

AIS Transactions on Human-Computer Interaction

Volume 1 | Issue 4

Article 1

Winter 12-29-2009

Diagnosing and Managing Online Business-to-Consumer (B2C) Relationships: Toward an eCommerce B2C Relationship Stage Theory

Damon E. Campbell

Millsaps College, damon.campbell@millsaps.edu

John D. Wells

Washington State University, wellsjd@wsu.edu

Joseph S. Valacich

Washington State University, jsv@wsu.edu

Follow this and additional works at: <https://aisel.aisnet.org/thci>

Recommended Citation

Campbell, D. E., Wells, J. D., & Valacich, J. (2009). Diagnosing and Managing Online Business-to-Consumer (B2C) Relationships: Toward an eCommerce B2C Relationship Stage Theory. *AIS Transactions on Human-Computer Interaction*, 1(4), 108-132. Retrieved from <https://aisel.aisnet.org/thci/vol1/iss4/1>
DOI:

This material is brought to you by the AIS Journals at AIS Electronic Library (AISeL). It has been accepted for inclusion in AIS Transactions on Human-Computer Interaction by an authorized administrator of AIS Electronic Library (AISeL). For more information, please contact elibrary@aisnet.org.



Transactions on Human-Computer Interaction

THCI

Theory & Review

Diagnosing and Managing Online Business-to-Consumer (B2C) Relationships: Toward an eCommerce B2C Relationship Stage Theory

Damon E. Campbell

Millsaps College
damon.campbell@millsaps.edu

John D. Wells

Washington State University
wellsjd@wsu.edu

Joseph S. Valacich

Washington State University
jsv@wsu.edu

Abstract

The emergence of eCommerce has provided organizations with an unprecedented opportunity to take advantage of business-to-consumer (B2C) interactions. Generally speaking, relationships move through various stages, when a customer chooses to establish a relationship with a person or an organization. Likewise, when a customer forms an ongoing relationship with an online organization, it progresses through similar stages. Yet, the IT-mediated nature of B2C eCommerce interactions causes the manifestation of these stages to be different from offline B2C interactions. As such, this paper proposes a theoretical framework for examining stages of online B2C relationships, based on Stage Theory. The proposed eCommerce B2C Relationship Stage Theory (eB2C-RST) highlights three stages of eCommerce B2C relationships from the customer's perspective: Attraction, Build-Up, and Continuance. This theoretical framework provides a foundation for both research and practice in the areas of interface design and online B2C customer relationship management.

Keywords: Business-to-Consumer Relationships, Electronic Commerce, Customer Relationship Management (CRM), Stage Theory, Relationship Marketing

Ping Zhang was the accepting Senior Editor. This article was submitted on 1/20/2009 and accepted on 11/11/2009. It was with the authors 31 weeks for 2 revisions.

Campbell D.E., J.D. Wells, and J.S. Valacich (2009) "Diagnosing and Managing Online Business-to-Consumer (B2C) Relationships: Toward an eCommerce B2C Relationship Stage Theory," *AIS Transactions on Human-Computer Interaction*, (1) 4, pp. 108-132

INTRODUCTION

Customer¹ relationship management (CRM) focuses on “attracting and keeping economically valuable customers” (Romano and Fjermestad, 2002b p. 7). Research has shown that attracting new online customers can cost 20 to 40 percent more than traditional offline settings (Reichheld and Scheffer, 2000); likewise, by raising the retention rates of online customers by as little as five percent can increase profitability from 30 to 85 percent for an organization (Gefen, 2002). Clearly, attracting, building, and maintaining strong customer relationships are critical activities to a successful online business.

While CRM has its origins in traditional marketing (i.e., relationship marketing), the rapid growth of the Internet and electronic commerce (eCommerce) has been a catalyst for renewed interest in this area not only from marketing researchers, but also those in the information systems domain (Romano and Fjermestad, 2002a). The Internet provides an IT-enabled platform offering a high degree of interactivity and control for customers (Liu and Shrum, 2002; Rayport and Jaworski, 2003). Likewise, this platform provides organizations with an unprecedented ability to gather, store, and personalize “profile and preference” information to better engage customers in one-to-one interaction (Valacich et al., 2007; Wells et al., 1999).

A relational view of eCommerce emphasizes various “social and psychological factors in online B2C interactions” (Li et al., 2006 p. 105) in order to identify ways to strengthen social connections between an organization and its customers. While businesses may not consider B2C interactions as relational, such interactions are clearly growing more personal as evidenced by many streams of research focusing on issues such as customer loyalty (Gefen, 2002; Prewitt, 2002), online personal information disclosure (Awad and Krishnan, 2006), positive and negative emotional responses (Sun and Zhang, 2006), personal trust (McKnight et al., 2002), and customer retaliation for scorned relationships (Grégoire and Fisher, 2006). The focus on such relational factors is clearly warranted, given that eCommerce customers are growing more accustomed to personalized interactions with businesses (Awad and Krishnan, 2006; Greer and Murtaza, 2003; Tam and Ho, 2005).

Prior research suggests that customer relationships can be understood and, therefore, strengthened through two distinct perspectives. First, relationship *breadth* focuses on how relationships evolve over time, acknowledging that relationships can have many phases (e.g., beginning, middle, or end). As such, organizations develop strategies for moving relationships to a desired stage (e.g., use of loyalty programs). An example of research regarding relationship breadth includes Dwyer et al. (1987), which identified five different stages in buyer-seller relationships. Similar conceptual life cycles have also been proposed and tested for many other types of relationships (e.g., Altman and Taylor, 1973; Festinger, 1954; Huesmann and Levinger, 1976), including IT-enabled customer service (Ives and Mason, 1990).

Second, relationship *depth* focuses on the various factors that strengthen or weaken a relationship within a particular stage (e.g., trust, satisfaction, brand equity, visual appeal, communication, conflict). For example, Morgan and Hunt’s (1994) Commitment-Trust theory of relationships examined the importance and role of trust and commitment within a relationship marketing context. From a B2C eCommerce perspective, researchers have focused on identifying factors for attracting customers (Watson et al., 1998) as well as increasing website use (Van der Heijden, 2003), reuse (Loiacono et al., 2007), and eLoyalty (Anderson and Srinivasan, 2003). Clearly, depending on the specific stage, different factors will play greater (or lesser) roles in strengthening (or weakening) a B2C eCommerce relationship.

