the movie and comes here and comes here and types this up*
> **R:** *What do you think about this kind of comment?*
> **P:** *I think 'cos it's just interesting to see what other people have to say about movies that you might wanna see or things like that*
> *(Ryan)*

Traditional formats of WIA (e.g., banners, pop-ups) sometimes also let participants have fun. "Controllable" emerged in this phenomenon. Ironically, participants enjoyed what they could control in the traditional WIA formats – even though they generally disliked these formats because they were less "Controllable" and more "Intrusive" . Nevertheless, the object they enjoyed was not the product information in the traditional WIA formats but the interactive features they offered. In fact, sometimes they could be obviously attractive in terms of their designs and even make participants have "Fun." However, what made them fun was not the content, advertising message about product, but the appearance of WIA formats (e.g., flash design, animated design, etc.).

> **P:** *Uhm and then I guess this advertisement here....that's cute.*
> **R:** *Do you?*
> **P:** *Yell, this is a cute ad.. Skyscraper is what it's called.*
> **R:** *Skyscraper?*
> **P:** *I like the way things kinda pop up at you.*
> *(Ashley)*

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In this example, an animated pop-up ad, which appeared to jump up-and-down on the screen, attracted this participant's attention and led to her positive response. What she liked was not the content but how the pop-up appeared. In addition to "Controllable" feature they enjoyed, "Real-Time Communication" was also related to this phenomenon. Because these animated banners and pop-ups immediately give responses to consumers' actions (clicking and moving), their "Real-Time Communication" feature could let participants feel "Fun" with "Controllable" aspects. The following examples also confirm how a banner or a pop-up could let consumers enjoying interacting with it.

> **R:** *Do you usually ignore this kind of things [banner]?*
> **P:** *Yes. Sometimes there is like a little game I play it. Sometimes there is like a guy moving and you have to catch it.*
> (*Sarah*)
>
> **R:** *Did you get any kinds of pop-ups or banners in this site or in others sites?*
> **P:** *You know. I believe Amazon does have pop-ups now. I think they do but I didn't see one today. There's a site where I go to every time I log on called Silon.com. They have pop-up ads now... Which use flash software...which makes pretty interesting I likes look at those ads.*
> **R:** *Do you follow that ad or just look at that?*
> **P:** *Just look at that ad. The thing makes me interesting is sometimes they're interactive and it also looked some games or little movies so,...*
> (*Jacob*)

As shown in *Jacob*'s example, "interactive" features are likely to yield "Fun." This case confirms that even intrusive and annoying WIA formats in general can be seen as interesting and have some potential for enjoyment.

"Fun" represents relatively positive responses to WIA, which participants enjoyed (reading, writing, seeing, etc.). Traditional WIA formats were usually not able to produce "Fun," while other formats could do so. Nevertheless, the former could make participants

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experience "Fun," but it rarely linked to positive consequences. When referring to "Fun" or similar terms, participants did not tend to clarify their feelings. Experiencing "Fun" is usually not a predetermined goal-seeking behavior, rather it could be achieved accidentally as shown in examples in this section. The following category, "Informative" denotes a contrasting view to "Fun."

Informative

Themes: Informative, Variety, Specs, Detailed, Everything

> *R:*   *Okay, let's stop here. Why do you like this site?*
> *P:*   *Because it tells about every movie that's ever been made pretty much.*
> *R:*   *So, don't they miss any movie?*
> *P:*   *I, not that I've been able to find. I mean they've got every movie that I've ever heard of.*
> (*Ryan*)

"Informative" was the most popular theme regarding WIA as well as the Web in general. Whenever referring to the benefit of the Web and product information on the Web, they usually mentioned "Informative" as compared with other media or other formats on the Web. As widely accepted, information seeking is the top reason for people to use the Web. Participants thought that the Web was more informative than other media, because they thought that the Web has more detailed and various information. In other words, they had higher expectations of in-depth information from WIA than other mass media advertising (Figure 6).

This category represents the informativeness of WIA. Participants liked to seek information about the products they wanted to know on the Web, and preferred "Informative" WIA in most cases. Both depth and breadth of information are reflected

Real-Time
Communication

Easy

Reliable &
Honest

+

+

+

INFORMATIVE
- Variety
- Everything
- Specification
- Detailed

±

Relevant

+

Controllable

Gives relevant
information in detail

Detailed Everything
- Corporate: Depth
- Third-Party: Width

Customer
Review

Does not give
any information

Websites

Traditional
WIA Formats

Corporate
Third-Party

Note) Thick lines between the category and formats represent stronger association.

< Figure 6 > Informative – Relating Themes and WIA Formats

with several themes: "Variety," "Specs (Specification)," "Detailed," "Everything," as well as general term of "Informative."

Other theme categories also accompanied "Informative" in many contexts. The delivery of "Informative" content of WIA in "Real-Time Communication" ways and "Controllable" interaction with them were preferred. It was also critical for them to evaluate "Informative" WIA with the criterion of "Reliable." Based on their self-confidence of WIA, it was "Easy" for them to screen numerous pieces of information about products. Every "Informative" WIA is not preferred; in fact, they needed what was "Relevant" to them but not necessarily to others. Thus, they needed to screen out the majority of information based on whether information is "Relevant" to them.

As generally acknowledged, the benefit of the Web, which is not bound by time and space limitations, leads to expectation of WIA content. In fact, it was expected that the Web would provide more information than other product information sources. In the following case, *Chris* regarded the corporate Website as the online-version of advertising by comparing with magazine ads. He specified why he expected more information from his favorite corporate Website, *Canon.com*, than general magazine ads. He pointed out "updated" characteristic (See "Real-Time Communication") as well as time and space limitlessness.

> **R:**   *Can you compare the product information from Canon.com and the information from magazines? Are they really the same?*
> **P:**   *Generally, you can get more information online. Obviously in a magazine even on a full page ad your still constrained. Because of the size of the ad plus sometimes the ads are not always as current as what's online. When I go online I find product specifications, I*

*can find the dimensions of the camera and I can find a lot more
information than is on an ad in a magazine. Anyway the sites like
this you can get a lot more information. I can go to specs on the
camera and I can get a lot of information that's not normally you
don't see these in a magazine ad or television ad. They don't
really have time to put all this information in there.*
(Chris)

The high expectation of informativeness on WIA is well supported with
participants' thoughts about and their uses of the Web in general. They often described
the Web as a popular information source for pre-purchase research. Once getting a piece
of product information or a cue which can be acquired from other traditional ads or their
acquaintances, the Web would be a favorite source they were likely to contact for more
information.

> *R: Do you usually go and get different information?*
> *P: Yeah, because a lot of times I find something in a store that I'm
>   interested in. A product and then I'll go on the Website I very
>   seldom ever buy anything on the spur of the moment. I go research
>   and find out if it's what I want first. So this way I can come here
>   and I can get all of the information about the item that I want prior
>   to actually going out and buying it.*
> *(Dylan)*

*I know I could look on Internet and find the company name and find
everything about it......uhm......the Internet's got all the information you
need. I just haven't looked up many products lately. But, I know if I need
to, I can go to the Internet and find it.....with ease (Joseph).*

In many cases, participants, in their articulation process (talking aloud what they
were doing on the screen) as well as in conversation with the interviewer, showed what
detailed product information they wanted to find and how they were skillful and
knowledgeable to deal with specific and detailed information about products they were
interested in or familiar with (See also "Easy"). The following case shows the level of

information a participant wanted from an online store and how he found a variety of information about a specific product he was interested in.

> *R:*   *Do you know what these jacks are for?*
> *P:*   *I know what some of them are for, um, some of the others, I mean a lot of these are the same jacks for different, like if you have, you know, if I have a Playstation 2 and a DVD player and a X Box or something they can all hook into here 'cos that's what mostly all the jacks are for so you don't have to keep plugging in different ones all each time, uh, looks like about everything, now I'm clicking on, uh, cables a little side thing that they have for cables um and it will take me to uh, shows me all the different kind of cable connections that they have and then you can click on them and I believe that it will show me, yeah tell me all the different cables that they offer like monster cables, the better connection cables so you get better picture and quality and sound and everything there's S-video, component video, uh, let's see, basically I kinda wanna see the price on some of these, they're fairly expensive, let's see, I wanna take a look at this optical cable by clicking on it and let's see it's $40 bucks for that. For one meter of optical cable.*
> (*David*)

The expectation for information amount also varied by different WIA formats. Participants had higher expectation from a WIA format over other media. More unlimited (in terms of space and time) formats such as corporate Websites were expected to be more informative than limited formats such as traditional WIAs (e.g., banners).

> *R:*   *When you go to that kind of corporate the company Website, why do you go to that Website?*
> *P:*   *I wanna know more about it.*
> *R:*   *About a specific product you have in your mind?*
> *P:*   *Yeah. Yeah. They can tell me a little bit more about what I'm looking for than maybe just a normal Web like a third party Website.*
> (*Daniel*)

Some formats were more frequently referred to as having "Informative" content than others. "Corporate Websites" and "Third-party Website" including online stores'

product information were regarded as "Informative," while traditional WIA formats such as banners were complained about because they were not informative.

> *I think they [corporate Websites] provide a lot of good information…*
> *(Liz).*
>
> ***R:*** *What kinda page do you usually go, Paritian.com?*
> ***P:*** *Uhm, let's see....features of the week.......yell, homepage......has a*
> *little booklet that shows like the top ten must have items. And that's*
> *always good to know.*
> *(Ashley)*

As noted "Intrusive" formats were often perceived as "Annoying," and these unwelcome formats were often complained about because of their lack of information. Unlike traditional ads (e.g., print ads, TV commercials), consumers wanted to have very specific product information, which can satisfy their own needs.

> *Banner does not give me any information….that's not any information at*
> *all. So I need information like price, features, how people evaluate, and*
> *those information can't be provided by advertising at all (Joshua).*

As shown, two of the most informative WIA formats referred to by participants were "Corporate Websites" and "Third-party Website," and this participant expected more information from the former than the latter. In this case, the participant had a specific product or brand in his mind and wanted more information about it. This more specific goal could lead him to prefer its corporate Website than other third-party Websites, which could have more general – not detailed – information about more various kinds of products.

A WIA format considered "Informative (Informational)" (about products) could be labeled as advertising. Corporate Websites were often referred to as advertising

because they offer product information and promote their products. See the following example.

> **R:** *What do you think about this kind of company Website? Do you think it is advertising?*
> **P:** *It's kind of advertising, yeah, that's what I mean by something that I clicked on that I don't mind seeing something like that. Because in a sense it is informational because it is a company Website but then again its promoting the new product by showing the taste tests and the facts and the days the events are happening and that sort of thing.*
> *(Jessica)*

The corporate Website is, in fact, regarded as one of the first places for consumers to go for more information about specific products. In fact, in the case of having specific brands, corporate Websites were preferred to obtain further information about products.

> **R:** *Are there any other parts of the Web that can help you or others understand any products?*
> **P:** *Yeah, if somebody had a specific product in mind and they wanted to get more information on it then I think the Web would be really helpful there. Like if somebody wanted to find information on a car. They could go to the Ford Website and it would have more information on a specific kind of car.*
> *(Olivia)*

Visiting Websites containing product information is performed not only when consumers have specific (pre-purchase information search) and certain needs to purchase, but also when they have no purchase needs (ongoing information search). In other words, a pre-purchase situation with intentions to purchase a certain product is not the only context for participants to inquire about product information on the Web. In fact, they sometimes visited Websites where product information is available without a purchase plan for their upcoming purchases. Ongoing product information search behavior was prevalent.

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> **R:** *Could you tell me what kinds of product information you got from the Web?*
>
> **P:** *Um, the JC Penney site, um I just randomly go in and I learn a lot about the products they have that I didn't know they had.*

(Lauren)

As exemplified earlier, some "Fun" related behaviors with WIA formats also performed as ongoing product information search (See "Fun").

"Informative" often means "Everything," a complete list of information about a product or a product category, to participants. As noted previously, virtually limitless time and space could allow them to anticipate complete sets of product information for their specific needs (Also see the first example, Ryan's, shown in this category).

> **R:** *Do you think that the information on the Web is better than the information you found you got from the salesperson at the Best Buy store?*
>
> **P:** *Um, sometimes it depends, I meant 'cos you know you might go in and somebody might not be able to help you sometimes or you might get a real knowledgeable person you might get somebody who's new that doesn't really know much so they might not tell you everything or might tell you things that they don't don't know about they're just kinda making up uh, but on the Web they'll usually tell you everything about it, uh, what this does if you don't know what you know certain kinds of connections are or something like that it can tell you*

(David)

Because search engine services (e.g., *Yahoo!, Google*) are popular among many Web users, this concept of "Everything" often emerges in the context of search engine used to find product information. In fact, participants often use their favorite search engines to find product information they need. With the search, consumers can visit corporate Websites or third-party Websites. See the following example.

> *You can just find… you can type in the name of the product and you can get probably go to a site by its manufacturers and learn about a product*

or a brand there or you can uh, you can go to other sites if you, you can
go to like if you type in to Yahoo it'll show you you know everything that's
there's a lot of things that are written about that particular brand (Anna)

In terms of variety, participants expected, and actually got, a wide variety of product information from corporate Websites or third-party sites. The information, which can be available from other offline sources (e.g., retail stores, acquaintances, mass media) is also sought and expected on the Web. As generally accepted and these participant' thoughts about the Web revealed, the Web is an integration of other media in terms of its capability to carry product information. Thus, a variety of product information, which is available from multiple sources, is thought to be available on a Website.

> **R:** *What kinds of information do you need?*
> **P:** *Well, of course the price, um, probably the size of it the how easy it*
> *is to operate.*
> **R:** *Let's go take a look at one of the cameras now.*
> **P:** *Okay. We'll take a 4-1/2 star one. It's pretty cheap to use. Check*
> *out a refurbished one.*
> **R:** *Don't you mind buying a refurbished one?*
> **P:** *No. I'd buy a used one.*
> **R:** *What kind of information do you read here.*
> **P:** *Well, of course I look at the price, I'd look at the warranty. There*
> *is one. That's what all I'd look at. I guess I'd check out the seller.*
> *Yeah, see here's customer ratings.*
> **R:** *Do you think those are pretty good ratings.*
> **P:** *Yeah, I would look at this. It looks as though that they're getting*
> *nothing but good ratings for the most part.*
> **R:** *Are those other customer ratings?*
> **P:** *These are other buyer's ratings yeah. So see here one's got a*
> *damaged purchase but they received an exchange. So its, yeah if I*
> *was going to buy a digital camera I would buy from this site.*
> *(Anthony)*

This participant obtained various kinds of information about a product (digital camera) from a third-party Website (*amazon.com*). He gathered or expected to have "Price," "Availability (including refurbished ones)," "Warranty," "Ease to operate,"

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"Seller's reliability," and so forth. Any single mass medium can hardly carry all this information. The variety of product information consumers expect to get on the Web is different from other mass media.

Participants do not always seek "Good" information, which sheds positive light on the product (See also "Reliable"). They, sometimes, wanted to see some hidden sides of products they are interested in. As emerged in the example above, other consumers' thoughts and opinions (Word-of-Mouth on the Web) are considered as a critical factor, and the customer review may contain negative thoughts about products as well as praise. *Anthony*, in the following case, showed how important negative information is to him and how it affected his thoughts about products and purchase decisions.

> ***R:*** *All right, why are you looking for bad points?*
> ***P:*** *Because you're looking for a reason not to buy it. Because you're interested you know of course in buying a camera but you'd be looking for reasons not to buy it so where I would look first would the bad points. I wouldn't look at the good points because I'm sure there's a lot of them. I would look to see why I wouldn't buy it.*
> ***R:*** *Is the bad point description one of your reasons to see the customer evaluation? Do you think the bad points can be seen in the editorial review?*
> ***P:*** *No. I think just the customer evaluation.*
> *(Anthony)*

With this example, a clear difference between "Customer review" and "Editorial Review (Third-party reviews or descriptions)" is disclosed. Two-sided product information including positive and negative aspects can be important for consumers and it is available not in "Customer review" but "Editorial Review." More differences will be described in "Reliable & Honest" section.

There was a controversy about the "Informative" nature of WIA formats, especially online stores and Corporate Websites that could be framed as a question: "Do the Web and WIA generally offer enough product information for consumers' purchase decisions?" This controversy was seen within a participant (across different contexts such as product categories) as well as across different participants.

> **R:** *Okay, to this point, you looked at the top and some bathing suits and sandals. These three pieces you can buy but do you think that you kinda have a full understanding about these products? The sandals and tops?*
> **P:** *I have enough to make an informed decision.*
> **R:** *Uh hum.*
> **P:** *For example, let me show you something here. You look at these sandals. The very first thing I would look at would be, I have worn enough sandals to know that which type is gonna cut my toe, which is gonna give me a blister and this type is gonna be fine because its double wrapped as you can see here and its got a slight wedge, its really pretty, but this is where its gonna be comfortable. Because its got that sort of silky ribbon and its gonna bend to my foot. So this would be a shoe that I would be interested in buying and I can tell from the photographs that I would.*
>
> *(Lauren)*

Lauren, in this case, shows that the product information on an online store could satisfy her information need for purchase. Although praising the online store for its informativeness for her clothes purchase, she complained, in the following case, about the Web's incapability to keep her from getting more "live" information such as touching, seeing, and the like. See the negative side below.

> **P:** *When I'm sitting with Peter and he goes online to look at electronics. I'm not sure I like that that much when we're looking at stereo equipment because I'd rather see it on a table in a store to see how big it is, how deep it is, how heavy it is. I can't really get enough of the product information online for high- ticket items like stereo equipment. And, we've made a lot of mistakes online with electronics.*

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R: Oh, why?

P: Oh Peter just wow I love it, it's perfect, it's just what we need. You know? He made me order this RAM last week and then when it came in he said I forgot I can't put in two different sizes they have to be equal size.

R: RAM memory?

P: Yeah, so we had to send it back, it had to be wrapped up, I had to pay for postage and had to reorder it, it had to be credited to my credit card. So to me, not having a sales person there was a big negative. Because if we had gone to someplace like Best Buy and walked in and said we wanna upgrade the RAM. He would have said, hopefully he would have said, well how much do you have now because its gotta be the same. So we have a lot of mistakes when we buy stuff that Peter thinks he knows about. It's different with clothes. It's not that hard with clothes. But when you get into big- ticket items, now that's a little different. You know I would not buy a car on the Internet. I'm like that's one of those things you wanna drive around the block you wanna feel the clutch.

(Lauren)

In the first example about the purchase of sandal, she clarified why she could reach informed decision of purchase without more information. As she said, she had enough experiences ("*I have worn enough sandals to know")* about sandals and clothes. However, she showed weak confidence about computer equipment in the second case so that she usually got some help from her son. Although her expert assistant, *Peter*, could make those negative experiences in part, she was not satisfied with product information about computer equipment offered by online stores. She introduced a critical difference between two cases: "Big-ticket (expensive product)" or not. More expensive (or highly risky) products should be observed in their "live" status on retail stores rather than on the Web where "live" experience with products is not possible.

Nonetheless, the "Informative" dimension is not always good for consumers. Each participant has his (her) own expectation of informativeness on the Web. While the majority showed higher desires to have deeper and wider product information, some did

not want to have excessive amounts of information they had not intended. The optimal amount of information varied by participants. They, sometimes, did not intend to have excessive amounts of information, while other times they can hardly manage the product information beyond a certain amount. Briefly, the product information, which is not relevant to their specific needs can be useless and not "Informative" (Also see "Relevant").

> **R:** *Some other Websites can provide you with description of movies or characters or stories. Don't you think that it is important to have other sorts of information?*
> **P:** *Um, the other information may be important, but usually when I want to see a movie I know what it's about and usually who the characters are in it so, I don't need that.*
> *(Liz)*

This participant usually checked a Website offering information about movies and the timetable of regional theater where she could watch the movie she was interested in. She did not want to have further information such as movie reviews or background information. As shown in the following example, a great deal of information about various products makes them feel unmanageable (See also in "Controllable"). They wanted the Web in general to have optimal amount of information. A large amount of overloading information is regarded as useless as shown in the following example.

> **P:** *Probably you would get more product information off the Internet than you would in a magazine... I mean more specific if you were looking for something more specific*
> **R:** *Is it good?*
> **P:** *Right it is good.*
> **R:** *Okay. Some people complain about the information coming from the Internet, what do you think about that?*
> **P:** *Usually when I'm bombarded with a lot of information, I just look for you know key words that that's specific to what I'm looking for*

*and then I'll click on that so I don't spend a whole lot of time
reading the whole thing.*
(Lori)

The two distinctive motives of Web use, "Fun" and "Informative," can be pursued
simultaneously. In fact, they are sometimes mixed together. Specifically, information-
seeking and gathering is "Fun" for participants under some contexts. Gathering or giving
product information is "Fun" (See also "Fun").

R: *What do you feel about posting your messages about any kinds of
          books?*
P: *It gives me pleasure to tell other people what I think of a particular
          book. Ordinarily I don't like bad things about the books. The only
          place I ever read bad reviews was on that Challendo book.*
(Jacob)

R: *When you search the information about those products, do you feel
      you are enjoying that?*
P: *Oh, Yes, I do. I enjoy it much. I know it's time-consuming
      sometimes when you don't know where you're headed, but I like it.*
(Jasmine)

Moreover, during the navigation, participant often showed dynamic switching
between "Fun" and "Information seeking" motives. See the following example.

R: *Okay, usually do you think that you intentionally search for
          product information or do you just go to accidentally search for
          information?*
P: *Uh, sometimes I'm going on just specifically for information as of
          late I've been going around to some like different car sites and car
          dealerships and Consumer Reports Kelly Blue Book and things
          looking for different things on cars a lot 'cos I'm you know gonna
          graduate in the fall and I want a new car just kinda looking around
          for things like that and um, sometimes I don't go for information
          I'm just kinda going to look for fun you know*
R: *Just fun?*
P: *Just fun, you know just kinda surfing around but if it something
          pops in my head I'll kinda start looking for something like the cars
          um sometimes I'm just looking around for cool cars and then I'll*

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> *look around for something I'd like to buy and so I'm looking at*
> *specs on it and how much it might cost or auctions on it so.*
> *(David)*

This "motive-change" often happened during their navigations within a single Website as well as across various sites. The Websites containing a variety of contents could drive participants to change their initial purposes of Web navigation. As shown in the following example, "*get sidetracked*" is not unusual but popular phenomenon on the Web.

> **R:**   *Do you experience that your original motives have changed?*
> **P:**   *Perhaps, I get sidetracked sometimes. Yes. Sometimes I do get*
> *sidetracked and especially if you visit a big website like*
> *Amazon.com. When it's a travel website your slightly limited but if*
> *it's a large website such as Amazon I get sidetracked a lot because*
> *I will look on the side for example and there will be a special or a*
> *deal and then I will find myself clicking on that link.*
> *(Jasmine)*

"Informative" is a critical component of WIA and takes a role to evaluate WIA. Because the Web is regarded as more informative than other mass media, some WIA formats such as corporate and third-party Websites are considered more informative than other formats as well as product information in other media. A great deal of information about various products does not always lead to consumers' positive responses. Their needs can be satisfied with certain amount and variety of product information. What they can hardly manage is not preferable. The following theme, "Easy," explains how consumers can feel positive when they can handle "Informative" contents of WIA.

Easy

Themes: Easy to Find, Efficient, Don't' Have to

> **R:**   *Do you like this site? Can you tell the reason why you like this site*
> *[priceline.com]?*

P: *Yeah I do. It is just easy to go through. It takes you through it step by step and cause you have lots of different options like in what time of the day you would like to leave and come back and I like that because a lot of times you know its hard to really see what if available.*

(*Sarah*)

This category represents positive side of WIA. The subject of "Easy" usually is about how to manage WIA (Figure 7). This includes how to reject undesired WIAs, how to navigate through Websites to find product information, how to understand some WIA contents, and so forth. Most participants expressed high self-confidences about how to deal with various contents on the Web in general and this self-confidence was also easily applied to WIA.

.....because I have a pretty good skill how to find information I need so I will use my search skill using search engine….not randomly. I don't want to do that [clicking banners]. You know… that's time wasting. For me…maybe some people can get some helps but I can't (Joshua).

R: *Does this site offer from a most relevant to the least relevant?*
P: *Yeah. Yeah. I know all search engines do but now I'm very familiar with this one and it wouldn't even cross my mind to if I couldn't find something on this I wouldn't even look at another search engine 'cos I know if it's not here it's not anywhere.*
(*Emily*)

I pretty much know what I'm going to look for....so then you can either put on the lyrics or....(Joseph)

Participants found it "Easy" to handle a variety of WIA formats, regardless of whether they accept or reject the message. What is easy is not the WIA message itself, but the way to handle WIA. Various cases showed that they felt seeking for product information was easy.

R: *Don't you feel you need to see it with your own eyes?*

Real-Time Communication

Controllable

Relevant

+

+

+

EASY
- Easy to Find
- Don't Have to
- Efficient

Easy to Find
Information & Efficient

Easy to
Understand

- Easy to Reject
- Some Interstitials are
not easy to reject

Customer
Review

Websites

Corporate
Third-Party

Traditional
WIA Formats

Note) Thick lines between the category and formats represent stronger association.

< Figure 7> Easy – Relating Themes and WIA Formats

P: *No…I think I am much better in scrutinizing the product on the Internet….*
(Joshua)

It is very easy for them to reject WIA formats with simple ignorance. As described, participants normally reject traditional WIA formats. Although they did not literally refer to "Easy" when rejecting (clicking off pop-ups or ignoring banners with or without recognitions), it seemed very easy for them to reject those traditional WIA formats quickly. Participants, in most cases, did not hesitate to reject those WIA formats.

As shown in <Figure 7>, some of other theme categories had strong relationships with "Easy." "Controllable" features and functions helped participants feel that it was "Easy" to get product information they seek. They did not feel "Easy" with the WIA format or the Web itself but participants made themselves feel easy with controlling the content they wanted to fit their needs.

R: *Oh, Do you like that kind of function [requesting questions by email]?*
P: *Yeah it helped… it helped out a whole lot I mean made everything easier I didn't have to keep you know going back and keep asking about it. It made everything a lot easier for me. I really don't use the Internet that much for just for like pleasure it's usually for a purpose.*
(Liz)

Surely, this "Controllable" characteristic is inherent in the Web in general. Participants thought that their search for product information was much easier than random searching with other sources (e.g., "hearing commercials").

R: *Why do you prefer to get online than other media?*
P: *Well, just because you can get more information off the Internet if you want to. Instead of just hearing commercials or searching around for something about a product you can get on the Internet and find it right then. That's the main reason.*
(Anthony)

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One of their popular thoughts about the Web and their product information seeking on the Web was "Efficient," which represented "No Time Delay (See "Real-Time Communications" for detail) " as well as "Easy." Like the cases in other categories, participants also brought up the theme of "Easy" when comparing the Web with other media, especially to praise the benefit of the Web. Generally, they found it much easier to get product information with the Web than with other media and this would be one of the most important reasons for them to go online when they need product information. They often compared the Web navigation with "*Driving to All Local Stores.*"

> ***R:*** *Are the information from the Web about the companies or products*
> *much different from information from other sources such as*
> *people, newspapers, magazines, or TV?*
> ***P:*** *I don't think it's different. They are basically same thing, but you*
> *can find those information more efficiently (in the Internet).*
> (*Joshua*)
>
> *When you want to find something its, you know you can go. It's easier*
> *than going to the library and looking up a book about it. You just point*
> *and click (Anthony).*

Specifically, participants often mentioned how easy and efficient they could feel about their online shopping as compared with the shopping at retail stores. The efficiency the Web provides is about "Fast" process of consumers getting product information and purchasing products. As shown in following examples, "No Time Delay" or "Fast to Find" is appreciated by consumers for the Web as compared with other media.

> ***R:*** *Do you think that the product information you got from the*
> *Internet is better than the information from other sources?*
> ***P:*** *No, no I just think it's easier.*
> ***R:*** *Only easier, what do you mean easy?*
> ***P:*** *I don't have to get in the car and I don't have to drive to, I don't*
> *have to wander around in departments where I don't know where I*
> *am. I go online and I quickly say all I want to look at are the tall*
> *things. Only related to tall. If I go to the store, the tall clothes are*

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mixed in next to the petites, next to the fat, next to the short, next to the juniors and its exhausting when I have to go one at a time and look at clothes.
(*Lauren*)

R: *Could you compare the product information searching on the Internet with in other resources?*
P: *I will prefer to do it on my computer from my house rather than driving all over town and different places. Its not as like if I don't get much opinionated information as you would if you actually talk to a person but just general information like you know if you are trying to buy a video recorder in BestBuy, you can just look up on the Internet to find out all you need to know. And you can need more when you go down there and check it out.*
(*Sarah*)

In fact, "Fast to Find Information" and "Fast to Buy" are strong benefits of WIA to participants as compared to other media and these lead to "Convenient" and "Easy." Participants, as revealed above, liked to compare the Web navigation to search for product information with visiting multiple local stores when praising the Web's efficiency.

R: *Have you ever purchased something from the Internet?*
P: *Oh, yes…a couple of…camcorder from amazon.com, and I bought phone cards, too. When I pay something now, I use the Internet a lot…now I can look at my bank account from the Internet and I can transfer from my checking account to the saving account I can do that. Very convenient and fast. If I have to do it using the bank, at least 30 minutes to one hour I have spend. Now it's a five minute, I can compare same product in different sizes if I have to go to Circuit City, BestBuy, Walmart and so forth, think about it…at least 5 hours. I can do it in 30 minutes. It's so time efficient …*
(*Joshua*)

I can find anything I want to find in a matter of a couple seconds or a couple minutes (Lori).

…… it makes it easier for me and it's quick and I get good material very quickly (William)

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"Quick finding" was transformed to "Easy" in many cases. Specifically, as compared with other mass media, the Web functioned as a "Personalized" or "Individualized" medium for participants to satisfy their specific information needs (See "Controllable"). They did not have to "Wait for (Stay tuned)" until the exact information they wanted to get was provided on the Web.

> *TV will give the whole country and so it will go by section and another section.....so, it might be fifteen minutes before you actually see this actual forecast that you're looking for.....So, I can just go straight to this and see it and print it out and have it (Rachel).*

Especially, corporate Websites were praised due to their collection of all information about the products participants expected to find. Because every corporate Website is expected to have detailed information about the product each company has, consumers can easily expect what kinds of information they may see within a certain corporate Website. Instead of searching around different sources and several Websites, corporate Websites let consumers find the product information they want with ease.

> *R:*   *Okay, do you think the product information from the Web is pretty much different from the kind of information from any other sources?*
> *P:*   *I don't think so. I think a lot of it is the same.*
> *R:*   *Any differences?*
> *P:*   *It's easier to access. That's definitely a difference. A lot of time there is a lot more options like uh, with the coke's Website. I keep going back to that. They've got their information about their company. They've even got their annual report online, whereas I'd have to go to many different sources to find out all that information.*
> (*Jessica*)

As exemplified before, some participants liked to visit movie-related Websites and to find some information about the movie they wanted to watch or liked. The

following participant critically compared his information checking at the Website offering information about movies with actual information gathering by calling several local theaters. To him, it was not easy to call multiple local theaters and listen to some unwanted messages in order to find the specific information he wanted to have – which theater aired the movie at what time. Instead, he chose to go to the Website, which made it "Easy" to find the information without waiting.

> **R:**   *If you were going to, do you usually check the times?*
> **P:**   *Yeah, yeah if I 'cos I don't subscribe to the newspaper and so I*
>   *don't get and it's just as easy to do this than have to call them and*
>   *listen to a message and I can just look and see what showtimes it*
>   *is, they got, like right here I click on this and see who's in it and it*
>   *shows who is all in the movie*
> (*Ryan*)

Some participants also liked to visit the Websites operated by the retailers, which they could use to access local stores. Instead of going to local stores, they wanted to have previews. They even reviewed online store advertisements, which are similar to offline ads (e.g., free-standing inserts). They wanted to "Be-Ready-to-Buy" with sufficient information about their products before making actual purchases either at a local store or at an online store.

> **R:**   *One more question, why do you like this site?*
> **P:**   *Uh, well, I like this site because you know I don't really have to,*
>   *Best Buy's a ways from my house and I don't have to I don't get*
>   *the papers so I can come on here and look at their weekly ads and*
>   *things like that um, and just so I don't have to drive to the store*
>   *you know I like to actually play with all the things and stuff like*
>   *they advertise on their commercials which is really fun to do but,*
>   *on their Website you know I can come they have some stuff they*
>   *have on their Website you know on their Website that they might be*
>   *out of in the store so you can still take a look at them on the*
>   *Website um, you know I can just browse through all the stuff*
>   *without walking around the store I can be eating while I'm uh, on*

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> *the Website looking at some of the stuff so it's plus I can do a lot*
> *more stuff you know than I can go to some other, I can compare*
> *other things from other stores like if I wanted to compare*
> *something at Circuit City I can just go to their Website and*
> *compare with Best Buy rather than going from store to store to*
> *store so*

(*David*)

The theme of "Easy" was highly related to participants' familiarity with Websites they navigated through in the study. As all participants were relatively heavy Web users and were asked to navigate their frequently visited or favorite Websites, they were usually able to find the information they wanted with ease. They already knew what usual contents were in their favorite or frequently visited Websites; therefore, they could skip a lot of content. The content they skipped might be screened based on their prior experiences with each Website.

The concept of "Easy" to access or find the information they want on the Web is applied to the context of specific Websites where product information is available --such as corporate Websites and third-party Websites. In fact, participants' positive thoughts about the Web were often related to the theme of "Easy to Find My Way." With narrower but detailed scope, participants felt some Websites containing product-related messages were "Easy to navigate."

> **R:**   *Okay. What kinds of features do you like within this site?*
> **P:**   *Uh, it's real descriptive. I mean it's easy to navigate around on*
> *like the other sites. Um, what else do I like about it. I like its easy*
> *to find things is the biggest point that I like about it."*

(*Daniel*)

> *I like to go to certain sites. If I'm researching a product I enjoy being able*
> *to like Canon recently came out with a new camera. I wanted to learn*
> *more about it. It was very easy for me to go to Canon's Website and see*
> *everything there that I would see in a brochure which would take me if I*

called Canon and said can you send me a brochure. It would take me a
week or ten days to get it (Chris)

More specific features on Websites could make them "Easy." Visual components (e.g., product pictures) were easier for participants to understand or to process the product information than textual components (e.g., product specification descriptions). See the following example about the *Amazon.com*'s editorial review.

> ***R:*** *That star rating is important to you?*
> ***P:*** *Yeah.*
> ***R:*** *Why is it important to you?*
> ***P:*** *Why?.., because it's a pretty visual way of showing the quality of*
> *the camera instead of typing out a big paragraph about it. It's*
> *easy to understand and it's simple and you can glance at it and see*
> *how good or how bad the camera is.*
> *(Anthony)*

To this participant, the simple "*Star-rating*" on the top of editorial review, which usually has a couple of long paragraphs, functioned as a "Snapshot" to simplify the quality of a product.

The theme of "Easy" represented several different contexts: Getting product information on the Web in general, Finding product information within WIA formats, Purchasing products on the Web, Understanding product information provided in WIA (e.g., corporate Websites and Third-Party Websites), etc. "Controllable" features and "Fast (Real-Time Communication)" process made them feel "Easy," which produces positive responses. Although their feeling of "Easy" with Websites they navigated seemed to result from their familiarity with those Websites, their self-confidence with handling the Web in general showed that they would feel "Easy" with other material on the Web they did not meet. Other relating themes, "Real-Time Communication,"

"Controllable," and "Relevant," proved to help consumers feel "Easy" in handling WIA messages.

Relevant

Themes: Interested, Relevant, Serving Purposes

> **R:** *Why have you never clicked them?*
> **P:** *I am not interested in. What was it?….*
> (Joshua)

Regardless of whether messages are "Informative" or "Fun (enjoyable)," participants showed strong preference for WIA messages, which are "Relevant" to them. Similarly, they also indicated that they were "Interested" in the "Relevant" content. As previously described, their initial navigation behaviors were somewhat goal-directed; therefore, their purposes of navigations were quick and straightforward to reach their goals (e.g., finding the specific information, buying a product, reviewing articles, etc.). In this process, what is "Relevant" to their initial goals could be one of the most important criteria for them to accept (e.g., paying attention, reading, watching, etc.). On the other side, what are not "Relevant" to their navigation purposes were easily rejected (e.g., ignored, clicked off, skipped, etc.).

As shown in <Figure 8>, a variety of theme categories and WIA formats emerged as related to the "Relevant" thematic category. Most traditional WIA formats, including commercial emails, were regarded not "Relevant," while others were preferred due to their relevancy. Other accompanying themes are represented in this section.