Although prior research has examined online B2C customer relationships from these perspectives, no known work has *comprehensively* examined these distinct mechanisms. Consequently, the goal of this work is to provide a comprehensive theoretical framework for understanding online B2C relationships that captures both relationship depth and breadth. Such an understanding will ultimately allow for organizations to tailor a shopping experience to an individual, based on the current stage of a B2C relationship. By understanding the key factors of each stage in online B2C relationships and the role each stage plays in attracting and retaining online customers, more effective strategic decisions can be made in managing these B2C interactions in order to maximize desired outcomes at each stage and overall.

Relationships are a fundamental derivative of exchange and interaction. Therefore, it is intuitive that relationships have been studied in a variety of disciplines and from a variety of perspectives. For instance, psychology scholars have examined interpersonal relationships (e.g., Altman and Taylor, 1973; Altman and Taylor, 1987; Festinger, 1954; Huesmann and Levinger, 1976). Likewise, marketing scholars have examined relationships in terms of relationship marketing (e.g., Dwyer et al., 1987), brand relationships (Fournier, 1998), and agency relationships (Bergen et al., 1992), while management scholars have examined business-to-business relationships (Lane et al., 2001). More recently, information systems scholars have examined business-to-customer relationships within an electronic

¹ This paper uses the terms User, Consumer, and Customer synonymously.

commerce context (Li et al., 2006; Romano and Fjermestad, 2002a). Therefore, many different relationship perspectives and models exist in the literature (e.g., stage perspectives, consumer satisfaction models, brand equity/extensions models, trust models, channel management models, and so on). We found Levinger's (1980) Stage Theory to provide a comprehensive lens through which to examine the eCommerce context.

Stage Theory identifies five different stages that an interpersonal relationship undergoes: Acquaintance /Attraction; Build-Up; Continuation /Consolidation; Deterioration; and Ending. This theory examines the changing dynamic between parties as a relationship progresses through the different phases, and classifies each into a specific stage. In order to gain broad insights into B2C relationships, we extend this theoretical perspective to online B2C relationships.

Building on Stage Theory (Levinger, 1980), our theoretical framework, which we call the eCommerce B2C Relationship Stage Theory (eB2C-RST), proposes that aspects of the Human-Computer Interface can be utilized to attract, build, and maintain customer relationships. Variations of Stage Theory have been applied to contexts beyond interpersonal relationships (Stern, 1997); therefore, it is likely that it can also be applied to online B2C customer relationships. Given that our focus is on attracting, building, and maintaining B2C relationships, we focus only on the first three phases of Stage Theory (i.e., Attraction, Build-Up, and Continuance).

The remainder of the paper is organized as follows. First, we review relevant literature, build the eB2C-RST theoretical framework, and provide its associated propositions. We then describe an approach for testing and applying the framework. Finally, we summarize the theoretical and practical contributions of eB2C-RST and include suggestions for future research.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Traditional relationship marketing research has referenced many different areas of theory and research in order to identify key characteristics in buyer-seller relationships. Specifically, research has included theoretical perspectives originating in the study of sociology, social psychology, economics, law, organizational science, political science, and marketing (Eiriz and Wilson, 2006). Furthermore, Sheth and Parvatiyar (1995), in their review of relational marketing literature, identified 11 different bodies of literature that inform relational marketing. These streams of research have varying foci including specific variables (e.g., risk) and behavior, and other streams have been exploratory in identifying unique areas of buyer-seller relationships. Each type of research has been recognized to offer contributions to the understanding of relationship marketing. We expect the same to be true in researching the influence of eCommerce B2C relationships. Table 1 summarizes various theoretical perspectives ranging from interpersonal (i.e., person-to-person) theories to perspectives on person-to-organization relationships, including IS research on eCommerce customer relationships, which could reasonably be expected to offer unique insight to the study of eCommerce B2C relationships.

Table 1, although not exhaustive, summarizes and gives examples of the many possible theoretical perspectives that could provide unique insight to the phenomenon of eCommerce customer relationships. As can be seen, Stage Theory seems well equipped to provide a combination of theoretical insights based on the breadth and depth perspectives. Additionally, and consistent with past research in the area of relationship marketing and eCommerce, we posit that the use of an interpersonal relationship theory is appropriate for examining B2C relationships (Dwyer et al., 1987; Li et al., 2006; Morgan and Hunt, 1994). According to the theory of personal relationships, three elements define a relationship²: interdependence, interaction, and attribution to dispositions of the other party (Kelley, 1979). Li et al. (2006) detailed how these elements are met in eCommerce B2C relationships. Thus, the application of an interpersonal relationship theory, such as Stage Theory, to better understand online B2C relationships seems appropriate.

Fundamental Assumptions and Theoretical Boundaries

As with all conceptual endeavors, the development of this framework requires certain assumptions and theoretical boundaries. The following are details of the fundamental assumptions made during the development of this framework.

First, from the customer's perspective in an eCommerce context, the website and the organization are perceived to be the same entity. Previous research in the area of online B2C interaction has suggested that customers perceive the website as a representative of the organization (Winter et al., 2003), and do not perceive a difference between the website and the organization (Gefen et al., 2003; Li et al., 2006). In fact, IS scholars have argued that "when the customer sees a website and not the firm, the site becomes the firm" (Pitt et al., 1999 p. 12).

² Many types of eCommerce interactions would not fit this definition. For example, a single, one-time, and spontaneous purchase would not be considered an online B2C relationship.