> **R:** *Do you usually get information about movies from this site?*
> **P:** *Well, um, when I looked the other day I couldn't find anything that told me the movie times and I'm not really interested in what other people have to say about the movies I'm just interested in like you know like when they are or whatever and I'm not sure how to find that so*

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< Figure 8 > Relevant – Relating Themes and WIA Formats

> ***R:*** *Are you satisfied with the information about movies here?*
> ***P:*** *No I'm not. Because it doesn't serve the purpose that I'm looking for*
> ***R:*** *Do you usually go to another site to find more information about movies?*
> ***P:*** *Uh huh.*
> ***R:*** *What kinds of sites?*
> ***P:*** *First I would go to Google.com and then I would…*
> ***R:*** *Could you tell me about why you were not satisfied with the information from Knox News-Sentinel?*
> ***P:*** *I wasn't satisfied about the information on the newspaper's Website because what I was looking for in the movies was the um, the time and the specific movie theatre*
>
> *(Liz)*

This example also shows an aspect of "Goal-oriented" navigation. Because participants often use the Web to serve their specific purposes, they usually want to find specific content satisfying their personal needs. Even customer reviewers, in which many participants showed high interest, are not relevant to this participant. Anything not serving her purpose does not attract and satisfy her.

This participant revealed that this judgment of relevancy about WIA were very strict. She was interested in some movies; however, general information without "the time and the specific movie theatre" available on a newspaper Website is not relevant to her. Thus, the "Relevant" contents often are related to participants' predetermined goals.

> *The way a day or two ago, I hadn't read closely, and I am glancing more specifically what is taking about. And it looks like it's got an internal link here and takes to NASA. Takes to NASA, information packet. I won't read this. If I were going to this conference, I might read this. But, I don't think I will. Okay. Pretty much what I do there (Jacob).*

This participant also shows how he screened a variety of information on his favorite Website. He reasoned why he did not want to follow the link to an organization's Website. Because the link was for certain target groups, who planned to join in a

conference, he thought that it was not "Relevant" to him and decided not to go further with it. On the other hand, he assumed that he could follow the link if he planned to go to the conference. This shows that relevancy is very context-bound and flexible.

The power of "Relevant" was clearly confirmed in cases for which traditional WIA formats were accepted. Although banners and pop-ups were usually "Annoying" formats, consumers would accept them if they were "Relevant."

> **R:** *So, if you are interested in a few that popped up, why have they interested you?*
>
> **P:** *Um, sometimes some have like had, well if it has a like usually it says click on the shoot the monkey to win a hundred dollars and it tells you some weird thing, like I don't do that but if it has something like if I was on a Dodge Webpage the other day had a picture of a Viper and said click here you know like a different like a click this Dodge's it's like a Dodge Website for like a different dealership or something and you click there and it went to uh, it's like a local it's a local thing around here from where I was at so I clicked on it and it had a uh you know they had Vipers and different things so then I started clicking around that because it's a different dealership but it had a little banner ad.*
>
> **R:** *Was it on a Dodge's company Website?*
>
> **P:** *Uh, it was on I typed in my zip-code for something on Dodge's Website and when I did that it popped up with some banner ads for different things like different Dodge dealerships like Burgin Dodge and things like that*
>
> **R:** *Why did you go to the Dodge Website?*
>
> **P:** *Uh, I was looking, well at the time I was looking I love Vipers and I was looking at some of the new things that Dodge had on there on the new car show the new Detroit Auto Show and uh, so then it had the thing where you can build your own Ram and stuff have it, and click in the Website and it had different dealerships and things that come up where you can, it had a like a Burgin Dodge popup ad that came on there and some things.*
>
> **R:** *Do you enjoy seeing that kind of advertising or does it annoy you, or do you think it gives you some information about your future purchase?*
>
> **P:** *Um,*
>
> **R:** *Both?*
>
> **P:** *Both, yeah. Really.*
>
> (*David*)

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Two distinctive pop-up ads this participant viewed unveiled the power of relevancy. Interestingly, it was not necessary for this participant to have a strong need to purchase when he followed the pop-up. Often times, it is enjoyable to get "Relevant" product information. In fact, the two opposite motives of Web usage in the literature seemed to be collapsed in this case. The motives of "Entertainment" and "Information seeking" are simultaneously pursued (Also see previous section of "Informative").

> **R:** *Do you read the headline news [at netscape.com]?*
> **P:** *Yeah the head line news mainly to see what's going on. I just kind a browse here to see sometimes there is fashion or style stuff I read about that.*
> **R:** *About the current fashion trends or some stories about trend?*
> **P:** *Yeah. Also let me see. Especially this article is interesting that article isn't it. I always click like get away from the advertisements.*
> *(Grace)*

Other categories also overlapped with "Relevant" and they were "Informative," "Real-Time Communication," "Fun," "Controllable," and so forth. The following example shows that "Relevant" contents could lead a participant to involve a further step of information seeking (following a link to a corporate Website) with the expectation of getting more updated and detailed information.

> **R:** *Has all the information provided from Best Buy and eBay and your search improved your knowledge about the product?*
> **P:** *I think it has 'cos like I'm clicking on you know a surround sound system that I wanted to you know think about buying a lot of times it'll tell me sometimes it'll have links to like Yamaha's homepage or something like that which might be interesting to me 'cos then I can click on it and see what kind of new technologies they're coming out with you know if they might have something that you can add on to your system later on uh, whereas somebody in the store you know might not know that um, whereas on the Website I can see all the specs and stuff and I still have to go to the store to*

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> *look at but um, it might have links or something else that'll tell me*
> *more information about the product than somebody in the store.*
>
> (*David*)

The meaning of "Relevant" is not simple enough to understand. Although the theme of "Relevant" seems very attractive to advertisers or marketers, the concept of "Relevant" is not straightforward enough for advertisers to control and to predict. For example as shown in the following case, many search engine Websites such as *Yahoo!* utilize the function of relevancy. In fact, after submitting search terms, banners, pop-ups or links to other Websites, which are relevant to the search term, are provided in the following "Result" page. For example, after entering the search term of "desktop" in the *Yahoo!*'s search box, an upper banner for *HP* and side banner for *uBid*'s laptop computer sales could be seen in the following Webpage. Nevertheless, this "advertiser-oriented" relevancy does not mean "Relevant" to consumers in most cases. See the following case.

> ***R:*** *What are they?*
> ***P:*** *I presume that these guys are just a sponsored links and that they*
> *have requested that when this word or this word comes up*
> ***R:*** *From relevant companies?*
> ***P:*** *Yeah, and that's never going to be of use to me because of what I*
> *do and what I'm looking for so I never click on anything like that*
>
> (*Emily*)

On the contrary, another type of advertisers' (or sellers') use of relevancy was "Relevant" to participants. Some online stores show some "Related" items depending on which product a customer searches for. For example, if a customer selects to view a digital camcorder on an online store, the subsequent Webpage is likely to show peripheral accessories relating to the digital camcorder as well as detailed description of the digital camcorder. This advertisers' version of relevancy may be seen as "Relevant" by

consumers, while the related banners and pop-ups in search engines might not. See the following example.

> **R:** *When you make your decision to buy something like this what kinds of message do you read here? Just seeing photo only?*
> **P:** *No, I look at this stuff, you might also like ….*
> **R:** *Oh.*
> **P:** *So I look at other stuff like the shoes that go with it because they do a good job of putting some other things in there that I might like.*
> **R:** *As combinations?*
> **P:** *Yeah, so I have found that that works really well. They do a real good job of that.*
> (*Lauren*)

In fact, regardless of the content, consumers tend to ignore traditional WIA formats (Also see "Annoying" section), although there are a few exceptions such as *Dodge* case described before. They liked to think that their information search results would be better than any traditional WIA formats. As described before, their self-confidence about their Web-navigation ability seems also related to this. See the following case.

> **R:** *What do you think about your intentional selection of information? Do you spend a lot of time to find the exact information that you want?*
> **P:** *Yeah..*
> **R:** *Don't you see other contents you didn't want?*
> **P:** *Uh huh. Well the only example that I can think of about the Internet having things that I'm not interested in 'cos I just don't go to things that I'm not, you know those pop-ups advertisements that yeah, so*
> (*Ryan*)

In this example, "Controllable" emerged as related to "Relevant." To this participant, everything he has faced on the Web is "Relevant" to him, because he could ignore most non-relevant content except for "Intrusive" WIA formats. Apparently, there

could be much irrelevant content on the Web; however, consumers may think that most

content they see are under their control. Thus, what is not "Relevant" can be what is not

wanted and less "Controllable."

> ***R:*** *What kinds of information do you read here? The editorial review?*
> ***P:*** *Lots of information, I wouldn't read that.*
> ***R:*** *How about the next messages? The customer review.*
> ***P:*** *That's what I would be interested in reading*
> (*Daniel*)

The main reason for this participant to prefer the customer review to editorial

review is based on "Relevant (Interested)." What he was interested in was accepted,

whereas what he was not interested in was rejected.

"Relevant" takes an important role to accept or to reject various WIA formats.

Even most "Annoying" WIA formats could be accepted if they were highly "Relevant" in

some cases, while less-"Annoying" formats (e.g., Corporate Websites) could be rejected

if they were less "Relevant." Nevertheless, "Relevant" should be viewed from

consumers' perspective as verified in some cases.

Controllable

Themes: Controllable, Manageable, Choice, Variety, Customizable, Personalized

> ***R:*** *Why do you like this site?*
> ***P:*** *Because it it's full of art schools and it can narrow my search*
> *down and just give me a list of schools that are what I'm looking*
> *for instead of having to just to search blindlessly.*
> (*Liz*)

This category represents participants' thoughts about WIA's aspects that allow or

disallow them to control its content (Figure 9). In most cases, participants showed

positive responses to "Controllable" content, while yielding negative responses to less

"Controllable" ones as described in the "Annoying" section. In fact, they showed, during

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< Figure 9 > Controllable – Relating Themes and WIA Formats

their navigation, strong negative feelings about elements of the Web that restricted their control and interrupted their navigation. This phenomenon is well found in various contexts.

"Controllable" has strong relationships with some of other theme categories including "Intrusive," "Annoying," "Informative," "Easy," "Informative," and so forth. Briefly, what is more "Intrusive" means less "Controllable" and makes the experience more "Annoying." "Controllable" contents make consumers' feel "Easy," and excessive "Informative" content is less "Controllable." Like other themes, "Controllable" cannot be understood without consumers' perspectives. In fact, what is "Controllable" and what is not "Controllable" vary by people and contexts. See the following two contrasting examples.

> **R:** *Okay, how about the uh, quality of information from this site?*
> **P:** *It's good. You can get a brief like a brief version of this or you can get like this is the like the full length or whatever.*

(*Rachel*)

> **R:** *With some big screen ads, you cannot control or exit out for a few seconds. Did you experience that? What do you feel about that?*
> **P:** *I dislike that. Viewers should have to sit there and look thru or download or a certain clip start to play but I don't know. I dislike it it's taking up the viewers time and you can't get rid of it just doesn't seem ethical*

(*William*)

The "Controllable," in many cases, meant "Having many options (or choices)." Especially, searching and gathering product information during online purchase process show how participants control what they look for. The contents customized by consumers also lead to positive responses. Based on their personal preferences - "Relevant" in most

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cases -, they often used this "Customizable" function to pick the contents "Relevant" to them.

> *Look great. Pick a color and size. Okay, and I love yellow, yellow's my favorite color, so that would be the first thing I'd notice. See, and now they have, they've changed this over here so I'd look at this tankini because its yellow. So color draws me in a lot when I'm looking at this stuff. That's pretty (Lauren)*

> *I like it because I can get news headlines, I can check my stock markets, I can check my favorite sports teams, my weather, everything on one place and as you said I can set at the bottom I can change what I see. They have content for just about anything. I have everything on one page and I don't have to go surfing here and there to find it (Daniel).*

As observed during the navigation sessions, most participants were good at handling their Websites' content and they also thought that they were skillful (Self-Confident). This concept emerged when they could customize the contents with a variety of choices Websites provided. The following example shows how a participant was good at customizing the content (information about automobile purchase) provided by a third-party Website in order to find the specific product information he wanted.

> **R:** *Okay. Could you tell me about your interest in cars that you get information about cars?*
> **P:** *Uh, yeah. I went to a site called Auto Trader dot com and uh, they've got a system that I mean somehow you type in the your zipcode and the area the radius that you would wish to travel like say, you want Knoxville and everything in a 100 mile radius and they'll give you all the cars for sale within that 100 mile radius and you can you can go to the you can look at a picture of the car a lot of times and you can and it always tells you about the cars and how much it costs*
> *(Ryan)*

In order to control and manage the content with ease, sophisticated "search" functions are preferred. The following example about online classifieds for apartments shows how the step-by-step narrow-down search function works.

*So it says choose an area and I need the UT area so I click UT, I want 2
bedrooms step three I'm going to click all price ranges and search. And
this is the apartments index. I know what College Park is and I know what
Volunteer Studios is and…(Liz).*

However, as noted in "Informative," the variety of options and information is not always good. Another participant complained about information overload. What is perceived as a "Controllable" amount of information varies by individual preference.

*I do think it's hard to maneuver around, as there is so much stuff (Sarah at
Priceline.com)*

Often, participants liked to compare the Web with other information sources in terms of how easily they could control and manage content. For example, although person-to-person communication seems quite interactive, they felt that they could hardly control the information sources, the persons. The product information on the Web is easier for them to control (Also See "Easy").

R: *Is the information from the Web about the companies or products
much different from information from other sources such as
people, newspapers, magazines, or TV?*

P: *I don't think it's different. They are basically same thing, but you
can find those information more efficiently on the Internet).....they
are more personalized information. Because if you go to a store,
you have to listen to salepeople's sayings. Even though that's not
the information you are looking for, sometimes you listen… but
here in the Internet I can use whatever. There's no need to do so.*
(*Ashley*)

Ashley showed how personalized acquisition of information could be better achieved on the Web than with sales people. She prefers the sense of total control on the Web to the weak control in visiting the real store.

Participants showed high confidence to manage a great deal of information offered on the Web or Websites. News Websites such as *cnn.com* and *msn.com* usually

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contain a great deal of information, but participants who often visit these sites thought

that they were skillful enough to pick up what they want to and need to read. In fact, their

navigation processes through "information-abundant" Websites were very fast. See the

following articulation.

> **R:** *What do you see here [www.cnn.com]?*
> **P:** *No. Scrolling down, scrolling down, scrolling down. Nothing*
> *interesting on this part of it. So, I'm going to scroll back again.*
> *(Anthony)*

In the same vein, as shown in the dialogue above (with *Ashley*), "Customizable"

and "Personalized" emerged as critical. In order to fulfill specific needs, participants

liked to customize their information seeking in advance. The content they usually look at

is considerably selective and customization functions are very popular among them.

> *Yeah, the my yahoo page you can customize. You can go down to the*
> *bottom and you can set up, you can add all kinds of things. Like I have –*
> *all of these are just local theaters so I can see what's playing what time*
> *things like that. Back up here I have the weather…..(Joseph)*

> *And you can even look, uh, a couple of months ahead to see what's coming*
> *out in the future. (Tylor).*

> *….. Anyway you can keep going next, next, next and it shows whatever. I*
> *usually – you can limit the search somewhat to show I think you used to be*
> *able to. Oh yeah, to photos only. That will trim it down because I'm not*
> *going to buy if I can't see what it looks like. …..I'm looking first at the*
> *photos and then when I see something that look interesting then I'll read*
> *the text about it (Chris, at Ebay.com).*

"Controllable & Customizable" showed strong negative association with

"Annoying" in many cases. In brief, what participants could hardly control or manage

was likely to make them feel annoyed. In fact, participants expressed strong negative

feelings against what they could not control. Those objects were usually traditional WIA

formats (e.g., banners, pop-ups, interstitials, etc.) and Websites with information overload.

> *It's a Web maybe if I open something it might do it. The Web comes up here and there's no X to get rid of it and if I click here it still doesn't go and it won't let me click into anything else so it's stopping me from doing anything and that really annoys me because the other banners I'll just click out and that's the end of them and also they this Website has a lot of like bookmakers you know bookmakers like a betting shop they'll popup and then when I'm closing out I'll find like ten of them here so each page I've gone onto a new popup has come up and that I find very irritating so (Emily)*

In fact, *Emily* got annoyed because pop-ups ads continuously appeared although she already decided not to follow the pop-up ads in previous pages. Following pages, to her, seemed to ignore her decision. Non-controllable characteristics in the Website – no exit option and continuous popping-up ads – increased her level of annoyance. The following participant clearly expressed what she disliked and why. She wanted the Website and the pop-ups ads to accept her decisions.

> **P:**   *Yeah, I'm still trying to Figure out how to navigate. Click out that box again. A lot of times with their Website you know when your navigating and you go back to the home page that box is going to pop up every time you come back to the home page.*
> **R:**   *How do you feel about that?*
> **P:**   *I don't like it because I've already decided I don't want to see it and it will click up every time I do it. No I didn't want China, I wanted Charleston. That from China? Those are expensive plane tickets. I guess that Knoxville's not on here. No, let's try Chattanooga. I don't know why they have Chattanooga on here and not Knoxville. I don't believe they have Chattanooga either. Odd. See you can plan the whole vacation. Let me just do a search here and see what we come up with for air travel. This is pretty good.*
> *(Jessica)*

As exemplified before, this continuous appearance of pop-ups, although being clicked off at the first appearance, makes consumers feel they are losing their control over navigation. The "Sucked in this whirlpool" happens frequently and is the major reason consumers were reluctant to accept banners and pop-ups and disliked them.

> *I don't even look at it because once you click on one of those banners all these other things start popping up and you get sucked into this whirlpool (Anthony).*
>
> *Yeah, if I can find what I'm looking for, if I can't that's really annoying to me. Or if I get bogged down in popup ads, I hate that (Tom).*

The most "Annoying" and "Intrusive" format, the interstitial, also made participants feel most out of control. There are different types of interstitials in terms of their levels of "controllability." Most of them allow people to exit immediately (by providing exit or close button), while others do not provide any methods to exit. The latter is less controllable than the former, and participants also thought so. A participant in the following example used an extreme method to exit from this highly uncontrollable interstitial.

> **P:** *And uh, so yeah you're almost and it's usually the whole ad and you if clicking on it accidentally you know just thinking things that you're going you're going to the site that you wanted to and you accidentally click on it. It takes you to a whole another place and….*
>
> **R:** *Did you see any kind of the whole screen ads, which did not allow you to click X exit button?*
>
> **P:** *Yeah I have seen one.*
>
> **R:** *So in that case,*
>
> **P:** *Uh, I pushed uh control alt delete and uh*
>
> **R:** *Oh really?*
>
> **P:** *And uh, closed it through that*
>
> *(Ryan)*

Interestingly, this participant decided to close his Web browser instead of waiting for the interstitial to be gone. He did not want to wait for the interstitial disappearing automatically, so used an extreme method to get rid of it. This very active rejection of WIA format also confirms how much "Uncontrollable" WIA formats are disfavored. The following case also shows why interstitials without exit options could be the most "Annoying" objects. He even thought that the advertiser should be remembered, so that he could maintain an unfavorable attitude toward the company for a long time.