Table 1: Summary of Literature Offering a Relational Perspective

<i>Theoretical Perspective</i>	<i>Contribution</i>	<i>Theoretical Focus</i>	<i>Examples in Literature</i>
Interpersonal Relationship Theories			
Attachment Style	Individual differences in attachment style influence our relationships	Relationship Depth	(Cassidy and Shaver, 1999; Hazan and Shaver, 1987)
Ben Franklin Effect	Helping others encourages liking		(Jecker and Landy, 1969)
Contact Hypothesis	Understanding breeds friendship		(Sherif et al., 1961)
Law of Attraction & Repulsion Hypothesis	Similarity in attitudes encourages friendship		(Byrne, 1971; Rosenbaum, 1986)
Matching Hypothesis	Similarity in levels of attractiveness leads to romantic relationships		(Walster et al., 1966)
Mere Exposure Theory	Exposure to others increases liking		(Kunst-Wilson and Zajonc, 1980; Miller, 1976; Sawyer, 1981; Zajonc, 1968)
Proximity Effect	Interacting increases the chance of friendship		(Festinger, 1954)
Reinforcement-Affect Theory	Conditioning leads to liking others	(Byrne and Clore, 1970)	
Interpersonal Relationship Stage Perspectives			
Social Exchange	Offers sub-processes and stages of increasing closeness	Relationship Breadth	(Burgess and Huston, 1979; Scanzoni, 1979; Thibaut and Kelley, 1959)
Social Penetration Theory	Relationships go through stages of increasing familiarity		(Altman and Taylor, 1973; Altman and Taylor, 1987)
Stimulus-Value-Role Model	Reactions to situations define roles		(Murstein, 1970)
Relationship dissolution theory	Breakdowns happen in stages		(Cody, 1982; Duck, 1982)
Stage Theory	Relationships go through several stages	Relationship Breadth and Depth	(Levinger, 1980)
Marketing Theories			
Buyer-Seller Relationships	5 stages of a buyer-seller relationship ranging from awareness to dissolution	Relationship Breadth	(Dwyer et al., 1987)
Integrated Model of Buyer-Seller Relationships	Adds a depth focus to the stages of B2C relationships	Relationship Breadth and Depth: However, recent empirical studies do not support the theoretical model	(Powers and Reagan, 2007; Wilson, 1995)
Expectations-Communication Behavior-Appraisal model	Importance of previous expectations	Relationship Breadth	(Celuch et al., 2006)
Commitment-Trust Theory	Importance of trust and commitment	Relationship Depth	(Morgan and Hunt, 1994)
Organizational Theories			
Agency Theory	Examines the relationship between organizations, agents, and others	Relationship Depth	(Bergen et al., 1992; Jensen and Meckling, 1976; Mishra et al., 1998; Ross, 1973)
Employee Recruitment	Attracting employees is necessary for maximizing human resources	Relationship Depth	(Breaugh and Starke, 2000; Highhouse et al., 2003)
Information Systems Related Perspectives			
Technology Acceptance	Identifies technologically related factors that encourage adoption of IS and IT	Relationship Depth	(Gefen et al., 2003; Loiacono et al., 2007)
eCRM	Recognizes the importance of relational factors in B2C interactions	Relationship Depth	(Li et al., 2006; Pavlou, 2003; Romano and Fjermestad, 2002a)
Diffusion of Innovations Theory	Acknowledges 5 stages for innovations to be adopted as well as technological factors	Relationship Depth: all stages of original work have not been extended to the study of eCommerce	(Agarwal and Prasad, 1998; Moore and Benbasat, 1991; Rogers, 1983)
Customer service life cycle model	Applies the customer resource life cycle model to eCommerce	Relationship Breadth	(Ives and Mason, 1990)
Digital Marketing Framework	Identifies stages of online relationship leading to engagement	Relationship Breadth	(Parsons et al., 1998)
HCI and Design Science	Identifies interface characteristics that influence user perceptions	Relationship Breadth	(Loiacono et al., 2007; Straub et al., 2002a; Straub et al., 2002b)

Second, the theoretical model is proposed to capture the customer's perspective of an online B2C relationship not the organization's³. Because Stage Theory examines relationships from a single individual's perspective, it lends itself to examine consumer perceptions of eCommerce B2C relationships. Progression of a relationship is dependent upon individual decisions to begin or continue a relationship, and it is through understanding what influences each of these individual decisions that one can gain a depth perspective of a relationship. In other words, organizations depend on customers to willingly progress in a relationship. As such, by understanding the customer's perspective, one can determine key factors influencing eCommerce relationships.

Third, the theoretical model presented here is proposed from a variance perspective. Although the model does offer both breadth and depth perspectives, this framework is not a process theory. Markus and Robey (1988) define a process theory as a model concerned with explaining how outcomes develop over time. We do not attempt to theorize on time order, causation, or any other process variables. Therefore, the model does not qualify as a process theoretical perspective according to this definition. The exogenous constructs presented in this model are shown to predict the desirable endogenous constructs associated with the different stages of an online B2C relationship. For instance, the level of any construct at Time N may not be the same at Time N+1, but yet is predictive of the associated endogenous construct. Given the variance perspective for this theory, we can gain insight, albeit implicitly, to the associated process by understanding the ordinal nature of the relationship stages. By understanding the key relationships between the predictors in this model as proposed in this cross-sectional view, and the time order in which the breadth perspective gives us, a holistic conceptual understanding of online B2C relationships is possible.

Finally, identification of the constructs included in the theoretical model is done by identifying the underlying factors set forth in Stage Theory and instantiating those factors to an online B2C relationship context. The theoretical propositions and constructs presented here are intended to be a faithful instantiation of the Stage Theory perspective in an online B2C relationship context, and are supported by evidence found in the IS literature. We admit (and expect) that there may be alternative relationships among these constructs not represented in this model; however, in this conceptual endeavor, our focus was to stay true to the Stage Theory perspective. For example, there may actually be direct effects between constructs where this model implies mediation, or there may be relationships between the exogenous constructs represented in the model. Additionally, there may be alternative perspectives (e.g., those summarized in Table 1) that provide support for additional relationships between variables in our model that we do not propose. We do not claim such relationships do not exist, but maintain they are outside the scope of this research. We leave these issues to future research.

THEORETICAL DEVELOPMENT: THE ECOMMERCE B2C RELATIONSHIP STAGE THEORY

In our attempt to extend Levinger's work, we summarize many of the tenants of his work and show how the underlying factors presented in Stage Theory are also relevant to eCommerce customer relationships. Identification of these stages and the instantiation of Stage Theory to an online B2C relationship context were done by applying the underlying factors originally set forth by Stage Theory to the context of online B2C relationships. We set forth the rationale for these propositions with the proposed definitions. In each of these areas, we detail the Stage Theory conceptualization and posit similar variables found in the observation and research in an eCommerce context. We review the relevant interpersonal relationship literature used in Levinger's work and contemporary research to show the similarities in the phenomena of interest as well as the applicability of this theoretical perspective to eCommerce B2C relationships.

Stages of eCommerce Relationships

In proposing Stage Theory, also known as the ABCDE model, Levinger (1980) first detailed the five distinct stages of a relationship providing the breadth perspective. Attraction is the initial phase, followed by Build-Up, which is an elaborative phase of exploration by both parties. Continuation/Consolidation is marked by long-term stability and mutual commitment. Deterioration is a crumbling phase where inequities arise. This creates an atmosphere that is not mutually beneficial. If such inequities are not addressed or otherwise continue, the final phase of a relationship, Ending, may be the result. Ending occurs when there is a breakup, dissolution, or death. Following the introduction of these stages, Levinger reviews the extant research. For each stage of a relationship, Levinger conceptualizes the importance of specific factors and research results. Although Stage Theory does not propose an explicit theoretical model, the description of each phase details its prerequisites, distinct factors, and qualifying conditions. Therefore, the conceptual work provides a depth perspective for each stage.

³ The eB2C-RST does not attempt to model how organizations perceive B2C relationships (i.e., the individual consumers) nor inform how organizations perform decision making in the context of B2C relationships. An organization has purposes different from the customer. Organizations do not make decisions like individuals [Sarker, 2006; Sarker et al., 2005].

The first stage of our model is *Attraction*, and is defined as an overall evaluation or attitude toward a potential relationship. During *Attraction*, two important conditions exist that distinguish it from other stages. First, both parties have little or no personal experience with each other. Second, *Attraction* is limited to attitudinal factors associated with the initial appeal of a relationship. *Attraction* has been acknowledged by many theoretical perspectives as an integral part of many relationships including interpersonal (Altman and Taylor, 1973; Scanzoni, 1979; Thibaut and Kelley, 1959), B2C (Dwyer et al., 1987; Powers and Reagan, 2007; Wilson, 1995), and business-to-employee (Highhouse et al., 2003). Ecommerce research has also found that a key to successful strategies is attracting online customers, and has presented many strategies for achieving successful attraction (Watson et al., 1998). This stage is focused on appraising the potential risks and rewards of an online B2C relationship. Subsequent relationship stages (e.g., *Build-Up*) differ from *Attraction* in that they deal with appraising potential for, as well as realized, gains or losses. Distinguishing this stage from subsequent stages is essential to a deeper understanding of *Attraction*.

The second stage, *Build-Up*, focuses on the development of relational factors that lead to self-disclosing behaviors. *Build-Up* includes a phase of testing the waters for a relationship. During *Build-Up*, a customer discloses personal information about him or herself in order to obtain benefits believed to be possible in the relationship. Learning occurs as customers observe how such information is used in the budding relationship and if the perceived rewards of the relationship can translate into actual gains. The importance of self-disclosure in relationships is evidenced by a similar pattern seen in attraction research. Stage Theory points to this influential variable as key to emerging relationships (Levinger and Snoek, 1972). Interpersonal relationships literature has continued to show that self-disclosure increases interpersonal closeness (Collins and Feeney, 2004; Mikulincer and Nachshon, 1991). Similarly, self-disclosure is essential to online B2C relationships (Moon, 2000), considering online transactions require disclosure of personal information (e.g., address and financial information). Research has also shown that user perceptions of interfaces, such as privacy perceptions, influence the level of self-disclosure in eCommerce settings (Andrade et al., 2002). Furthermore, a consumer's disclosure of personal information is essential for long-term interactions and personalization. Therefore, we see the importance of a *Build-Up* phase in online B2C relationships as well.

The first two stages of a B2C relationship can be considered the beginning of a relationship. However, a relationship is not considered mature until the stage of *Continuance* is achieved (Levinger, 1980 p. 531). Stage Theory characterizes this stage with "an intent to maintain a relationship over some period of time." (Levinger, 1980 p. 531) Additionally, the *Continuance* stage is often marked by "an explicit pledge, ... a pledge (that) has two functions: (1) it signifies that one will try, however possible, to enhance the other's outcomes; and (2) it means that one has looked far ahead into the pair's future outcome space and is willing to decrease the attractiveness of competing alternatives" (Levinger, 1980 p. 532). In an online B2C relationship, such characterizations can manifest as eLoyalty. eLoyalty is defined by "a customer's intention to visit the Internet business site again based on previous experiences as well as future expectations" (Kim et al., 2002 p. 248) and "deals with customer intentions to do more business with the vendor and to recommend that vendor to other customers" (Gefen, 2002 p. 29). The similarities of each of these stages in both interpersonal and online B2C relationships, as well as the similarity of the dependant variables involved, provide a unique opportunity to apply the conceptual tenants of Stage Theory to an eCommerce context.

Justification for Propositions

Figure 1 represents these stages and the associated propositions of the proposed eCommerce B2C Relationship Stage Theory (eB2C-RST) framework. The justification for the propositions related to the depth perspective of each stage is presented here. Both Stage Theory and IS literature provide the theoretical justification for eB2C-RST and the associated propositions. First, we begin with the *Attraction* stage then proceed to subsequent stages.

eCommerce Attraction Stage

Attraction is defined as an overall evaluation or attitude toward a potential relationship with an organization, and this stage is focused on appraising the potential risks and rewards of a B2C relationship. This stage of a B2C relationship is qualified by low levels of experience with the website and, therefore, minimal previous interaction and expectations when initially exposed to the organization's website. Past research indicates that, all else being equal, attraction is encouraged by the perceived rewards others may provide (Huston, 1974) (Levinger, 1980 p. 524). Related research based on interpersonal relationships provides deeper insight into the various factors that lead to perceived rewards: good appearance, competent behavior, compatibility, and a level of responsiveness or apparent liking (Huston and Levinger, 1978) (Levinger, 1980 p. 524). Table 2 applies these relationship factors to online B2C relationships and provides an example of these underlying factors. Below, we define each construct within this theoretical model and integrate it into the overall model. Similarly, we review the interpersonal relationship literature upon which Stage Theory was founded. Furthermore, and of most importance to the phenomenon of interest, we highlight the similarities with HCI constructs as well as findings in eCommerce research.