> ***R:*** *Were you able to delete the full screen ad [an interstitial this participant previously experienced]?*
> ***P:*** *There are many kinds of….you know…full screen ads…sometimes I can, but sometimes I couldn't so….*
> ***R:*** *If you couldn't…*
> ***P:*** *I have to wait and look at but…I am more angry. My angry…. it's far much bigger than the notice of the product they are advertising. I couldn't remember…I should remember but I don't think I remember.*
> *(Joshua)*

Regarding the control over what they did not need, usually pop-ups, an interesting metaphor was provided by the following participant. She compared the control over pop-up ads with handling ringing telephone as following.

> *I always just click out of it I mean I wouldn't if you click this button you win a million dollars I wouldn't click it I mean but find out if some people have that feeling that they have to well let's just see what it's about I don't have that like if my telephone rings and I miss it. It doesn't freak me out I let it go to the machine and the people that have to know who it was who was on the phone I it doesn't bother me so you might say if you click on this you'll get a million dollars just for clicking I would never click because I just don't believe it's advertising and it's probably going to create some cookie and I don't know some virus or something (Emily)*

Before accepting the message in both cases (picking up the phone and clicking through the pop-up), she has a perfect control over them. It seems very easy to control

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pop-up ads in most case, although they experienced somewhat uncontrollable occurrences as they felt "Annoyance" for continuing popping-up ads. The problem should appear after accepting the messages, but she knows this is what most other consumers do.

"Controllable" is a critical component of interactivity, thus is central to the Web. It is considerably important to consumers that they be able to control WIA messages upon getting exposed. This was related to the overall preference of WIA format and messages contained. In fact, what is less "Controllable" yielded "Annoying," while what is more "Controllable" led to "Easy" experiences. Providing numerous options and information can be considered "Controllable" content; however, overloaded information and options, as reviewed in "Informative" section, were confirmed "Uncontrollable," which led to negative responses. Another typical component of interactivity is presented in the following section.

Real-Time Communication

Themes: Tell Me, Conversation, Live, Fast, Updated

> **R:** *If you have a need to buy something?*
> **P:** *Yes, and also what's interesting about this is. Because I use yahoo for my email probably but I guess you could do it with any email. If there is something specific I am interested in I can set this up so that anytime a new item with a key word, like I was looking at one time for a Nikon camera so I can punch in keywords Nikon and tell it to email me anytime*
> *(Chris)*

As one of the most distinctive characteristics of the Web, "Real-Time Communication" is perceived as an important feature of WIA. It represents how WIA messages are transferred to consumers: "Two-way communication" with short or no "Time Delay" (Figure 10).

< Figure 10 > Real-Time Communication – Relating Themes and WIA Formats

Participants considered that some WIA messages were not viewed but talked to them in "Interactive" ways, and this "Interactive" way represented "Real-Time Communication."

This category has close relationships with "Controllable," "Easy," "Fun," and "Relevant" because consumers used "Real-Time Communication" WIA functions with customizing and controlling the contents in order to get "Relevant" information. Most "Real-Time Communication" features with "Customizing" or "Personalizing" functions could make individuals enjoy interacting with WIA formats ("Fun"). Moreover, this "Real- Time Communication" of WIA could expedite consumers' searching for and obtaining product information efficiently ("Easy").

This theme category is also firmly based on the fundamental characteristic of the Web as a medium. Participants thought that the Web is more interactive than any other mass medium and they liked to get product information in interactive ways.

> *R:*   *Do you like to see that kind of video on all your things on the Web?*
> *P:*   *Yeah, I think it brings it more interactive feel to it. Like watching a television screen.*
> *R:*   *Why do you like it?*
> *P:*   *Clicking on all these icons and reading stuff. It's like you know you're interacting with a person on there.*
> *R:*   *With another person?*
> *P:*   *Yeah, it's kind of interesting.*

(*Jessica*)

In this case, "Controlling" proves to implement "Real-Time Communication," and this "Interactive" features make the participant experience "Fun." She felt "Interactive" with reading and watching the video clips showing remodeling a house with a variety of constructing and interior goods. Although it seemed like a television show,

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she felt that she was interacting with a variety of choices provided by "icons." It functioned like VOD (Video-On-Demand), which is one of the most interactive formats available on television.

As shown in this example, the term "Interactive" often emerged to represent the theme of "Real-Time Communication." Another example shows how the Web interactively functions to deliver the message to consumers.

> **P:** *Do you see any differences between product information on the Web and in other media?*
> **R:** *....nobody's ever gonna get out of a TV and talk to you, I mean they will but they won't call you by name. Of course, you've got newscasters that be like call this number for information about this or something, you know, you see that sometimes or on the home shopping networks, you know, you'll have people trying to sell you things, but you know when you get on the Web sometimes like my fiancée, she'll get on the Internet, on MSN Explorer and it'll be like Good Morning Jennifer, I'm like what's going on, you know, I mean when she first got it I was like it's kinda weird, it calls you by your name, but it's kinda a personal way of interacting with the consumer.*
> **P:** *What do you think about that style?*
> **R:** *It's pretty interesting and.... It's a nice way to interact with consumers.*
> *(Andrew)*

In *Andrew*'s case, "Personalized" and interactive communication were used simultaneously. These are two distinctive concepts were used together, and yielded more positive response. He also compared this interactive format with usual formats containing product information on the Web. Personalized two-way communication with consumers would be preferred over other normal formats.

Another example shows how "Controllable" can be used with "Real-Time Communication" feature: email feedback. In an organization's Website, the following participant used an email feedback service to get information about the organization. If a

consumer need to get more information from a Website but it is not available on it or s(he) does not want to navigate to find it, the consumer can email the company to request the information.

> **R:** *Have you ever emailed by using that kind of email thing from this site?*
> **P:** *Yes...... you can put your own name and your own email and then you know they'll email you or send you information.*
> (*Liz*)
>
> **R:** *So, do you think the internet is, as an informational source for products,... is the Internet more convenient than others?*
> **P:** *Yes.*
> **R:** *Hum, in what respect?*
> **P:** *Well, just because more convenient because I mean you get information when you want it instead of waiting. You go get information when you want it instead of waiting for information about any products to come to you.*
> (*Anthony*)

Thanks to the two-way communication capability, they not only read others opinions about products but also post their own opinions. Some participants enjoyed posting their opinions about products on the bulletin board in third-party Websites (e.g., Amazon.com). The participatory behavior on the Web makes them happy (See also "Fun"). The message board about product information on the Web is totally constructed by consumers with "Real-Time Communication" function. Thus, they not only acquire useful information about the products they are interested in but also provide the information to other consumers. The product information on the Web is created and developed by consumers as well as sellers.

> **R:** *What do you feel about other people's following your message (in Amazon.com's customer review board)?*
> **P:** *Oh makes me happy. I am glad to know that I started a conversation that people are interested in ....*
> (*Jacob*)

There are two different kinds of two-way communication in terms of time delay: "Live (synchronous)" and "Have-to-Wait (asynchronous)" communications. Although both are performed in two-way communication, the difference is whether there is a time delay or not. The following example shows how these two types of two-way communication (online transaction) mean different things to this participant.

> **P:** *No. They also have something on here that's interesting that called live auctions. I've never had much luck with it but they will have featured auctions where you can bid online at the same time that the auction is taking place wherever it is. Um, so it may be an auction like at Sotheby's where they're auctioning items they'll have pictures on here and I can bid and see what the current bid is and try to bid and win the item.*
> **R:** *Auction companies purchase in yahoo no ebay?*
> **P:** *Yeah, ebay it's like .. I don't know if it's Sotheby's or not but it's like you can watch the auction and you can bid on the item and they'll watch the screen and if somebody bids higher than the current bidder on the floor so you can actually, its like being at the auction. The only times I've ever tried to do it I only managed to do it once but you have to be on here at the right time, you have to look for when the auction is going to be held so its usually more of a pain than anything but its kind of interesting when you can get on there. Again, here's collectables to give you an idea. Ok, advertising, um I don't know how you say that but basically its beer signs or beer stuff.*
> *(Chris)*

As shown in the "Easy" section discussion of "Fast to find," synchronous communication is preferred in many cases. However, "Fast" is not always good. Sometimes, participants did not mind waiting for the sake of getting other advantages. Tom in the following case did not mind sacrificing his time delay for getting better deals.

> **R:** *You can get it with a cheaper price?*
> **P:** *Cheaper price, yeah. Uh, now you have to wait to get it as opposed to going to the store, you just buy it and then you have it but I've gotten some really good deals on cards that I wouldn't be able to*

find around here and I don't exactly mind waiting, as long as I get
it so, and I do so.
(Tom at ebay.com)

In the same vein, the theme of "Time Delay" often emerged in "Real-Time Communication" contexts. In a broad sense, there should be a time lag – whether it is long or short - between consumers and WIA messages created by various stakeholders including advertisers, other consumers, third-party reviewers, and so forth. In most cases, participants disliked "Time Delay" and preferred "Fast" process (e.g., loading texts, images, and files, navigating through Websites, etc.). The following case shows how "Time Delay" could lead to rejection of a WIA message, a promotional music trial file.

I would typically look at any links that somebody has suggested I go to.
Now often those links are very interesting once I found and I just click
back out. Here's another one I'd noticed. I am not gonna go here, because
it tells me it's a big download. I am not gonna take time to go there
(Jacob, at amazon.com's music trial site).

In fact, participants talked frequently about the speed of loading the information on the Web. How fast a WIA component loads was a critical factor for them to decide whether they accept the content. The "Time Delay" was largely due to large volume of Web components such as "big download" and it was sometimes also bound by the connection condition (e.g., connection line such as modem and LAN, computer hardware's performance) each participant had. The following example shows how big files with "fancy graphics" are rejected.

At home I have a 56K modem but normally I get on it about 24 and I have
a 300 megahertz computer so if I get onto one of these Websites that has
really complicated graphics it takes a long time to download them and I'm
not that patient. So a lot of times I just leave sites and never see the
information I was looking for and never see the product because it takes

so long. I wish they would. I don't need all the fancy graphics. I need the information. I have a 300 MHz computer at home (Chris).

Regarding the "Time Delay," participants showed strong preference for "Updated" product information on the Web. As compared with other mass media, participants thought that product information on the Web is more "Updated" with "Current" information in relatively "Real-Time" fashion. The difference was clearly shown in the comparison with print media such as magazines in the following case.

> **P:** *If there's a recall and the magazine came out two weeks ago and they have a current recall you can find the product recall on the Website but the ad was printed before they knew that there was going to be a recall.*
> **R:** *Recent information?*
> **P:** *Current information and more detailed information.*
> *(Chris)*

In fact, as compared to other media, participants perceived that the Web allows them to come up with updated product information. In many cases, participants needed current information about products they planned to purchase, and the Web's capability of updating product information was regarded as superior to other media.

A step further, they sometimes needed the information about "upcoming" products, which was supposed to be introduced in near future. The following examples show the context in which a participant used a movie-review Website.

> *I guess on Marvel.com I go to the different months and at the different pages here they tell me what's going to come out in the future and so, and they even give summaries, most of them give summaries of what's coming out so I find new things on here and so like (Tom)*
>
> *And, uh, so I can, from this I can make a list of things I want to buy in the future (Tylor).*
>
> **R:** *Okay. What other contents do you see at Amazon.com?*
> **P:** *Uh, Sometimes I go to like DVDs*

> *R:* DVDs. Okay
> *P:* And I just look through what's new on DVD and if there's like a
>   box set or something cool about it
> (*Daniel*)

As shown in *Daniel*'s case, most participants used to check "What Is New" on their frequently visited Websites without specific target product planned to search. They tended to focus on newly updated contents first and preferred frequent updating. The Websites with "Time Delay" updating trend were less preferred. Thus, this pattern of Web use was accordingly applied to the context of contacting product information on the Web.

> *R:* What kinds of contents you read?
> *P:* Usually reading news and what's going on in fashion and also like
>   they have some updates about like fashion have some updates
>   about styles and current make up trend stuff like that.
> (*Grace*)

The Website, both corporate and third party, is not the only WIA format that enables consumers to get "Updated" information. Commercial emails also allow them to update their product information in a timely way. Because most participants frequently check their emails – some of them mentioned that emailing was the primary activity on the Web – commercial emails' timeliness was appreciated. Although they found commercial emails to be highly "Annoying" (See "Annoying" section), they read a few commercial emails, which they allowed to get through. Ashley, in the following example, appreciated the "Updated" email from a department store. She updated her information about the store's product sales with the combination of this commercial email and her visits to the Websites.

> *R:* Let's go on one of you favorite Websites.

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> **P:**   *Okay.....Parisian.com and this is a retail store. I visit this Website quite frequently to see what sales are going on and....To see what kinda sales are going on and umh what certain things are featured for the week, what items are must haves, uhm just so I can be updated.*
>
> **R:**   *How often do you visit?*
>
> **P:**   *Uhm...well, I get emails from Parisian also, so, I don't have to visit a whole lot. The emails will update me.*
>
> *(Ashley)*

As compared with traditional mass media consumption contexts, participants were considerably less patient to wait for availability. In the context of traditional mass media consumption, there is an expectation of waiting to acquire the information they wanted to get. However, thanks to "Controllable" benefits of the Web, there is no need to stay with unwanted items. Basically, consumers on the Web are impatient. See the following example.

> **R:**   *When it takes a long time to download something, what do you do with it?*
>
> **P:**   *I just close out of it.*
>
> **R:**   *Close it?*
>
> **P:**   *Yeah. I am very impatient so if it doesn't come up fast then never mind.*
>
> *(Anna)*

> *If I check my email and I happen to be online I have gone there [online casino site through a pop-up ad] and actually played with the play money a little bit but its too slow for me so its not something I enjoy very often because its too slow (Chris).*

Usually, that which is not "Fast" is "Annoying" to participants. Some components on the Web or Websites could deter their navigation process and participants disliked these components. Pop-up ads were often regarded as a barrier to their navigation. Due to their intrusions or interruptions, participants felt their navigation got slower and blamed the pop-ups.

R: *How do you feel about that [pop-up]?*
P: *I hate those things. My computer's not the best at home and so*
         when those things popup it slows it down quite a bit I get frustrated
         with them.
(*Ryan*)

"Real-Time Communication" represents the way to get product information on the Web. Participants preferred WIA "Two-Way" communication to plain arrangements of information and liked "Fast" loading without unnecessary waiting process. Thus, this category also had associations with other themes as described in the section.

Reliable & Honest

Themes: Reliable, Trustworthy, Credible, Honest, Biased

> *Right, on a car, like the ratings and things but you know it's gotten from*
> *usually reliable sources that can tell me what you know (Liz).*

Participants evaluated numerous WIAs not only with the content or appearance itself but also more thoughtful consideration about the source of WIAs. This category is about how "Reliable" participant think the source of WIA is (Figure 11). Reliability of information source is considerably important to them. Because there are numerous sorts of product information available on the Web, participants thought that they needed to evaluate if a piece of product information was "Reliable."

Several themes are included in this category and they refer to slightly different aspects of "Reliable." They are "Truthful," "Credible," "Honest," and "Biased." Representatively, "Truthful" revealed somewhat different meanings than "Reliable," and "Honest" and "Biased" come from consideration of motives and purposes WIA creators (e.g., advertisers) may have. "Reliable" as well as other themes has an important role as participants judge whether to accept or to reject WIA formats. Some are reliable while

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Controlling

Annoying

Informative

+
-

-

+
-

RELIABLE &
HONEST
- Reliable / Trustful
- Honest / Biased

Unreliable
Distrustful

Reliable and trustful
Biased

Distrustful
Unreliable

Trustful
Honest

Traditional
WIA formats

Reliable

Websites

Corporate
Third-Party

Commercial
Emails

Other formats
News stories

Customer
Review

Note 1) Thick line between the category and formats represents stronger association.
Note 2) The relationships with "Controlling" and "Informative" are not simple
positive / negative ones. For detailed information, see the next page.

< Figure 11 > Reliable & Honest – Relating Themes and WIA Formats

others are not.

Representative relating themes are "Annoying," "Controlling," and "Informative." While "Annoying" showed strong negative relationship with this theme, "Controlling" showed as tools to evaluate whether WIA is "Reliable." In fact, some decisions about reliability of WIA sources require thorough investigation with "Controlling" the format. "Informative" also accompanied with "Reliable / Honest," and participants concerned some WIAs veiling critical information (regarded as less "Informative").

In most cases, "Reliable" is about the source of product information. Participants considered the owner of Websites as the source and liked to evaluate if they were "Reliable." Additionally, as *Joshua*'s case shows, decisions of risky and expensive products require them to evaluate if the source of WIA is "Reliable ("*trustworthy*" in *Joshua*'s case)."

> *….the company should be trustworthy. Like amazon.com is a very good*
> *and big company. I bought a camcorder…$600, $700, it's a very*
> *expensive. So I have to be more careful (Joshua).*

> ***R:*** *So you already have some product information that you got*
> *online? What do you think that part of knowledge or product*
> *information you got from online, do you think they are good?*
> ***P:*** *If you go to the company's site like Canon or Nikon or Compaq. If*
> *you make sure you're on that company's site then yes I think the*
> *information would be as reliable as an ad in a magazine.*
> (*Chris*)

"Reliable" strongly generate positive responses; in fact, participants referred to "Reliable" or "Trustworthy" as their major reasons to have positive responses to the source of WIA contents, especially corporate and third-party Websites.

> ***R:*** *Why do you like this site?*

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> **P:** *I trust it a lot more for because it's been around longer and I've read a lot about Amazon in general Amazon.com the company and uh, I know that they're reliable and the prices are you know the prices are really good I mean they're comparable to other places*
>
> *(Daniel)*

What kinds of product information are reliable is less contextual. Instead, certain formats as well as some sources (as shown in *amazon.com* case above) are considered more reliable than others in general, although consumers have different evaluations of "Reliable" for a WIA source. Participants were clever enough to consider why each WIA format was created with what motives. In fact, WIA formats for which the purpose is clearly to sell products were less reliable to them than other formats created without any "Selling (or promoting) -purposes." In this regard, the most reliable format would be "Customer Reviews" created by other consumers who have no intention to sell products.