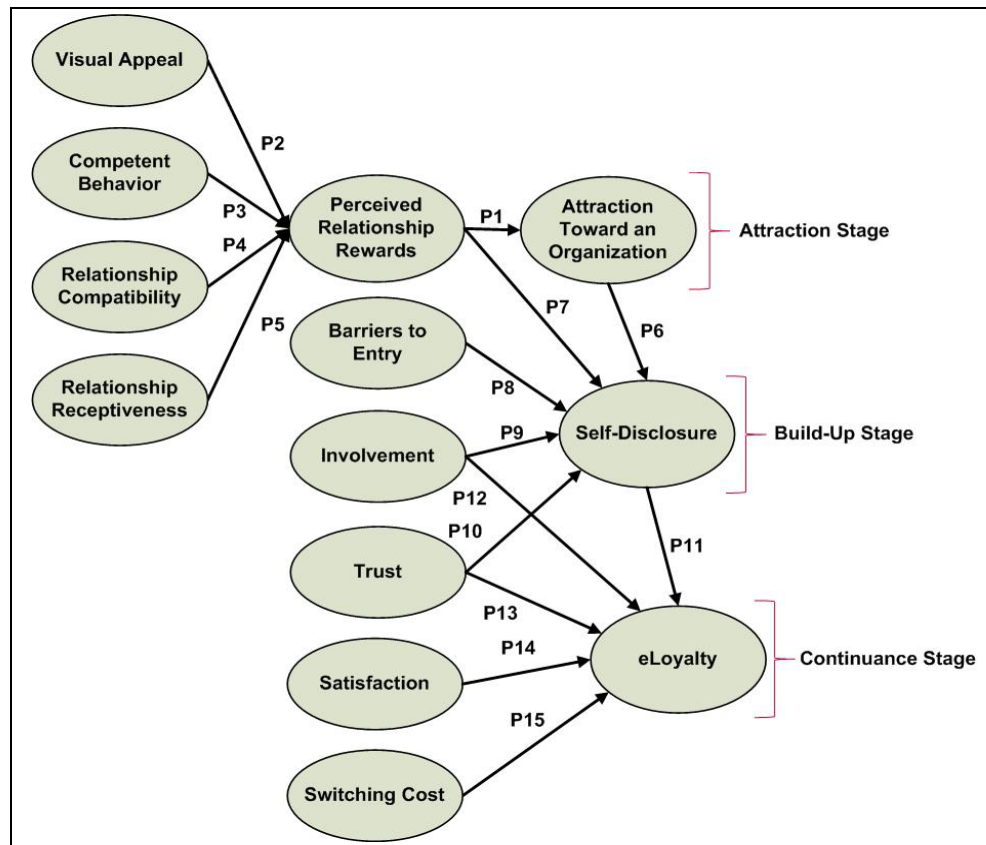


Figure 1: The eCommerce B2C Relationship Stage Theory Framework

Table 2: Operational Examples of Constructs Proposed the in the Attraction Stage

Construct	Operational Example(s)
Attraction Toward an Organization	A positive feeling about the possibility of being a repeat customer at a particular website
Perceived Relationship Rewards	A belief that I will benefit from interactions with a web-based organization
Visual Appeal	A liking of a websites appearance, layout, and color scheme
Competent Behavior	A feeling of confidence that a website will work correctly and efficiently in all technical areas
Relationship Compatibility	A perception that an organization displays the values I think a business should portray
Relationship Receptiveness	A feeling that a web-based organization really wants my long-term business

Attraction Toward an Organization

We reiterate here our definition of Attraction Toward an Organization as an attitude or summary evaluation of an organization. Past eCommerce research has acknowledged the importance of attracting new customers, and many different strategies have been suggested to achieve this goal (Watson et al., 1998). However, to our knowledge, this construct has not been measured in an eCommerce context. Based on Stage Theory, we have identified the following constructs as key antecedents that directly and indirectly influence this construct.

Perceived Relationship Rewards

For the purpose of this research, we define Perceived Relationship Rewards as the expectation of overall future gains or benefits from engaging in a B2C relationship. This perception is the product of a complex evaluation of the many varying aspects of an organization based on observed and perceived attributes. Research in attraction between humans has found that evaluations and perceptions of gains vs. losses are of great importance (Aronson and Linder,

1965; Huesmann and Levinger, 1976; Levinger and Snoek, 1972). This stream of research has shown that attraction is encouraged by the perceived rewards of a potential relationship (Huston, 1974). The use of perceived rewards is not foreign to IS research. Researchers have used similar concepts in IS adoption literature, which is similar to attraction in online B2C relationships. The model of Personal Computer Utilization considered the importance of evaluating long-term consequences in researching IS use (Thompson et al., 1991). If one perceives that there are potential rewards for entering a relationship, one is likely to be attracted. We posit that the higher the level of perceived rewards from a potential B2C relationship, the higher the level of attraction toward an organization.

P1: Perceived Relationship Rewards positively affect the Attraction Toward an Organization.

Visual Appeal

Visual Appeal is the perception regarding the aesthetics and overall appearance of a website, and has been examined in many previous eCommerce studies (e.g., Loiacono et al., 2007). In offline interpersonal relationships, visual appeal is largely determined by perceptions of another's physical beauty (Huston and Levinger, 1978). Appearance is often the first attribute that others can evaluate, and past research shows that people make many attributions based on appearance (Huston and Levinger, 1978). For instance, those with good appearance are regarded in higher favor (Adams and Huston, 1975; Dermer and Thiel, 1975; Dion and Berscheid, 1975; Dion et al., 1972; Huston, 1973), are viewed as more responsible (Seligman et al., 1974), are more influential (Sigall and Aronson, 1969), are perceived as better performers (Landy and Sigall, 1974), are pleasing to the eye (Feingold, 1992), and are more responded to by others (Barocas and Karoly, 1972; Benson et al., 1976). These types of attributions likely increase perceptions of possible rewards from potential relationships.

Similar effects for visual appeal have been found in business relationships. For example, research on Agency Theory shows that the environment can affect perceptions of organizations (Bergen et al., 1992). In such relationships, positive atmospherics (e.g., a nice looking hotel lobby) can prompt individuals to form more positive evaluations (Kotler, 1973-1974). Prior IS research on website design has found that a website's visual appeal can be assessed in as little as 50 milliseconds (Lindgaard et al., 2006). Therefore, customers can use attributions based on these impressions to evaluate other aspects of the website or organization. One of the more telling findings is the notion that what is beautiful is useable (Tractinsky et al., 2000). Tractinsky and colleagues found that users' perceptions of a system's aesthetics correlated more highly with their assessment of usability than the degree of actual usability, suggesting that perceptions of visual appeal can be more important than the actual performance of some systems. As such, past research has found that websites that are more attractive lead to positive evaluations (Van der Heijden, 2003). In accordance with this research, website visual appeal is also expected to enhance the perceived rewards of a potential B2C relationship.

P2: Visual Appeal positively affects Perceived Relationship Rewards.

Competent Behavior

Competent Behavior refers to the perception of a website's capability to perform as intended. For instance, does the system do what is expected, and does it perform as it should (e.g., security)? In offline relationships, these perceptions are based on one's ability to behave according to social norms, given a specific context and role (Huston and Levinger, 1978). Competent Behavior has been observed to be a strong factor in determining the possible rewards of a relationship (Huston and Levinger, 1978) because perceptions of future behavior are often based on past behavior. Socially normed appropriate behavior similarly encourages attraction (Chaikin and Derlega, 1974; Chelune, 1976). Also, behaviors such as disclosing personal information in inappropriate circumstances discourage attraction (Derlega and Chaikin, 1976). Other studies have found that perceptions of another's "ability to obtain and willingness to invest the resources necessary for the survival and success" of a relationship (Buston and Emlen, 2003 p. 1) influence evaluations of possible relationships (Feingold, 1992). Therefore, we see the assessment of competent behavior as a key factor for understanding perceptions of potential rewards of a relationship.