> **R:** *…What do you think about other people's reviews?*
> **P:** *I tend to put a lot of stock in what other people saying, because they don't have a vast interest in selling the products. If it's another person like me who's written a review, my guess is that they're being honest. I would respect that. That doesn't necessarily mean that I will take that opinion and that'll make me buy the book. But at least, I believe that they're telling the truth.*
>
> *(Jacob)*

As shown here, this participant identified with other people posting product review messages. Because message creators (other consumers who already purchased the product in general) were considered as the message readers (consumers who try to get information about the product), they should be "Reliable."

Especially, in online auction sites, the customer reviews showed considerable power in judging the reliability of sellers and their products. In fact, due to the typical characteristic of online auction, which is "numerous sellers" and "unknown sellers,"

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consumers' concerns about the reliability of the product information and the sources – the

sellers – are naturally high. See the following example describing the "Reliable" in *eBay*,

the most famous online auction site.

> ***P:*** *…You can look at, on eBay they have a scale of how reliable*
> *somebody is and usually I'll only purchase from somebody that's*
> *like got a topnotch rating.*
> ***R:*** *Good history?*
> ***P:*** *Yeah, but I have, I've talked to a guy that owns a baseball card*
> *store and he'll order a whole lot of cards from somebody and send*
> *them the money and then never get their stuff, so, but I'm not really*
> *worried about it, as far as not getting the stuff.*
> *(Tom)*

David, in the following example, a participant clearly mentioned why a

"Reliable" information source is critical on the online auction market as compared to

other local stores where consumers can see live products.

> *Well something, usually some stuff I like, like I'd rather have it, see stuff*
> *on eBay I can't, I see pictures, is basically like Best Buy.com I can see*
> *pictures of stuff but where there on eBay I have to buy it before I can*
> *check it out usually you know, I mean they might say oh it sounds great*
> *looks nice but you know it might have some internal problem the FM*
> *stations don't come in good or something but you know I don't get a*
> *warranty off of stuff on eBay, whereas you know Best Buy I can go to the*
> *store and check it out you know I get it brand new rather than you know*
> *they might play with it for a while and say it was brand new and never*
> *touched it, see I don't necessarily trust the people on eBay that sell a lot of*
> *this stuff whereas Best Buy you know I can see it it's in a box you know*
> *it's probably brand new I'm sure it probably not returned or something*
> *like that.*
> *(David)*

In the same vein, the Web itself was considered less credible than other sources of

product information, especially personal sources. The following example shows how the

Web's product information is viewed as less reliable than "*First-Hand information*" from

experts.

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> **R:** *How would you compare the information on the Web and a very knowledgeable expert salesperson?*
>
> **P:** *Uh, well usually like if I think they're a real knowledgeable salesperson and they're sounding like they know what they're talking about I usually trust that more than a Web because basically stuff on the Web they're just telling you the information that you know the product has or that the company has told them what it does and all that like uh, a salesperson will tell you the, they probably, they've used a product or they have known people that have you know I went to my friend's house he got this and says this system kicks ass you know and blows everything else out so he'll give you first hand knowledge about the product where you know the screen you know it just tells you information about that you could probably find on the back of a package or something like that but he'll tell you actual user knowledge that yeah based on experience or things that other people have told him the Web you won't get information feedback on what other people have said about the product or something like that so that's what's kinda useful.*

(*Daniel*)

Based on this case, other mass media could be also less credible than personal sources, because the plain information this participant complained about on the Web can be also a limitation of product information from the mass media. The reliability of the Web itself is much suspected due to consumers' concerns about their security and privacy. As exemplified before (See "Annoying" section), many Websites' requirements of personal information make consumers nervous. They are reluctant to give their personal information to the Web. Basically, the Web is not a highly reliable medium to them at this point. See the following example about "*Security Point of View.*" The reliability of the computer hardware system could be also related to the concept of "Reliable" in this case.

> *I'm a bit nervous I haven't done it yet because I'm a bit nervous about it I'm kinda and I'm also a bit nervous about online banking I think that I haven't checked it out for her she said that she's gonna put money in there to 'cos we're taking care of other things for her and then we could when*

she sells her car I could put the money in and they can get it but I haven't done it so I mean from a security point of view. I'd be wary and last week and the week before I had a lot of problems with viruses on my computer so I'm a little more hyper this week than I was about a month ago about I'm not opening everything I get and I'm just aware of the fact that there are people out there hacking and not for my information but there's a lot of information out there that isn't very secure so most of the time the information that I'm the way I'm using it is just frivolous it's not very important stuff it's not like it's life or death or you know bank information so I don't worry about that too much (Emily)

More critical aspect of the product information on Web relating to the "Reliable" theme is "Abundance." The abundance of information makes consumers more confused and skeptical about the reliability of product information the Web provides. Because the Web has limitless information with a variety of information sources, consumers often suspect the reliability or trustworthiness of each information source. Accordingly, consumers tend to pay more attention to where the product information comes from. The following case shows how a consumer investigated detailed information about the product seller. The "rating," a kind of customer review, took a critical role in judging the reliability of a seller and his products.

P: *Yeah, I'll check on uh, I'll check to see you know who does who the person is selling it what kind of rating they have you can click on here um,*

R: *Is it important, the ratings?*

P: *Yeah, it tells if you click on uh, like the person who's selling it like this is the seller, if you click on the seller um, let's see yeah I don't know*

R: *That number?*

P: *Yeah it tells you how many ratings that people had on, once you buy something from the person, you can click on like you can give them a rating like if you think they're positive or negative or whatever like that and then their points ad up and you know in the past four months he's got four positive rating points and so over the past 6 months he's got 16 total points he doesn't have any negative or neutral points so he's a pretty good guy as far as I can tell you know from here he seems like a pretty good guy and he's*

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not going to gip you and you know break it before he sends it to you or something like that so but uh, and then you can click you know high bidder is this guy right here pinball, he's got 304 points um, he's got good points too so, usually um, like right now some of the things I find you know pretty high price but you can go to uh, like I was gonna click off of here

(*David*)

In fact, the context in the online auction is considerably different from that in others (e.g., online or offline store purchase) in terms of the information needed to reach the final decision to purchase. Specifically, while in stores participants can rely on the reputation of stores (e.g., *Amazon.com*) as well as brand names (e.g., *Sony, Gap*), they can be less confident whether the seller is reliable and trustworthy in an online auction. The product information provided by the seller was viewed with some skeptical stances, because participants thought that there are some untrustworthy sellers who sell unsatisfactory products for many reasons (e.g., difference between the product itself and the product information the seller provided). Thus, the customer review posted by other previous buyers can be the most trusted information about the seller, and participants thought that they needed to evaluate the reliability of the product information a seller provided based on this customer review of the seller.

> **P:** *They used to have a little legend that tell what these things meant but if I go to view comments and the seller's feedback this is just a breakdown of the past seven days. They've had three positive and no negative. So this person never had any negative comments back and this is a chance for the buyers to rate the seller. If I get something from this person and it was poorly packaged or its not what he said it was I can go back on ebay and put my own comment in here so that everybody else buying...so that the seller has an incentive here to obviously....*
> **R:** *What do you think about that, is it positive? Is it still reliable?*
> **P:** *Based on the comments, yes. He's had all positive comments. Um, no negative comments at all. No bid retractions so nobody's cancelled out on it after they have bid in so these are actually the*

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comments that were left. They were all appeared to be praise comments, great by ebay, A+++ or things like that. Excellent sign, top quality service, highly recommend. So all of these lead me to believe that this person is a reputable seller and ...

R: *Do you believe all of this? Some of that can be misrepresented.*

P: *Obviously. I can set here and write these things all day long. Um, so obviously it could be misrepresented but I don't know. I'm one of those optimistic people so I tend to believe unless somebody prove me, I mean obviously within reason. I mean I don't believe some of those stupid emails that come around that say oh, the governments trying to charge us two cents a piece for email now or something like that.*

(Chris)

However, as previously noted, the reliability of personal sources is usually very powerful, and it was shown that the personal source could be thought more reliable than the customer reviews, one of the most reliable format of WIA. The following participant has high trust in customer reviews, but gave higher scores on personal sources over the customer reviews in terms of reliability. Another interesting finding in this case is the differences of reliability among different domain name such as .org, .gov, and .com. She thought that Websites with .gov or .org, implying non-profit organization, were more reliable than others, usually .com ones.

P: *If I have two descriptions or two descriptions of a product and one is obviously Internet advertising you know dressed up as advertising then..... I'm probably going to be a little more cynical but if I thought a review by Madeline from Ohio I'm going to be just as suspicious of that I mean I would read it and if there was a lot of them and a lot of them are saying good things and it has that star thing and it's like four and a half stars or five stars I would buy that over one that has two stars if I don't know anything about a book but if a friend of mine had recommended this book to me*

R: *In person*

P: *In person, then that will outweigh the fact that it only got two stars if I'm going on there to buy then I probably buy that but that yeah, those reviews and on that consumer report Website I showed you they have reviews as well they would have customer reviews and you know their journalist the people who work for them have tested*

*these products as well and I would trust them on a dot org type site
or a dot gov site or something I'm going to trust that and that
would influence whether I would use that product or you know go
to that event or uh, but if someone personally recommended
something to me that would probably outweigh it if I'd been
recommended a book and then went online to find that book I
wouldn't necessarily read those reviews and it wouldn't
necessarily make me think I'm not going to buy this book now if it
had been recommended.*

R: *Why do you think that someone's recommendation is better?*
P: *That's always… they know me in person. I trust their experiences
          …*
(Emily)

Nonetheless, the customer review was the most powerful format of product

information among all WIA formats. In fact, the trustworthiness of customer reviews has

a strong impact on consumers' purchase decisions. Customer reviews' negative ratings

prevented him from buying the product ("*watching movies at theater*" in this case).

R: *Do you feel if these guys, uh, could help you to decide?*
P: *Yeah, they definitely influence what I think, yep*
R: *Could they influence your final decision to see the movie?*
P: *Yeah, if I came here I'd uh, and read this before I went to see the
          movie uh and everybody here says it's not very good then*
R: *This guy talked a lot*
P: *Yeah, he did, they're usually not that long, they're usually pretty
          short, but uh, yeah, if they said it wasn't any good, if everybody
          was saying that I probably wouldn't waste my money on it but if a
          lot of people says it's good I would go see it.*
R: *Why do you feel you can trust these guys' comments?*
P: *Uh, 'cos a lot of times they go into pretty good detail they're not
          usually as long as this but they go into pretty good detail about
          and they tell you what it's about before you go see it actually but
          but uh, yeah, it's they just make good points as to what, they
          usually support their points pretty well as to why it's not good and
          you know it's not like I'm never gonna see the movie, I'll probably
          rent it. It just wouldn't be number one thing on the list to do you
          know if a bunch of people said it was not very good*
(Ryan)

Another format of product information on the Web proved to be a strongly "Reliable" source: "News stories about products." Although the thoughts about news stories containing any brand and company names were not frequently mentioned by participants, it was strongly confirmed that it, as a source of product (or company) information, was highly "Reliable." The following participant showed, although thinking it is context-bound, high trust of product or company information delivered through TV news. Surely, the reliability of the TV news channel, which was *CNN*, also seemed to contribute to his thoughts.

> *Yeah, um, that's how you hear about them, I would never know what*
> *Enron was or I wouldn't have known anything about it other than what I*
> *would if you know TV news and right, on CNN news so I get information*
> *um, and possibly here and there every now and again you're going to read*
> *about something that it tells you about a product or a service or a*
> *company or something but um, if it's on CNN then it's I do uh, more*
> *credible I don't know maybe I do kinda think of it differently depending on*
> *the context that it's in (Anthony)*

Sometimes, participants liked to compare the reliability or the trustworthiness of WIA contents with product information in other media. Participant tended to have more or at least equal level of trust for the product information on the Web than in traditional media, especially print media.

> ***R:*** *Do you think that the information from the manufacturer's Website*
> *is more official information than magazine or newspaper?*
> ***P:*** *Um, I think so. I think I trust them more.*
> (*Danie*l)

Among various formats, corporate Websites are regarded as more reliable than traditional WIA formats. Regardless of what the content of the message is, a more

reliable ("credible") format (the corporate Websites in the following case) is preferred to less reliable ("credible") one (banners and pop-ups).

> *R:*   *If there is something in your mind, lets say you want to get a Discover card and you see a banner or pop up about getting a Discover card. Do you want to click that or you just ignore it?*
> *P:*   *I would rather go Discover card Website because I feel like that will be more credible then popups which I am sure would link you to the Website but I would just rather on my own go there.*
> *R:*   *By typing the discovercard.com instead of clicking the banners or popups. Why not popups or banners?*
> *P:*   *just because it seems more credible when you are actually at the official Website.*
> *R:*   *do you think popups and banners are a little less credible?*
> *P:*   *yes.*
> (*Sarah*)

Consumers who have brand loyalty to a certain brand name often like to visit its corporate Websites. They like to buy products from their favorite brands without comparing with other brands and this loyalty leads them to get more information from corporate Websites. Their brand names are the only "Reliable" ones to them. Thus, any product and its pertinent information offered with the loyal brand names, especially within the corporate Website is considered "Reliable."

> *Uh, Toshiba is what I'm probably looking for 'cos everything I have for some reason, my TVs, my VCR, my DVD and everything is Toshiba and from the things that I've looked at on Consumer Reports and things, Toshiba has been really good and people that I work, that I know have worked in Best Buy and places like that tell me that Toshiba's really good, makes good, good picture tubes and things, so (David)*

Third-party's product review and information proved somewhat different from customer reviews in terms of reliability. Participants thought that manufacturers' or third-party Websites' product information were less reliable than customer reviews. Their evaluations were centered on the motives to create the product information. In fact, as

shown before, other consumers – message creators of customer reviews – were identified

as similar to themselves and they could "*take what other people say more to heart.*" On

the other hand, manufacturers were thought to create the product information for their

business and this thought is similarly applied to the third-party Websites.

> **R:** *Why is it [customer review in amazon.com] important to you?*
> **P:** *Why, because it's a pretty visual way of showing the quality of the camera instead of typing out a big paragraph about it. It's easy to understand and its simple and you can glance at it and see how good or how bad the camera is.*
> **R:** *That rating is made by other customers?*
> **P:** *Yeah, it's a customer rating.*
> **R:** *Feedback about that product?*
> **P:** *Feedback from people who have purchased it.*
> **R:** *Do you believe other people's evaluations?*
> **P:** *Yes, I would do that more. I would trust other people's evaluation of it more than I would the manufacturer.*
> **R:** *Manufacturer's information?*
> **P:** *I wouldn't trust the manufacturer's information as customers. Alright I don't see any cameras I want to buy.*
> **R:** *Why do you think the customer's information is more valuable than the manufacturer's?*
> **P:** *It's because you can relate to it more because you are also a customer and being a customer you going to take what other people say more to heart.*
> **R:** *Um.*
> **P:** *Just seems more credible than just like say if the manufacturer was just wrote something about a product you would think that would be more advertising than anything. It's just more real.*
> (*Ethan*)

> **R:** *Why do you rely on what these other people think?*
> **P:** *That's a good question. I think it's similar to when you hear a review of a movie and decide whether you're going to go see it or not based upon a movie reviewer like Siskel and Ebert says. I feel like if I read it, these are normal common people that visit the web everyday or frequently and I feel like sometimes I trust these people common people, I trust them more perhaps than I would trust somebody that writes for a newspaper or somebody that writes for a company.*
> (*Jasmine*)

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As implicitly emerged in this example, a theme of "Biased & Honest," which is about the motive to create WIA messages, takes an important role in evaluations of the reliability of WIA. In fact, "Honest" WIA should be "Reliable," while "Biased" ones were regarded not "Reliable." Participants suspected some sources of product information to be biased, while they regarded others as honest. It is neither complicated nor context-bound to judge whether each WIA format is "Biased" or "Honest."

> *I think they [corporate Websites] provide a lot of good information but*
> *then again you have to think about um, you know the, company the*
> *Website being a little bit biased (Liz).*

Similarly, WIA is evaluated by whether it is created with an honest voice. Although thinking that a majority of product information found on the Web was reliable, especially on Corporate Websites, Online stores, and third-party Websites, participants also suspected that some parts of product information are biased. With corporate Websites, they showed this negative feeling frequently, in fact, they mentioned that product information on any corporate Websites might be a little biased.

> **R:** *Don't you read somebody's summary provided by uh, this official*
> *site or*
> **P:** *Like an official site of the movie?*
> **R:** *Yeah, that kind of thing or some news stories provided by…*
> **P:** *Uh, actually yeah, I'll read the newspaper about it but I just see it*
> *in a magazine or something I'll read about it but I don't usually*
> *look at the movie Websites.*
> **R:** *Do you think that other movie watchers' comments are more*
> *reliable than the more official things?*
> **P:** *Yeah. Probably.*
> **R:** *Why do you think so?*
> **P:** *Well just because they're not trying to make money off the movie*
> **R:** *And official reviews can be written to make the money?*
> **P:** *Yeah.*
> *(Ryan)*

In fact, among a variety of WIA formats, corporate Websites were regarded by participants as the most biased. The theme of "Biased" often emerged with corporate Websites while it was rarely mentioned for other formats such as third-party Websites.

> *Obviously they [corporate Websites] are going to put a little bit of a positive spin on their equipment. They're not going to call attention to any shortcomings it may have but its reliable information and as much as any commercial that your going to see on television or anything else (Chris).*

Contrastingly, customer reviews given by other product users are evaluated as most honest. As noted earlier in this section, the customer review was the most reliable WIA format because consumers tend to identify the message creators of customer reviews with themselves. A step further, it can be said that participants thought themselves to post "Honest" opinions about products if they were the message creators. In other words, consumers believe themselves honest and identified with other consumers like themselves. Therefore, their trust in customer reviews is very different from those in the product reviews provided by sellers or third parties. Although thinking that there was some useless or biased information in customer reviews, they gave more credit to customer reviews than other formats. Their self-confidence (See also "Easy") also takes a role in evaluating whether a group of customer reviews about a product is trustworthy.

> ***R:*** *Can you compare those customers' reviews and other corporate-provided information?*
> ***P:*** *In a way… you have to remember…sometimes they are just….it could be just 19 year-old boy reading real good noble and they may say "this is suck, this is a bad book." But I had to consider all that condition and have a confidence. But I think they are more honest than corporate promotional information.*
> *(Joshua)*

Like the case of traditional ads, product information on the Web had to suffer from the "deception" issue. Participants raised a critical issue that many Websites did not disclose all information of products intentionally. "Annoying" emerged to have a strong relationship with this "Deceptive" issue. In a broad sense, "Unreliable (which means biased and deceptive in this context)" WIA messages could yield "Annoying" responses. The information concealed was perceived to be deceptive, and participants thought that undisclosed information could be negative to products and discourage people from buying. The following case clearly shows how negative a consumer felt with "Deceptive" product-related information in an online store.