Perceptions of website Competent Behavior can be influenced by a number of characteristics including but not limited to security, navigability, and response time. Many proxy constructs have been studied that can be attributed to this macro construct. For example, website characteristics such as download delay (Galletta et al., 2006), security (Nah and Davis, 2002), and navigability (Salisbury et al., 2001) have all been found to influence user perceptions of websites. Such perceptions have also been found to be influenced by web seals (e.g., VeriSign) (Odom et al., 2002). Competence has long been used in trust-related IS research (Mayer et al., 1995; McKnight et al., 2002), where competence has been found to predict trusting beliefs. All of these assessments of website competent behavior influence evaluations of future interactions and possible rewards of an eCommerce relationship. Similarly, website functionality and competence are also expected to predict perceptions of possible relationship rewards.

P3: Competent Behavior positively affects Perceived Relationship Rewards.

Relationship Compatibility

Relationship Compatibility refers to perceptions of how website content communicates values and beliefs that are compatible with those of a customer. Perceptions of compatibility in interpersonal relationships are an integral part of attraction (Byrne, 1969; Sussmann and Davis, 1975). Aspects of compatibility that encourage attraction include similarity (Craig and Duck, 1977) and compatible attitudes (Johnson and Tesser, 1972; Tesser, 1972). These aspects of compatibility have been shown to reinforce our self-concept (Byrne, 1971; Byrne et al., 1973; Clore, 1975; Clore and Byrne, 1974), indicate that others are good (Arrowood, 1973; Hensley and Duval, 1976; Leonard, 1975; Levine et al., 1974), and enhance one's self esteem (Leonard, 1975).

Online customers have been found to be more attracted to an organization with similar values (e.g., environmentally responsible) than to one with incompatible values (Laroche et al., 2001). Likewise, prior research has shown that compatibility in values plays a role in IS use and is an important factor in technology acceptance (Karahanna et al., 2006). Compatibility has also been found to be an important factor in the diffusion of innovations (Moore and Benbasat, 1991). In sum, if an organization's website conveys beliefs and values compatible with those of a potential customer, similar effects should be found.

P4: Relationship Compatibility positively affects Perceived Relationship Rewards.

Relationship Receptiveness

Relationship Receptiveness refers to a customer's perception of an organization's desire to enter into a customer relationship. Interpersonal attraction research shows that evaluations of future interactions influence the perceived rewards of a relationship (Huesmann and Levinger, 1976). These types of evaluations lead to a perception of a greater ability to provide future rewards (Brickmann et al., 1975). Overall, individuals are more likely to be attracted to another if they are assured that the other accepts them (Huston, 1973; Levinger and Snoek, 1972); likewise, they will not be attracted if they are assured that the other does not accept them (Shanteau and Nagy, 1976).

Similarly, a customer is likely more interested in an organization that shows interest in an ongoing eCommerce B2C relationship (e.g., product notices) than in one that does not (e.g., company has no return policy). With current IS capabilities, organizations are able to communicate one-to-one with users (Wells et al., 1999) with customized content (Palmer and Griffith, 1998; Watson et al., 1998). These individual cues portrayed in a website can act as a signal to potential customers of an organization's receptiveness to a relationship. In turn, interfaces that intimate relationship receptiveness affect a customer's overall perception of possible rewards from that relationship.

P5: Relationship Receptiveness positively affects Perceived Relationship Rewards.

eCommerce Build-Up Stage

There are a few qualifying conditions for the Build-Up stage. First, at this stage, customers now have low to moderate levels of experience with the website. Second, initial trust begins to be formed. Finally, the key indicator of this stage is that a level of information exchange between the organization and the customer has been established. This stage is tightly coupled with the greater promise of rewards, encouraging the customer to continue investigating a possible eCommerce relationship. Much of the eCRM research has been focused on information retrieval from customers (Romano and Fjermestad, 2002a). Therefore, the necessity of self-disclosure in eCommerce is evident. Stage Theory also suggests that self-disclosure is the crucial aspect of Build-Up, and this behavior is encouraged by many factors (see Table 3).

Table 3: Operational Examples of Constructs Proposed in the Build-Up Stage

Construct	Operational Example(s)
Self-Disclosure	A customer gives personal information to a web-based organization (e.g., email address, credit card information)
Attraction Toward an Organization	An inclination to do business with an eCommerce website
Perceived Relationship Rewards	A perceived customer value in doing transacting business with a website
Barriers to Entry	An existing contract with a competitor, a habit of conducting business with a competitor, previous learning effort or emotional investment in a competitor
Involvement	A belief that doing business with a website is important to me and to the organization
Trust	A willingness to be vulnerable to a web-based company

Self-Disclosure

Mature relationships can progress to a point of full disclosure, leaving both parties extremely vulnerable to one another. Prior to reaching full disclosure, a period of testing-the-waters typically occurs. Levinger and Snoek (1972) found that the disclosure of personal information is used in emerging relationships to assess if the other party will abuse that information or maintain the confidence. Past research has also found that self-disclosure is a common way for adults to increase interpersonal closeness (Collins and Feeney, 2004; Mikulincer and Nachshon, 1991) and to be an essential part of eCommerce exchanges (Moon, 2000). Depending upon the outcomes of the Attraction stage and/or past Build-Up activities, one may wish to engage in self-disclosing behavior in order to discover the reaction of the other party. For example, if a customer offers a website a personal email address, will the information be abused? Research has shown that various IT-artifacts have been known to influence human's self-disclosure with computers (Moon, 2000), and Stage Theory suggests that several factors can influence this behavior.

Attraction Toward an Organization

Attraction Toward an Organization is a necessary but not sufficient condition for initiating a B2C relationship. One of the fundamental characteristics of a relationship is interaction (Kelley, 1979), which includes the exchange of information. However, there is a natural apprehension to disclose information (McCroskey and Richmond, 1977) that especially exists online (e.g., security concerns). In order for an interpersonal relationship to progress, self-disclosure occurs in situations of mutual attraction (Collins and Feeney, 2004; Huston and Levinger, 1978; Mikulincer and Nachshon, 1991). In such cases, the level of attraction serves to motivate an individual to overcome the natural apprehension to engage in self-disclosing behavior. Similarly, we posit that Attraction Toward an Organization predicts a customer's self-disclosure of personal information online.

P6: Attraction Toward an Organization positively affects Self-Disclosure.

Perceived Relationship Rewards

Prior research shows that interpersonal relationships progress based on the perception of incrementally greater potential rewards versus costs (Huesmann and Levinger, 1976; Levinger and Huesmann, 1980). "A progressing relationship is one in which expected rewards become increasingly probably relative to expected costs" (Levinger, 1980 p. 525). Based on the outcomes from the Attraction stage and/or previous Build-Up activities, an online B2C relationship may show increasing promise of gains. Conditional rewards are often used to entice online customers to share information. For instance, an organization may require an e-mail address, name, and other information before a customer can receive a username or password to gain access to potential rewards. Therefore, a promise of gains will continue to motivate individuals to engage in behavior that will further the relationship.

P7: Perceived Relationship Rewards positively affect Self-Disclosure.

Barriers to Entry

Barriers to Entry focus on the perceived costs, both tangible and intangible, that must be overcome to engage in an online B2C relationship. Stage Theory indicates that individuals initiate relationships with only a fraction of those to whom they are attracted (Levinger, 1980 p. 524), and interpersonal relationship research has shown that progression in a relationship is only possible if one desires to expand interpersonal connections (Huston and Levinger, 1978; Levinger, 1980). Members of a stable relationship often construct barriers to entry against competing relationships such as an agreement to decrease the attractiveness of other alternatives (e.g., pledge of monogamy). Other barriers may be geographical, social, or economical in nature. Thus, such relationships must overcome these barriers to survive.

Common Barriers to Entry that must be overcome to progress an online customer relationship include price sensitivity (Cao et al., 2003/04), contractual obligations (Chen and Hitt, 2002), geographic and timing issues for product and service delivery, and uncertainty associated with sampling experiential products in a virtual world (Daugherty et al., 2005), to name a few examples. In order to entice a customer into a new B2C relationship, an organization must overcome any perceived barriers to entry by providing enough tangible or intangible benefits to offset any such barriers. If unable to do so, the customer is unlikely to share information with a potential vendor.

P8: Barriers to Entry negatively affect Self-Disclosure.

Involvement

Zaichkowsky (1985 p. 342) defines Involvement as "a person's perceived relevance of a (potential relationship) based on inherent needs, values, and interests." Interpersonal relationship research has shown that levels of involvement correlate with subsequent progress of relationships (Hill et al., 1976; Levinger et al., 1970). Stage Theory explains

that as involvement increases, the level of intimacy in disclosure also increases (Levinger, 1980 p. 526), and Levinger summarizes a case in which increased involvement assures increased commitment and the initial trust required to divulge intimate information (Levinger, 1980p. 528).

Past research has shown that people interact at similar levels of involvement with both computers and people (Kiesler et al., 1996). Marketing research has long acknowledged the importance of involvement in consumer behavior (Greenwald and Leavitt, 1984; Petty et al., 1983). Likewise, IS-related research has shown that interfaces can affect the level of user involvement (Kumar and Benbasat, 2002) especially in an eCommerce context (Griffith et al., 2001). Given that an eCommerce interaction requires disclosure of information in order to transact business, it is expected that the involvement in a potential B2C relationship fosters self-disclosure.

P9: Involvement in an online B2C relationship positively affects Self-Disclosure.

Trust

Trust, an important aspect of relationship development, is a willingness of parties to be vulnerable to the actions of another (Mayer et al., 1995). Interpersonal relationship research suggests that for relationship progression to occur, a party becomes more vulnerable to the other. Such willingness to become vulnerable is, by definition, an act of trust. Trust has been shown to be influenced by many factors, such as trust in the business environment, trust in the organization, individual differences, and beliefs about specific characteristics of the trustee (Dinev and Hart, 2006; Gefen and Straub, 2003; Mayer et al., 1995; McKnight et al., 2002; Pavlou and Gefen, 2004). Likewise, previous research has found trust to predict a customer’s willingness to provide personal information on the Internet (Dinev and Hart, 2006). Similarly, we propose that trust is a key predictor of a customer’s self-disclosure.

P10: Trust in an online B2C relationship positively affects Self-Disclosure.

eCommerce Continuance Stage

Continuance reflects a maturing of an ongoing B2C relationship reflected in a customer’s eLoyalty. Qualifying conditions for this stage include high levels of experience with the site, overall perceived rewards, self-disclosure, and moderate to high levels of trust. However, the key indicator is a level of eLoyalty in a B2C relationship. Trust between parties is formed during Build-Up. Interestingly, continuance marks the only stage where perceived rewards are not the primary focus. “In early contacts, one is concerned with forecasting one’s future outcomes; in a declining relationship too partners will attend carefully to its net benefits and to the benefits foregone by neglecting alternatives. In contrast, partners in middle stages relationships may have accumulated a large surplus of rewards, so that neither is likely to pay much attention to temporary reductions; there is little need to for a regular accounting” (Levinger, 1980 p. 536).

eLoyalty

eLoyalty refers to “a customer’s intention to visit the Internet business site again based on previous experiences as well as future expectations” (Kim et al., 2002 p. 248) and “deals with customer intentions to do more business with the vendor and to recommend that vendor to other customers” (Gefen, 2002 p. 29). The intention to continue to use an IS has been widely researched as a post-adoption phenomena (Bhattacharjee, 2001). This area of research, as well as the relationship literature, stresses the importance of satisfaction as an antecedent to continuance. However, the relational focus of the eB2C-RST offers insight to other possible factors that may lead to eLoyalty (see Table 4). Each of these factors is described next.

Table 4: Operational Examples of Constructs Proposed in the Continuance Stage

Construct	Operational Example(s)
eLoyalty	Continued website usage and positive attitude toward my past experiences with the organization
Self-Disclosure	I give personal information to a web-based organization (e.g., email address, credit card information)
Involvement	A high level of perceived relevance between of relationship between the organization and myself
Trust	A belief that the web-based company will do what is in my best interest
Satisfaction	A favorable perception of the process and outcomes dealing with a website in a B2C relationship
Switching Cost	Already familiar and comfortable with purchasing atmosphere of an online organization

Self-Disclosure

One of the qualifying conditions for a mature relationship is that both parties have high levels of Self-Disclosure. As disclosure and interdependence become more prevalent in a relationship, the Continuance stage is achieved (Levinger, 1980; Levinger and Huesmann, 1980). Marketing research has also shown that self-disclosure is necessary in the development of commitment to a retailer (Cho, 2006). Self-disclosure has been found to be essential to eCommerce exchanges, which cannot exist without information exchange between the parties (Moon, 2000). Consistent with these streams of research, we propose that self-disclosure affects eLoyalty.

P11: Self-Disclosure positively affects eLoyalty.