> **P:** *I went online to that place and I picked a few products and went but then the next day I got an email saying to me that two of the items I had chosen were like refrigerated ones so I had to go two day delivery which was like $7 more but I never saw that and it was annoying in that case when they sent the email I emailed back and I said to them that I didn't think it was very honest of them to have hidden this in the fine print so upfront they should have said that if you order this product with a star on it any of these products you have to go with two day delivery and it's like $7 more*
> **R:** *Oh…you didn't know that, did you?*
> **P:** *I didn't notice that because it was obviously if I'm sure it was on the Website she emailed me back and she apologized and said it was in the fine print or whatever but so*
> **R:** *What did you feel about that?*
> **P:** *I was annoyed because it was already expensive and then it was going to be like $8 more for two day and I was like if I had known this before I probably still would have bought the products but I wouldn't have felt as ripped off as and I probably won't use the site again because I think it's too expensive.*
> **R:** *So you ordered that because you were making your own decision, are you sure that you did not make that mistake?*
> **P:** *I would have made the purchase because if it had to be two-day delivery I wanted to do it I wanted to get it for him so I would have done it anyway.*
> **R:** *Is this a kind of special cases?*

> **P:** *It was a special occasion but if it were a normal product if I had bought like if I had bought something that wasn't perishable like that was perishable if I had bought shampoo and then found that out I would be very angry and I would probably ask them I probably would not buy it on there I would email them back and say terminate my order I don't want to get this I'll go and get it somewhere else.*
>
> *(Emily)*

As shown in this example, the "Dishonest" behavior accordingly caused a reaction that the vendor was "Annoying." The product messages in two different vehicles – Website and Email notice - were different and *Emily* felt that she was "*ripped off*" and was not likely to visit the site again. In this case, disclosure of additional charges could not affect her purchase decision but did affect her intentions to revisit. Although the price could be problematic, the honesty played an important role in constructing this participant's thoughts about the site.

As compared with other mass media, corporate Websites are considered more biased. Because the corporate Website is totally controlled by each company, consumers considered that corporate Websites should contain positive voices only for the company.

> **R:** *Do you think that they [magazines and newspapers] really offer different information (than Corporate Website)?*
> **P:** *No, but I think it's really unbiased they just kinda really tell about what it does and that's it.*
>
> *(Daniel)*
>
> **R:** *What do you think about the ebay site?*
> **P:** *Well, I'm a little skeptical in a sense that it's person to person like I could put a product on there and sell it and sometimes you wonder you know how because you don't actually get to see the product face to face so you wonder about the quality of it and what your paying for because you're not sure what your getting is what you think your getting.*
>
> *(Jasmine)*

A slight difference between "Reliable" and "Trustworthy" was sometimes found. The former has a more objective sense while the latter has a somewhat subjective voice. Specifically, "Trustworthy" is about the motive of message creation and similar with "Honest & Biased" concept. In fact, what is reliable is not always trustworthy. In this case with the difference between "Reliable" and "Trustworthy" (in many cases, participants interchangeably used both terms), "Reliable" was more powerful than "Trustworthy" in terms of the influence on the consumers evaluation. The following example shows this distinction.

R: *Did you read this kind of thing? Other customers' opinions?*
P: *Uh, no.*
R: *Why?*
P: *Yeah, usually I like to read the editorial reviews*
R: *Do you think they are reliable?*
P: *Yeah, like they usually have like um, Amazon.com editorial review or um, they'll have um, Rolling Stone*
R: *Is it helpful?*
P: *Yes it is.*
R: *Do you think the editorial reviews are reliable?*
P: *Sometimes I do, um, I just like to read them first and then if it sounds if it sounds like kinda what I'm thinking that it would sound like and then maybe sometimes I will click on down to spotlight reviews and it's like music from a fan and they'll rate it and I'll read it read that review.*
R: *Other customers' sayings?*
P: *Yeah.*
R: *Are these reliable?*
P: *I don't like saying that, I don't think that they're as reliable as the editorial reviews sometimes I kinda trust them, I don't 'cos I know how some people perceive their music compared to how I do so,*
R: *There are a lot of different perspectives.*
P: *Yeah.*
R: *Do you think that you purchased cds here uh, after reading the editorial reviews?*
P: *Uh huh.*
R: *And at the time uh, the editorial reviews helped you understand the cd music and*

P: *Yes.*
(Daniel)

Thus, he thought that customer review was not (or less) "Reliable" but "Trustworthy," because he trusted people who wrote the customer reviews. However, the editorial review, although it could be less trustworthy than customer review as shown in previous examples, was thought more "Reliable" and he relied on it for his purchase decision. The quality of contents in the editorial review could get more credit in this case.

"Reliable & Trustworthy" represent various themes relating to product information on the Web. Especially, it is mostly about the consumers' thoughts about the sources of product information (e.g., companies, other consumers). "Biased & Honest" also emerged as a critical theme as relating to this category and it is consumers thoughts about the message creators' motives behind the content. Traditional WIA formats were rarely mentioned with these themes, while Websites (corporate and third-party) were often associated with them.

SUMMARIZING: INTEGRATING THEMES BY WIA FORMATS

As described so far, each WIA format shows a variety of meanings, theme categories, under various contexts. This section summarizes the association among various themes by each WIA format. It is helpful to review what kinds of themes emerged under each format for integrating various themes and their relationships. In addition, with managerial perspectives, how each WIA format can yield positive responses is discussed with theme categories. <Table 6> summarizes which theme categories were more pertinent to each WIA format.

< Table 6 > Thoughts About Each WIA Format

WIA Formats	Positive	Negative
Traditional WIA Formats	Fun – Enjoying some interactive features Easy – Easy to reject (ignore, removing) Real-Time Communication – Fast Interaction with Relevant – A few exceptional pop-ups and banners have relevant contents (e.g., company consumers have loyalties)	Intrusive – Intruding their navigations Annoying – Yielding negative feelings, Useless, Irritating Controllable – Less controllable and Needs control – Continuous popping up Informative – Lack of information Real-Time Communication – Time Delay against navigation process Easy – Some interstitials (without exit option) are not easy to avoid Relevant – Most are not relevant Reliable & Honest – Unreliable and Untrustworthy
Corporate Websites & Third-Party Websites	Informative – Every aspect of products, Specifications Controllable – Variety of information, Feedback enabled – Managing numerous information by personalizing and screening activities	Annoying – Requiring personal information – Irritating "Intro" pages with flash animations – Unorganized structure Informative – Unmanageable information

< Table 6 > Thoughts About Each WIA Format (Continued)

WIA Formats	Positive	Negative
Corporate Websites & Third-Party Websites (Continued)	Reliable (Third-Party > Corporate) – Reliable product information, Helpful for purchase decisions Real-Time Communication – Updating product information – Interactive features / Live message Fun – Checking product information – Enjoying finding relevant and detailed product information Easy – Easy to manage and find product information (Efficient)	Reliable – Biased toward companies Real-Time Communication – Time Delay in Updating Contents Relevant – (Easy) to screen and selecting information based on relevancy – Most information consumers get from Websites is relevant (by screening)
Commercial Emails	Controllable – Personalized emails previously requesting Real-Time Communication – Updating on time – Feedback in fast way	Informative – Abundant commercial emails Annoying – Getting many commercial emails – Unintended junks Relevant – Most are not relevant Reliable & Honest – Untrustworthy and Unreliable
Customer Reviews	Relevant – Interesting in reviewing others thoughts – Provides relevant information Easy – Easy to understand	Reliable & Honest – Less reliable than third-party reviews – There are a few people positing distorted information (but consumers are good at considering this).

WIA Formats	Positive	Negative
Customer Reviews (Continued)	Informative – Gives relevant and trustworthy information in detail Fun – Posting messages about products Reliable – In most cases, Reliable and Trustworthy – Honest and Believable	
Others (Miscellaneous)	Paying attention – News stories containing product information Fun – Banners and pop-ups (Sponsorship) game enabled – Fictitious stories relating to products Controllable – Customizing and Narrowing down to personalize the content Reliable and Honest – Depending on news stories' reliability – News stories about products and companies in Websites with high reputation (e.g., cnn.com) are reliable.	

Traditional WIA Formats

In this study, four representative WIA formats were included in this category: Banners, Pop-Ups, Pop-Unders, and Interstitials. These formats, overall, produced negative responses, although a few exceptional cases yielding relatively positive responses were found.

Most of all, traditional WIA formats were always "Intrusive" leading participants to find them "Annoying." Because consumers liked to go through Web sites in their own way under their will (Goal-directed navigation), what intruded made them "Annoyed." They did not want to get any unintended and unpredictable contents on their navigations and traditional WIA formats were unintended and unpredictable objects on the Web. These formats were also considered as what should be controlled not to remain on their screens. Although "Controllable" usually shed positive aspects of the Web, "Should be controlled to avoid" yielded negative responses. These three theme categories, "Intrusive," "Annoying," and "Controllable," had strong interrelationships with each other. In fact, the more "Intrusive" a WIA format is, the more "Annoying" and the less "Controllable" consumers felt it to be. Specifically, interstitials, which block the whole screen during the navigation, were considered the least "Controllable" format, and consumers felt them to be the most "Annoying" and "Intrusive." This less "Controllable" feature of interstitals also emerged with not "Easy" to reject, although most of pop-ups and banners were "Easy" to reject. The unintended continuation of multiple pop-ups especially irritated consumers due to loss of control and continuation of "Intrusiveness."

Other negative themes relating to traditional WIA formats were "Irrelevant," "Uninformative," "Unreliable & Dishonest," and "Time-Delay (Real-Time Communication)." These theme categories could explain why consumers tended to avoid traditional WIA formats. Specifically, the contents of traditional WIA formats were not "Relevant" to consumers' needs and less "Informative." Regarding the source of these formats, they thought the formats were neither "Reliable" nor "Honest."

A few exceptional cases yielding positive responses were less meaningful due to their lack of repeated patterns and occurrences. Nevertheless, some banners and pop-ups with "Interactive" features enabled consumers to enjoy interacting with WIA formats, although what they paid attention and interacted with were not the WIA contents but the peripheral functions such as gambling features.

Websites – Corporate and Third-Party

Websites containing product information were broken into two classifications based on their ownership. Corporate Websites are operated and maintained by companies, while third-party Websites are not directly associated with manufacturers of products about which information is contained in the sites. Consumers were easily able to differentiate between these two.

Because Websites have a variety of aspects with limitless space and time, various themes from both positive and negative sides emerged with these WIA formats. On the positive side, consumers appreciated the sites' capability of containing a great deal of product information with the theme of "Informative" and "Controllable (Choice)." Regarding the quality of content, consumers thought that most corporate Websites'

product information were "Reliable." Once having prospective products in mind, they thought that corporate Websites would be the most reliable and in-depth product information sources. A variety of functions at Websites provide consumers with "Controllable" benefits such as customizing and personalizing content they would obtain with "Real-Time communication." Despite the large amount of information, consumers felt it was "Easy" to manage and find product information they needed with the self-confidence about the Web in general. They liked to compare the efficiency of the Web with that of other sources including personal sources, retailing stores, and mass media such as TV and magazines. In addition, the activity of searching and finding product information they wanted was characterized as "Fun."

On the other hand, consumers also expressed negative responses about various aspects of Websites. Unstructured Websites with irrelevant contents such as flash or animated "Intro" pages they found to be "Annoying," and "Over-Informative" contents were "Unmanageable" with "Annoying" responses. "Updating" was also critical for them to evaluate Websites, because consumers liked to check updated information in their frequently visited Websites. "Time-Delay" in updating current information about products could be characterized as "Annoying." As mentioned before in traditional WIA format cases, consumers also suspected the motive of Website creators (e.g., advertisers, third-parties) and evaluated them as "Biased" and less "Trustworthy." Especially, corporate Websites were considered more "Biased," because participants thought that companies, as the owners of corporate Websites, promoted their products through their Websites.

Commercial Emails

Widely known as "Junk" or "Spam," commercial emails often yielded negative responses, but there were some positive aspects. Regardless of the amount of information each commercial email contains, participants thought that there was a great deal of "Junk" that should be rejected (or deleted). In fact, in most cases, they decided if they needed to accept a commercial email by scanning through several titles in a short time. Because most commercial emails were not intended messages, participants did not tend to accept messages and disliked them. A step further, they also considered, based on their prior experiences, that most content commercial emails deliver were not relevant to their needs. Regarding the message senders of commercial emails, they expressed quite negative feelings about "Biased" contents as well as "Unreliable" sources. Because most commercial emails were not sent from famous companies, participants did not know the message senders in most cases. They also had somewhat negative feelings about senders of commercial e-mail.

However, consumers benefited from commercial emails. The major difference between negative commercial emails and positive ones was whether the receiver (consumer) asked for a commercial email to be delivered. The participants used to subscribe (regularly or irregularly) to a few commercial emails, which were newsletters, simple notices (e.g., new product notice, sale notice), and so forth. Consumers liked to read and benefited from the commercial emails, which they previously ordered. Because this was "Controlled" by consumers' intentions and the commercial emails had relatively "Current (Real-Time Communication)" messages, consumers appreciated the product information from the commercial emails sometimes.

The preceding two WIA format categories – Traditional WIA Formats, Websites, and commercial emails – were more or less labeled as advertising on the Web by participants, other formats including Customer Review, Commercial Emails, and other miscellaneous formats were not referred to advertising. Nevertheless, with the broader perspective toward the conceptualization of the Web-based Interactive Advertising (WIA), these new formats took important roles for participants to interact with (obtain, enjoy, reject, etc.) product information on the Web.

Customer Reviews

It is hard to define the customer review as a form of advertising if the traditional definition of advertising from advertisers' perspective is strictly applied. In fact, the customer review is not a paid form created by identified advertisers. Nevertheless, with a broader perspective from consumers' points of views, it can be regarded as a form of advertising. And it is similar to the more traditional "word of mouth" advertising. Because consumers obtain a great deal of product information from customer reviews on the Web, this study took a wide stance to include this format as the realm of WIA.

Customer reviews referred to any messages relating to products created by general customers. It is a Web-based word-of-mouth, but its penetration throughout the Web was considerably wide and resistant. Many third-party and corporate Websites had bulletin board functions, which allowed consumers to post their thoughts about products and companies. Before (or sometimes after) purchase, consumers liked to review what other consumers wrote about the products. Their personal experiences with the product

were highly valued, although there were a few negative responses about the customer review.

Because the customer review could usually be organized and viewed about a specific single product (e.g., IBM X-30 laptop, Sony digital camcorder dcr-trv27), consumers could find a set of customer reviews about a specific product. Thus, most information from the customer review was highly "Relevant." Moreover, some popular Websites (e.g., *amazon.com*) had many visitors leaving quite a lot of customer reviews about each product. Each review from other customers could have different aspect of the product and consumers could draw a holistic picture of the product based on the reviews ("Informative"). Thanks to using plain language and customer-oriented content, this format was appreciated with its "Easy to understand" characteristics. The most important benefit of this format emerged with the theme of "Reliable & Honest." Participants tended to identify the message creators of this format, other customers, with themselves. Thus, they assumed that other customers posted honest and real information about the product. Although the content of customer reviews were somewhat less reliable than that of Websites, especially corporate Websites, the "trustworthy" and "honest" customer reviews brought important product information to consumers. In fact, participants realized and assumed that there were a few other customers posting distorted and untrustworthy information due to dissatisfaction; however, they were also confident that they could get a consistent and reliable set of product information by reading multiple reviews.

Others

There were several miscellaneous formats containing product information found. Although they appeared a few times (See "Limitation" in Chapter V), their roles as alternative WIA formats were strongly supported. The popular formats identified in this study were sponsorships (although many sponsorships were presented as traditional WIA formats, participants could differentiate these two), online classifieds, and news stories about products and companies. Sponsorships appeared in a variety of formats including online games as well as traditional WIA formats. Consumers could enjoy games showing brand names and reading fictitious stories about products and so forth ("Fun"). The online classifieds allowed consumers to customize and personalize the final contents from a variety of venues to a specific content, which satisfied consumers' specific needs ("Controllable"). The news stories about companies and products were prevalent on the Web, especially at news Websites such as *cnn.com*. Most participants had one or more news Websites as a frequently visited site for their information needs, and those Websites were relatively well-known and reputable sites in general. Thus, they tended to trust the content presented in these news Websites and the stories about products and companies were highly reliable for them.

CHAPTER V.

DISCUSSION AND SUGGESTIONS:

WHAT WE LEARNED AND WHERE WE CAN GO FURTHER:

This chapter recaps the overall procedure and findings and discusses some critical points the study may yield as well as suggestions for stakeholders. The first section briefly summarizes what this study found and its processes. The second section deals with several arguments about critical points the study found. The third section suggests some implications for researchers and practitioners. In addition, this study has some limitations and the final section describes them for future studies.

RECAPPING: SUMMARY AND VALUE

This study explores a broad research topic – consumers' thoughts and behaviors regarding Web-based Interactive Advertising (WIA). The meaning of, and interaction with, WIA from consumers' points of view was thoroughly explored in this study with qualitative research.

This study fills a large gap that previous literature has rarely touched on. Despite a large volume of literature in this field, much of the existing literature has focused on traditional WIA formats such as banners and pop-ups from a managerial perspective; in fact, the effectiveness of banners and pop-ups within the experimental design was the most popular research agenda in this field so far. However, most of these studies share an

assumption that consumers are exposed to and watch banners and pop-ups. It is true that they are exposed to traditional WIA messages, but it is uncertain that they really watch and read these messages. In fact, recent studies show that most consumers disregard and get annoyed with the banners and pop-ups during their navigations (e.g., Meskauskas, Jan. 23, 2003, September 12, 2002; Edwards et al., 2002; Tillinghast, 2002). Furthermore, major Web browsers such as Netscape began offering pop-up blocking functions in the latest versions (Media, January 2003, p.8). The managerial-skewed research trend in this field has resulted in a somewhat distorted picture of consumer behavior with WIA. This study tried to fill this gap by investigating how consumers think about, and interact with, WIA messages in realistic settings from a consumer-oriented perspective.

Therefore, the study aimed to capture an overall picture to show how consumers think about WIA messages and how they interact with WIA through their everyday navigation process. Two primary research questions pursued were: "What do consumer believe Web-based Interactive Advertising (WIA) to be?" and "How do consumers navigate through and interact with WIA in a Web-based environment?"

A qualitative approach was adopted to investigate the research questions, and in-depth interviews and participant observations were two methods of data collection. Twenty-seven adults aged from 20 to 56 participated in the study. They were asked to navigate three to four of their favorite and frequently visited Websites and talked about their specific behavior on the Web. The researcher observed how they dealt with WIA formats throughout the navigation and asked some questions to find their thoughts about a variety of components on the Web. Depth interviews, following the navigation sessions,

examined what participants thought about WIA. The analysis process mainly observed Corbin and Strauss's (1998) coding process – open, axial, and selective coding.

A total of nine major themes about WIA emerged in the analysis. They are: "Intrusive," "Annoying," "Fun," "Informative," "Easy," "Relevant," "Controllable," "Real-Time Communication," and "Reliable & Honest." Many of these themes are related with each other as shown in <Figure 2>. Consumers were more likely to prefer WIA messages that are less intrusive, less annoying, more fun, relatively informative, easy, relevant to them, controllable, with real-time communication, and those that have reliable and trustworthy sources. What should not be overlooked is the fact that this relationship between WIA preference and each theme totally depends upon consumers' evaluations. In other words, a pop-up ad is an annoying object to some consumers but fun to others.

There were some matches between these themes and WIA formats. For example, traditional WIA formats such as banners and pop-ups are strongly related to the themes of Intrusive, Annoying, and Controllable. In fact, these formats usually make consumers get "Annoyed" due to their less Controllable and Intrusive characteristics. Corporate Websites were regarded as relatively Reliable as compared to traditional WIA formats.

Customer reviews emerged as a new format of WIA in this study from consumers' perspective. Participants often benefited from the reviews written by other consumers about the product they are interested in or intend to purchase. This type of product review was preferred over other reviews provided by manufacturers or third-party sellers. The theme of Reliable and Honest showed the differences between product

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information from manufacturers and that from other consumers. The former is more Reliable but less Honest than the latter.

A few more new formats of WIA including interactive shows and news stories with product information were also detected, and consumers relatively preferred and were highly involved in these formats. They can be regarded as formats of WIA because consumers also get some product information from these formats regardless of their intentions.

Briefly, a variety of aspects of WIA are found in this study and some of them were also explored in WIA literature, while others were rarely touched on. Discussions about the detailed findings are presented in the following section.

ARGUING: DISCUSSIONS ABOUT CRITICAL FINDINGS

Based on the findings of this study, it is necessary to discuss further what they imply and how they can contribute to the body of WIA literature. First, the conceptualization of Web-Based Interactive Advertising (WIA) is still defendable. Most existing literature implicitly relies on traditional definitions of advertising, which were consistent through most marketing and advertising textbooks. Richards and Curran (2002) searched many marketing and advertising textbooks for their definitions of advertising and discerned a consensus in the existing or old definition as:

Advertising is a paid nonpersonal communication from an identified sponsor, using mass media to persuade or influence an audience (p.64).

This definition of advertising, as Richards and Curran (2002) also argue, is also consistent with textbooks from decades ago. There are several components in this definition and they are "paid," "nonpersonal," "identified sponsor," "mass media," and

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"persuade or influence." Richards and Curran (2002), by asking a variety of experts in the advertising field for their thoughts about the need for new definition, insist on the necessity of a new definition. Their panelists, although speaking from managerial perspectives, provided a somewhat new and updated definition of advertising. For example, "mass media" and "identified" were modified to "mediated form" and "identifiable." The concept of "paid" was also controversial. As the following argument from a panelist in their study shows:

> *I think "paid" is entirely arbitrary. There is a lot of advertising that isn't paid. Think about how many times the same people who want this in the definition have said: "The best advertising is word of mouth" (and thus not paid for). It's dumb to limit it this way* (p.74).

This argument is related to the "Customer review" format found in this study. Because the consumer, as noted in Chapter IV, greatly relies on this WIA format, it functions as advertising based on the broad conceptualization of WIA in this study. This format can be regarded as a "Word-of-Mouth (WOM)" on the Web. Because many WOM researchers agree on the important role of WOM in information search, decision-making, satisfaction, and so forth (e.g., Gilly et al., 1998; Duhan et al., 1997; Gelb and Johnson, 1995; Tax et al., 1993), "Customer reviews" can be considered as a format of WIA. Other newly emerging formats such as news or fictitious stories can be regarded as the same from the consumers' point of view. The "paid," in fact, was considered one of the core concepts of advertising, because most panelists insisted on keeping "paid" as a necessary distinction between advertising and public relations. However, this is arguable if seen from consumers' perspectives. To them, advertising and public relations may have few differences in that they are all the information about companies or brands (products)

that the consumer is exposed to. But, the relationship between advertising and public relations is neither aimed at nor empirically evident in this study. Rather, the current study pursues broadening the concept of WIA from a traditionally defined narrow concept. As noted in the beginning of this study, due to its infancy, researchers should consider as many as formats as possible within the realm of WIA rather than to limit the concept to a few formats.

Certainly, this study supports the idea that the corporate Website should be considered as a format of advertising as Singh and Dalal (1999) insisted. Some participants in this study regarded corporate Websites as promotional and a format of advertising. The definition provided by Richards and Curran (2002) is also consistent with the characteristic of corporate Website. In fact, the corporate Website is a non-personal (in a general sense) and paid promotional (or persuasive) message provided by an identifiable sponsor. Although other new formats such as "customer reviews" and "News stories about companies and brands" can hardly satisfy the rigid and contemporary definition of advertising, from the consumers' perspectives, these formats are not different from the definite advertising formats such as banners in terms of their basic functions to consumers.

Second, themes emerged in the study that are also found in the literature, although they are not the same. Some findings of this study are consistent with or well understood with the literature's support, while other findings show somewhat different aspects of WIA. In fact, most themes were also considered critical in existing WIA literature or somewhat relevant literatures such as "CMC (Computer-Mediated Communication)," "Online shopping behavior," and so forth. The following shows how each theme category

was portrayed and studied in the literature and how the current study showed different or similar aspects as compared to what the literature presented.

"Informative" and "Fun" are the most popular themes in the literature of Web-based consumer behavior. As described in Chapter II, these are two major motives for people to use the Internet, and information search is the major reason to get online. This is also confirmed in the current study; in fact, most participants mentioned that their Web navigations are primarily for specific information they intentionally seek.

Generally, the literature explicitly or implicitly agreed that "Informative" and "Fun" are positively related to preference for Web contents including WIA messages (Luo, 2002; Ebersole, 2000; Eighmey and McCord, 1998; Rubin, 1994). This study also verified this basic norm. The majority of the literature is more apt to regard these two motives separately, because authors seem to think that a single motive is maintained throughout the whole navigation session. However, the current study showed that consumers, in their normal Web navigations, frequently switch from one motive to the other. This dynamic nature of navigation motives was also proposed in the literature (Coyle and Gould, 2002; Hoffman and Novak, 1996; Rodgers and Thorson, 1999) as reviewed in Chapter II. Thus, this study confirmed the model. Proposed in the literature. As reviewed in Chapter II, the literature (e.g., Babin, Darden, and Griffin, 1994; Hammond et al., 1998) suggested that the motive of "Informative" could work with an initial goal of purchasing a product or gaining information about a product. However, the dynamic nature of motive switch shows that initial goal is not a legitimate criterion to fix a motive.

This study can make this dynamic relationship between "Informative" and "Fun" more advanced by showing an additional phenomenon. Based on the literature including Rodgers and Thorson's switching norm, these two fundamental motives of Web use are mutually exclusive and exist independently. However, this study found that there were somewhat mixed motives; in fact, seeking information a consumer needed ("Informative" motive) is a "Fun" activity to him or her. Future studies need to explore what kinds of WIA formats under which contexts can pursue both motives simultaneously.

"Intrusive" and "Annoying" have recently started getting attention from WIA researchers as typical characteristics of advertising on the Web in general, although they had been studied in traditional advertising environment since the 1960s (Bauer and Greyser, 1968). "Intrusive" has been regarded as a key to execute effective ad messages and has been widely recognized to make ads distinctive. However, as recent studies (e.g., Li et al., 2002; Edwards et al., 2002) reported, "Intrusive" WIA yields negative evaluations such as irritation and annoyance. For consumers, "Intrusive" ads in the Web environment, which is under a highly active behavioral mode, are often nothing without any recognition. With regard to this conclusion, the current study is consistent with those recent studies of "Intrusiveness" on the Web.

This study also provides some additional room for researchers to explore how "Intrusiveness" works with other pertinent factors on the Web. In fact, previous literature lacks consideration for various relevant factors and the holistic environment where "Intrusiveness" happens. For example, Edwards and his colleagues (2002) proposed a model to explain antecedents and consequences of "Ad Intrusiveness" on the Web with an experimental design. Due to the limitation of the experiments, which keep high level

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of control, the study seems rather unrealistic. Specifically, "forced exposure" was used to measure consumers' reaction to WIA messages such as pop-ups, but this "forced exposure" rarely happens in naturalistic navigation sessions. Although most highly "Intrusive" WIA formats appear with "forced exposure," consumers in general do not pay attention to them. Higher involvement in reading the overall Web contents including WIA messages is neither a common nor a naturalistic phenomenon in everyday lives. Nevertheless, the Edwards et al.(2002) findings of critical variables, antecedents and consequences of "Ad Intrusiveness" should be valuable and should be investigated by future researchers. This study does not contradict the literature, but contributes to it by adding a different view. The "Relevancy" of traditional ads was limited to the relevancy of the content on the Website in Edward et al.'s study (2002). The current study showed how WIA messages being "Relevant" to their personal interests could play an important role to reduce the negative feeling of "Intrusiveness" in WIA messages.

"Real-Time Communication" and "Controllable" are also embedded in the inherent characteristic of the Web itself, the interactivity, and distinguish WIA from the advertising in other traditional media. As reviewed in Chapter II, interactivity is a central construct of WIA and these concepts are major components of interactivity. Many relevant studies support that interactivity of the Web is characterized with a variety of functions supporting "Real-Time Communication" and "Controllable" capabilities (e.g., McMillan and Hwang, 2002; McMillan and Downes 2000; Kiousis, 1999; Williams, Rice, and Rogers 1988; Straubhaar and LaRose, 1996). As defined broadly, WIA also can have these concepts and utilize their appropriate functions.

Consistent with the majority of the literature, this study also showed a positive relationship between these components of interactivity and WIA evaluations. However, the current study explored a step further. "Real-Time Communication" and "Controllable" are not always good (in leading consumers' preference) as revealed in the previous chapter. For example, WIA formats that enabled synchronous communication should be more interactive in terms of "Real-Time Communication," and a corporate Website with numerous customizable options should be more "Controllable." However, these WIA contents often lead to less positive evaluations than less interactive WIA contents (asynchronous communication or Website with a few options). Consumers often liked to delay the decision instead of providing immediate responses. The number of options and the amount of information about products should be optimal for each consumer. The ability to process a certain amount of product information in terms of its quantity and quality differs dramatically across consumers. Although these "Interactivity" components are generally regarded positively, it should be recognized that they are not always good.

Although the literature rarely made direct investigation of the concept of "Easy," this theme is much related to the interactivity of the Web, especially "Controllable" and "Real-Time Communication." In fact, this theme mainly represents how easily users can handle WIA formats (e.g., navigating corporate Websites, accepting or rejecting traditional WIA formats), and this is strongly related to if a WIA format is controllable by users. The "Easy" thematic category often emerged as related to thought about the Web as a whole venue of product information in general as compared to other sources of product information or purchase. "Efficient" was one of the most frequent and

representative themes in "Easy." This is mainly due to the time-saving benefits that WIA and its vehicle, the Web, can better offer consumers. The metaphor of comparison between "driving to several local stores" and "visiting a few Websites" implies how and why consumers prefer the Web as a source of important product information and a place to purchase. The importance of "Easy" also emerged under this context in a broad sense. Some literature about the Internet usage largely from uses and gratification research tradition (e.g., Stafford and Stafford, 2000) reported that this efficient characteristic of the Web is one of the main reasons for people to go online. Therefore, the aspect of "Controllable" in "Easy" found in this study offers an important contribution to the literature, while the "Real-Time Communication" aspect of "Easy" can add to and complement the existing literatures about Internet behavior in general.

The theme of "Relevant," not explored in the WIA literature, is related to one of the most fundamental norms in consumer behavior, Goal-directed behavior. In fact, most consumer behavior literature implicitly or explicitly assumes that consumers behave to achieve their goals (Bagozzi and Dholakia, 1999; Gutman, 1982). As described in the literature review section, consumer behavior on the Web is mainly goal-oriented (Deci and Ryan, 1985; Papacharissi and Rubin, 2000; Rodgers and Thorson, 2000). "Relevant" means, in part, that WIA messages can more or less satisfy a consumer's need, the goal of Web navigation. Therefore, "Relevant," which represents whether WIA messages are relevant to users, should be a critical theme in capturing the overall picture of WIA. By this point, "Relevant" found in this study is generally consistent with the literature about goal-directed behavior on the Web.

However, the theme of "Relevant" should not be limited to a simple meaning within goal-directed behavior on the Web. The characteristic of "Relevant" was dynamic during the navigation. In other words, a "Relevant" WIA message can include product information a consumer gets a sudden interest in as well as what s(he) initially pursued. The latter is the case of goal-oriented behavior most literature referred to, while the former has been rarely explored. As noted above as well as in Chapter II, the motive of Web navigation changes dynamically during navigation. In the same vein, the "Relevant" messages can be anything consumers potentially or intentionally are interested in. During a single session of navigation, the object of "Relevant" as well as motives can change over time. This dynamic nature of navigation goals should be further investigated.

The concern about sources of WIA messages appeared as the theme of "Reliable / Honest." Some literature dealt with the reliability (or trustworthiness) of Web sources (e.g., Choi and Rifon, 2002; Wathen and Burkell, 2002; Eastin, 2001; Andie, 1997). In fact, as the number of Web users has increased, because the Internet has no government or regulations controlling the majority of its numerous contents, it has been harder to distinguish more credible (or reliable) sources from less credible sources. Therefore, as this study revealed, consumers are more likely to consider the reliability or the credibility of WIA sources.

The current study supports the positive relationship between source credibility on WIA and consumers' evaluations on it. Most authors (e.g., Choi and Rifon, 2002; Wathen and Burkell, 2002) agree that the source credibility (or reliability) positively influences consumers' evaluations on the Web and WIA messages. For example, Choi and Rifon (2002) propose a structural model showing source credibility on the Web's strong

influences on variables evaluating WIA messages such as attitude toward the Web ad. As shown in Chapter IV, participants showed strong preferences toward WIA messages from more reliable and trustworthy sources such as corporate Websites and customer reviews.

This study revealed an interesting phenomenon which can be a future research topic regarding the theme of "Reliable / Honest." Although the terms of "reliability" and "trustworthiness" of WIA sources are interchangeably used in the literature, the study distinguishes these two as described in Chapter IV. (For detailed information about the difference between reliable sources and trustworthy sources, see "Reliable / Honest" in Chapter IV). Briefly, the "Customer review" is more trustworthy and honest than corporate Websites, while the latter is more reliable than the former. A complex dynamic of objectivity and subjectivity of the WIA messages each source provides can determine this distinction. As exemplified before, the product information in corporate Websites is regarded as correct, sufficient, name-valued, and relatively objective, while customer reviews are often considered as somewhat distorted, partial, anonymous, and highly subjective. This comparison applies to the decision of "Reliable." In other words, a "Reliable" source is evaluated with how objective it is likely to be. On the contrary, subjectivity is more appreciated in evaluating "Honesty," which also means trustworthiness. Although corporate Websites' product information is explicitly regarded as objective and correct, consumers are likely to suspect or dislike the motives of promotional messages in this WIA format. Customer reviews are regarded as "Honest," because message creators, other customers who previously experienced the product, are not considered to act for their own interests (e.g., making money, getting fame). Thus, subjectivity can be a good characteristic for a WIA source to be "Honest."

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Overall, the outcome of this study supports the existing literature, and contributes to it by adding more critical and detailed information. Both WIA formats and WIA themes are woven with each other and following researchers can conduct research combining both. Specifically, researchers can consider several relevant themes to the specific WIA format such as pop-up ads they study. On the other hand, studies about specific WIA theme(s) also can benefit from this study by considering which WIA formats are more pertinent to the theme(s). General suggestions for other stakeholders as well as academic researchers are provided in the following section.

SUGGESTING: IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTITIONERS AND RESEARCHERS

In terms of the relevance, the current study also has some benefits. Three major stakeholders, academic researchers, practitioners (e.g., Web advertisers, Web Marketers), and teachers in colleges, should benefit from this study.

First, academic researchers in WIA fields can have more balanced and well-developed perspectives of various phenomena relating to WIA detailed in this study. As noted before, previous literature has drawn a skewed picture of consumer behavior with WIA by heavily adopting managerial-oriented perspectives only. Therefore, the current study showing the phenomenon from a neglected perspective, which is from consumers under realistic settings, can allow researchers to think about the phenomenon with a more balanced view.

Specifically, major themes representing how consumers think about WIA can be critical research topics for following studies with different approaches. For example, "Intrusiveness" of WIA should be investigated further. Its negative effects have been

recently identified, although traditional WIA formats, the most intrusive formats, have been widely used and much explored by numerous researchers. Nevertheless, "intrusiveness" of WIA and its antecedents and consequences is not a simple question and answer problem. As this study revealed, the level of intrusiveness varies by WIA formats. Moreover, some "Intrusive" ads can yield positive evaluations and ad acceptance under certain circumstances (See Chapter IV for detail). Other themes such as "Relevant" and "Fun" could intervene and weaken the rigid relationship between "Intrusive" and "Annoying." Other themes or variables could be involved in this phenomenon. Again, it is not simple enough to explain with a few variables how consumers interact with and think about WIA under their usual Web navigations.

Future researchers, therefore, can take some benefits from the current study in developing their theories or finding more specific and substantive factors. This study took an exploratory stance for each theme in sacrificing grasping the overview of WIA and consumer behavior phenomenon. Thus, it is somewhat limited to delve into each specific theme thoroughly, although each theme is presented with "thick descriptions (For details, See Chapter III)."

Second, a variety of advertising and marketing practitioners pursuing Web strategies can widen and deepen their understandings about their customers. As noted, traditional WIA formats have been very popular and are still used by many WIA practitioners, although there have been some skeptical voices about this. As discussed above about the "Intrusiveness," practitioners can improve their traditional WIA formats without sacrificing the "Intrusiveness." They, in fact, need to consider other factors such as "Relevant" and "Fun," which can reduce or eliminate the negative evaluations due to

the "Intrusiveness." On the other hand, they can also pay more attention to other types of WIA. Specifically, corporate Websites can be effectively managed (by WIA practitioners) and this WIA format has strong potential to reach consumers as an effective marketing communication channel. Most consumers visiting corporate Websites have their own definite and specific purposes, and they want relatively qualified information in terms of both width and depth. In fact, the expectation of product information availability on the Web is considerably different from that acquired from other traditional media such as magazines and television. Thus, corporate Website developers should provide as detailed information as possible. However, practitioners also need to bear in mind the fact that the meaning of "sufficient information" varies by consumers. This means that one-page information about a product can be enough for one customer but can be insufficient for another customer. Customization, as discussed in the "Controllable" section, should complement this problem, and the development of Web technology can also implement this.

Overall, with ample data of consumers' voices this study provides, practitioners can develop their WIA messages or formats more effectively in order to reach and appeal to consumers lessening negative consequences such as advertising avoidance. Although the study does not claim any generalizability, which enables practitioners to apply directly its outcomes to their fieldwork, they can get some valuable insights for facilitating their strategy developments. For example, product information contained in news stories is more likely to be regarded as reliable and consumers can pay more attention or get involved. This kind of public relations activities can be pursued through a variety of sources where target groups are likely to visit or to contact. Some themes like

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"Fun," "Relevant," and "Reliable" were found to be an effective component, which leads a consumer on the Web to be involve in messages. It can be a possible way for practitioners to consider targeting consumers' hobbies and characteristics and to deliver their WIA messages through any hobby-pursuing sites such as entertainment sites (to satisfy the "Fun" and "Relevant" needs) as well as their corporate Websites (for being "Reliable").

Third, teachers in college classes, both in undergraduate and graduate programs, can get some advantages from the findings of this study. As more and more students have showed strong interests in the Internet and advertising activities on it, WIA is inevitably a critical topic in the advertising or marketing classes. Although most students in the class dealing with WIA topics are future practitioners who are required to gain managerial-oriented perspectives and skills, they also need to have a thorough understanding about consumers' perspectives. Although undergraduate classes may need to be more practical, without balanced and sufficient understanding about the overall phenomenon, it is hard to develop their abilities to manage effective WIA campaigns. Therefore, teachers need to help students have broad and various perspectives as well as to provide them solid literature and cases. Teachers can take full advantages of a variety of examples from everyday lives found in this study for their students.

CIRCUMSCRIBING: LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Although the study gives many implications and benefits, it had some limitations, which should be addressed in future studies. First, the data need to be more sufficient. Due to the time constraints and viability, the current study limited a maximum of an hour

session for each participant. Because in-depth interviews as well as naturalistic observation aim to achieve extensive and thorough understanding of interviewees' (or participants') views, a series of sessions with each participant can provide more sufficient data with various contexts. In order to balance the depth of exploration of each theme with the time or viability constraints, following studies may need to focus one or a couple of specific theme category with longer and deeper data collection.

Second, the data need to be collected from more various informants in terms of some factors relating to the thoughts about and interaction with WIA. Because the study took relatively heavy users, light users' voices are easily neglected. Although the proportion of heavy users, as noted in Chapter III, is likely to be larger, light users will always exist. Differences in demographics and Web experiences (or expertise) can also yield different outcomes. Younger consumers like children whom this study did not take into account, will continuously learn how to use the Web. People who have just started using the Web may show somewhat different outcomes than heavy users do. Another examples can be Web usage environment. Singles' Web uses can differ from the Web use patterns of married people or people with children. As some authors (Davis, 1976; Park, 1982) in consumer research in general argued, the decision making in household is a lot different from that of individual. The dynamic dyad in decision making between husband and wife is more interactive and complicated than individuals' decision making (Park, 1982). This also can apply to Web usage. Although the current study included a few married people and parents, most of them were singles. Any following study may need to investigate household Web usage in depth.

Third, upon getting holistic views from this or similar studies, any following research may need to pursue generalizations of findings. For example, each theme can have its antecedents and consequences, and their specific relationships can be clearer with controlled examinations. Although experimental design research lacks grasping realistic outlooks, it can bring the accuracy of outcomes, which naturalistic and uncontrolled research lack. As McGrath (1982) insisted, every study should have a competitive advantage in a side in sacrificing of the other side, any single study cannot draw a complete picture of a phenomenon and a series of relevant studies should help the to capture more holistic and accurate views.

Fourth, due to the lack of managerial perspective, this study does not do much to delve into finding antecedents and consequences of positive evaluations of WIA messages. Because a major question most practitioners seek to answer is how to perform effective WIA campaign, any following studies should make more efforts to find relevant antecedents and consequences of various WIA executions. However, the outcomes of this study should help this mainstream of WIA study by providing wide grounds for doing so. In fact, the study showed whether and how each theme is related to consumers' evaluations of various WIA formats and messages. For example, even though "Real-Time Communication" and "Controllable" had relatively positive relationships with preference of WIA, there were some variations and controversies (e.g., all synchronous WIA executions or all highly customizable WIA contents are not always welcomed). These two, as noted before, are major components of perceived interactivity, which has been regarded to positively affect the preference of WIA in general. Therefore, it is

questionable whether perceived interactivity and preference of WIA messages are positively related with each other.

<div align="center">FINAL NOTES</div>

This study investigated how consumers think about and interact with various WIA in their everyday lives. However, the study does not answer all questions related to this research topic, and most specific results require further investigations. Rather, this study provides the holistic overview of consumer behavior with WIA in realistic situations. Numerous research topics are proposed based on the findings. Each theme this study found should be dealt with in a more concentrated fashion. Additional studies with this qualitative approach are also needed to get deeper understanding of each theme and any possible additional themes.

The most critical product this study yielded can be encourage other researchers to rethink the phenomenon of WIA and its underlying assumptions. Again, consumers on the Web are active and powerful, create and modify WIA, make meaning of WIA, and are considerably different from the consumers in front of traditional media. Without considering this fundamental norm, researchers may be overlooking an important aspect of this phenomenon. This study can provide a starting point for every researcher to view the phenomenon of WIA from the consumers' points of view.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1.

<u>Handout for the Class: A Brief Summary of Research Procedure</u>

Primary researcher: Jang-Sun Hwang (Sun)
Contact: jhwang@utk.edu, 946-8750

First of all, I appreciate you with my research. Your participation is invaluable. Your information will be kept confidential, and will be used for the research purpose only. If you have any question about your participation in the study, please do not hesitate to ask me by email or phone.

The study aims to explore how people use and think about the Internet (or World Wide Web) and Web advertising. Followings are specific procedures of this study. Time estimation for each step can be varied. But, the whole session will take an hour or less. Each session will be recorded for academic purpose.

- You will be assigned an hour session to join in the study.
- You will receive <u>an email</u> to ask some questions (less than 10 Qs about your Internet use and a few demographic things) soon. They are simple questions and it takes for you to complete about 5 minutes.
- In your session, you are asked to navigate two or three of your favorite (or frequently visited) Web sites. This navigation session will take about <u>30 minutes</u>. Every activity on the Website you make needs to be consistent to your usual and normal behavior in your everyday lives. During your navigation session:
    o You need to talk aloud what you do on the screen (for example, "I am scrolling down to see some links" "I am going to the next page to see what's in there").
    o I will also ask some questions to know your thoughts and feelings about some specific features or an entire Web site.
- After this, I will interview you for about <u>30 minutes</u>.

After each session, you can be contacted to check if your thoughts are differently reported or recorded in my notes.

Thanks for your helps. Again, if you have any questions about or interests in this study, feel free to contact me. I will be happy to talk to you.

Jang-Sun Hwang (Sun)

Doctoral Candidate
Department of Advertising
College of Communications
University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Appendix 2.

<u>The Initial Email Sent Participants Prior to the Session</u>

Dear (name of participant who agreed to join in the study):

First of all, I appreciate you with my research. Your participation is invaluable. Your information will be kept confidential, and will be used for the research purpose only. If you have any question about your participation in the study, please do not hesitate to ask me using this email address.

As you were previously informed, you will be asked to navigate a few Web sites that are your favorites or that you have visited frequently. This session varies by participants but will not take longer than 50 minutes. After this Web navigation session, you will talk to me about what you think of commercial messages on the Web. This interview session will take about 20-30 minutes, but it also varies from participant to participant. Overall, the total time amount of whole session will be no longer than 1.5 hour.

In order to setup your session, I need some information from you. Please, reply to this email with answers to these questions. You can write your answers right below each question.

1. Please least 3 (or maybe five) Web sites that you visit frequently and/or that are your favorites.

2. On average, how many hours per day do you spend online?

3. How often do you go online? (e.g., twice a day, once every two days)

4. When did you start going online? (e.g., five years ago)

5. Where are you usually located when you go online? (e.g., university labs, dormitory, apartment)

6. Your age

7. Gender

8. Academic major

9. Hometown

Finally, to make your participation easier, please tell me when you are available to join in the study. Please, list at least two time blocks that are good for you. Each time block needs to have 1.5 hour.

Appendix 3.

<u>Guideline for Participant Observation Session: Things to be observed and noted</u>

Starting request: Show the list of Web sites that the respondent sent and ask: Please go to any of these Web sites that you would like. Do the things you usually do at the site. As you do, talk out loud about what you are doing.

1. General things
   a) Site addresses
   b) Subsequent sites participants actually visited
   c) How long they stay in each site

2. Which parts or messages they pay more attention to
   a) How do they ignore or pay attention to some parts
      i)   Scrolling to lower parts of a Web site?
      ii) 4Clicking a link before downloading all contents including images, banners, etc?
         (1) If so, which parts are shown before moving to a next page?

3. How they move within a Web site by clicking links
   a) Mouse click? Back button or backspace key?
   b) Does the back-and-forward process happen frequently?
      i)   Is a straightforward process (which is opposite to back-and-forward process) more dominant?
   c) How do they deal with so-called Web ads (e.g., banners, pop-ups & -unders, etc.)
   d) How do they move from a site to the other (e.g., typing address, bookmark)

4. Articulation process during PO session
   a) Voices will be recorded.

b) The activities with important remarks (judged by researcher's intuition) will be noted.

< Participant Observation – Possible Short Questions >

Some questions such as followings can be asked during participant observation sessions. These questions can also be asked during depth interview session if not dealt with in observation session.

1. Web site in general

- How often do you visit this site?

- How long do you usually stay in this site?

- Why do you like this Web site?

2. Specifications of Web sites

- Why do you like (some features or subsequent pages participants liked to view)?

- Why do you click this (if a participant clicks a hyperlink, banners, etc.)?

- Do you know (or recall) what (some commercial features such as banners) are for?

- Have you ever clicked them? If so (or if not), why?

- What do you think about each feature (e.g., anything found in Web sites)?
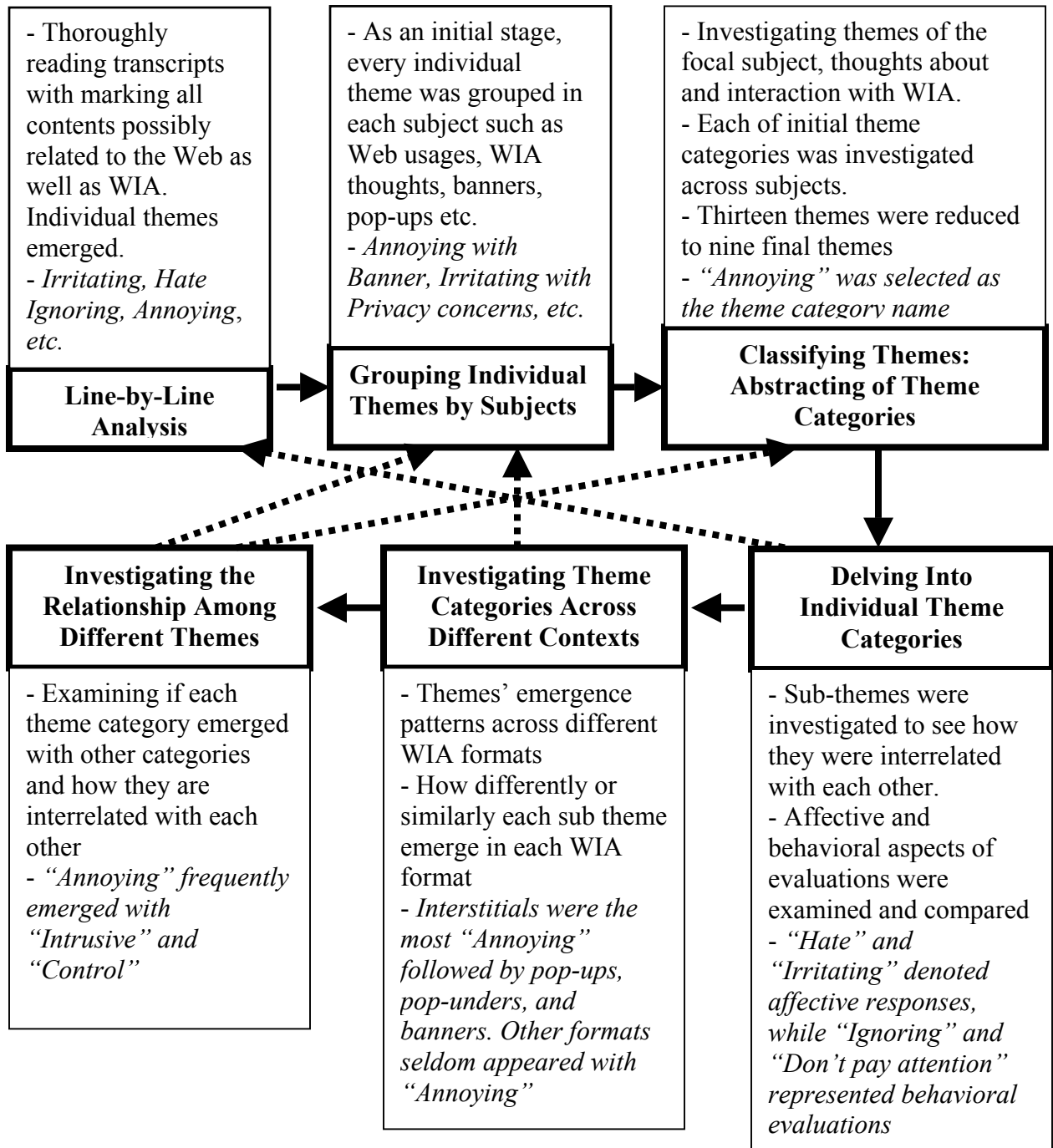
Appendix 4.

Guideline for Depth Interview Session: Topic Areas and Possible Questions

Topic Area	Possible Questions

General Web navigation (both in PO session and in the past)	• What do you think about the Web (the Internet) in general?
	 • What kinds of information do you usually get from the Web?
	 • Do you enjoy getting online?
	  - If so, which sites and why?
	  - If not, why not?
	 • Do you talk with others about your Web-based activities and experiences?
	 • What do you think drives you to go online?
	  - Entertainment / Information search
	  - Enjoying, Time-killing
	  - Obsession / need-based?
	 • If I said the Web is like "blank" how would you fill in that blank?
	 • When you get bored, have you got online?
	  - If so, what do you do in this case?

Commercial aspects of the Web and Meaning of WIA	• Let's think about several products or brands you are familiar with. Do you think that any parts of your thoughts and/or feelings about them are from the Web?
	  - If not, why not?
	  - If so, what kinds of products (or brands)?
	  - How did those thoughts and/or feelings come to you? Was it intentional or accidental?
	  - Are they different from thoughts/feelings about products/brands that arise from your experiences with

	other media such as TV and magazines? Why or why not?
	
	 • What do you think about commercial (or promotional) vs. non-commercial (or non-promotional) parts of the Web? (This might lead to answers related to things like pop-ups rather than corporate Web sites. Probe if needed.)
	
	 • Have you ever intentionally searched for product information on the Web?
	   - If not, why not?
	   - If so, which product from which sites and why?
	   - Was the search useful or useless?
	
	 • Have you ever purchased through the Web?
	   - If not, why not?
	   - If so, what was it?
	   - Why did you get it from the Web instead of other methods (e.g., shopping at a mall, mail order, etc.)?

WIA formats	• What do you think and feel about Web advertising such as:
	   - Banners, Pop-ups & -unders, interstitials (needs to explain), Web sites, and others
	
	 • Have you ever responded to Web ads (e.g. click on the banner)?
	   - If not, why not?
	   - If so, explain the experience?

Appendix 5.

An Example of Coding Procedure: "Annoying"

- Thoroughly reading transcripts with marking all contents possibly related to the Web as well as WIA. Individual themes emerged.
- *Irritating, Hate Ignoring, Annoying, etc.*

Line-by-Line Analysis

- As an initial stage, every individual theme was grouped in each subject such as Web usages, WIA thoughts, banners, pop-ups etc.
- *Annoying with Banner, Irritating with Privacy concerns, etc.*

Grouping Individual Themes by Subjects

- Investigating themes of the focal subject, thoughts about and interaction with WIA.
- Each of initial theme categories was investigated across subjects.
- Thirteen themes were reduced to nine final themes
- *"Annoying" was selected as the theme category name*

Classifying Themes: Abstracting of Theme Categories

Investigating the Relationship Among Different Themes

- Examining if each theme category emerged with other categories and how they are interrelated with each other
- *"Annoying" frequently emerged with "Intrusive" and "Control"*

Investigating Theme Categories Across Different Contexts

- Themes' emergence patterns across different WIA formats
- How differently or similarly each sub theme emerge in each WIA format
- *Interstitials were the most "Annoying" followed by pop-ups, pop-unders, and banners. Other formats seldom appeared with "Annoying"*

Delving Into Individual Theme Categories

- Sub-themes were investigated to see how they were interrelated with each other.
- Affective and behavioral aspects of evaluations were examined and compared
- *"Hate" and "Irritating" denoted affective responses, while "Ignoring" and "Don't pay attention" represented behavioral evaluations*

Note)   ➡ : Linear Process (These six major steps were generally proceeded one after the other)

    ▪▪▶ : Re-checking process (Three later steps needed to re-check the results of prior steps)

VITA

Jang-Sun Hwang is originally from Seoul, Korea. In 1997, after receiving a Bachelor of Political Science degree in the Department of Advertising and Public Relations at *Chung-Ang University, Seoul*, he entered the Master's program at the *University of Tennessee, Knoxville* (M.S. in Communications with Advertising specialization). In his doctoral program at *UTK*, he majored in Advertising and minored in Marketing.

His academic interests fall under various combinations of consumer behavior, marketing communication, interactive advertising, and cross cultural studies. His academic works have been appeared in *Journal of Advertising, International Journal of Advertising, Journal of Interactive Advertising, Journal of Intercultural Communication Research*, and presented in major national conferences including *AAA (American Academy of Advertising), AEJMC (Association for Education of Journalism and Mass Communications), ICA (International Communication Association), and PCA/ACA (Pop Culture Association / American Culture Association)*.