Involvement

As discussed earlier, the interaction between the two parties is a key aspect at this stage of a relationship. As in the Build-Up stage, involvement is also very influential in the Continuance stage. Interpersonal relationship research has indicated that involvement is a key indicator of the health of a relationship (Hill et al., 1976; Levinger et al., 1970). eCommerce interfaces have been shown to affect involvement (Griffith et al., 2001; Kumar and Benbasat, 2002). One eCommerce study has shown that involvement is highly influential in determining website loyalty (Wang et al., 2006). Similar to this finding, it is expected that a person's involvement in a potential eCommerce customer relationship fosters eLoyalty to a website.

P12: Involvement in an online B2C relationship positively affects eLoyalty.

Trust

Within Continuance, Trust continues to influence B2C relationships. If an organization is able to "pass" the testing-the-waters stage presented in Build-Up, then trust is fostered. Such trust is necessary to engender eLoyalty. Relationship marketing has also acknowledged the importance of trust for mature relationships (Morgan and Hunt, 1994) and has even been the focus of alternative models regarding online B2C relationships (e.g., website-stickiness) (Li et al., 2006). In one study focusing on eLoyalty, trust was shown to be its strongest predictor (Gefen, 2002). Similarly, we propose that trust is a key predictor of eLoyalty.

P13: Trust in an online B2C relationship positively affects eLoyalty.

Satisfaction

Wixom and Todd (2005) define Satisfaction as: "a degree of favorableness with respect to the system, mechanics of interaction, (and outcomes of interaction)." This includes satisfaction with the website, organization, previous outcomes, and the relationship with the organization in general. Relationship research on human couples identifies two complementary functions of a relationship: task and social-emotional (Levinger, 1980; Parsons and Bales, 1955; Settoon and Mossholder, 2002; Thibaut and Kelley, 1959). Task functions include dealing with externally related issues. Social-emotional functions include intra-relationship issues. Both functions can be the source of satisfaction (or dissatisfaction). Past research on relationships shows the importance of satisfaction for successful relationships (Blood Jr. and Blood, 1978; Levinger, 1964). The level of satisfaction in a relationship at an initial time point has been found to predict satisfaction at subsequent time periods (Hill et al., 1976; Levinger et al., 1970).

Relationship marketing literature also has recognized the influential role satisfaction plays as a predictor of long-term orientation with an organization (Ganesan, 1994). In addition, IS research indicates the influence of satisfaction with previous transactions regarding the intention to transact business (Pavlou, 2003). Satisfaction has been shown to influence IS continuance and use (Bhattacharjee, 2001; Wixom and Todd, 2005), which is similar to eLoyalty (Kim et al., 2002). IS research has also shown that interface characteristics can influence user satisfaction (e.g., Galletta et al., 2004), and previous studies have shown satisfaction to be the most influential predictor of eLoyalty (Anderson and Srinivasan, 2003; Ribbink et al., 2004). Therefore, this predictive role of satisfaction in relation to eLoyalty is warranted.

P14: Satisfaction with an online B2C relationship positively affects eLoyalty.

Switching Cost

Switching costs are defined as "any perceived disutility a customer would experience from switching" (Chen and Hitt, 2002 p. 258). Continuance is focused on creating high Switching Costs acting as a barrier to competing e-vendors. Members of an interpersonal relationship make an investment (Huesmann and Levinger, 1976; Rusbult, 1980), and seek to protect it. A level of interdependence creates an incentive to maintain the investment. This interdependence for a customer takes the form of switching costs.

Past research has identified many different facets of switching costs that can be classified into three general categories: procedural, financial, and relational switching costs (Burnham et al., 2003). Procedural switching costs involve the loss of time and effort. Financial switching costs include the loss of financially quantifiable resources. Relational switching costs focus on psychological or emotional discomfort due to the loss of identity and the breaking of bonds. IS research has identified three similar types of switching costs: transaction, learning, and artificial or contractual costs.

"Transaction costs are costs that occur to start a new relationship with a provider and sometimes also include the costs necessary to terminate an existing relationship. Learning costs represent the effort required by the customer to reach the same level of comfort or facility with a new product as they had with an old product. Artificial switching costs are created by deliberate actions of firms; frequent flyer programs, repeat-purchase discounts, and "click-through" rewards are all examples" (Chen and Hitt, 2002 p. 257).

Many consider eCommerce to be an industry with relatively low switching costs; however, literature suggests high customer loyalty in electronic markets (Friedman, 1999). Previous research in the area of eLoyalty has found switching costs to be a significant predictor (Gefen, 2002). Consistent with this previous research, we expect that switching costs will influence a customer's level of eLoyalty.

P15: Switching Costs positively affect eLoyalty.

DISCUSSION

As we have extended the theoretical perspectives of Stage Theory to the context of online B2C relationships, we posit the tenants proposed here have implications for gaining key insights in an eCommerce context. Here, we discuss various possible applications of this theoretical perspective and the implications for practice and future research.

Going Beyond Stage Theory: Further Integration of HCI Research

The eB2C-RST has pointed to many familiar eCommerce constructs (e.g., Visual Appeal, Satisfaction, Trust, eLoyalty, etc.) , and provides unique insight to key factors in attracting, building, and maintaining customer relationships in an eCommerce context. However, thus far this conceptual framework has relied heavily on Stage Theory. As stated previously, we expect there are many other conceptual areas as well as empirical results that could be used to understand eCommerce B2C relationships. Stage Theory was not developed with this context in mind, and therefore, the eB2C-RST is limited in identifying specific interface characteristics. It is true that the constructs proposed in this framework are commonly known as influential variables in the interaction with users online. However, in Table 5 we extend beyond the theoretical perspectives relied upon thus far and propose specific interface characteristics as a possible beginning for the decomposition of various antecedents proposed in the eB2C-RST. These proposed antecedents are suggested in this paper and in the literature, and accompanying references to this literature are also presented in Table 5.

The HCI-related constructs listed in Table 5 are certainly not an exhaustive list of possible influential interface characteristics that could be included in decomposing the eB2C-RST. However, this suggests a large need to investigate many areas of interface design, and gives an opportunity to show the influence of such interface characteristics on key outcome variables for online B2C relationships. Although much of the cited literature in Table 5 has already supported the relationships between these variables, some have not been tested in the context of online B2C relationships. Additionally, some of the relationships are not based on empirical evidence. There are also many other known interface characteristics that may need to be included (e.g., Loiacono et al., 2007; Straub et al., 2002a; Straub et al., 2002b).

Testing The eB2C-RST

Given that this theoretical framework is proposed as a variance model, we posit that testing the propositions explicitly can be done using survey methods. Appendix A proposes survey items to measure the constructs proposed in the eB2C-RST. However, we also offer alternative uses of the eB2C-RST for purposes of empirical testing as well as practical use.

One of the strengths of the eB2C-RST is that it captures the breadth perspective. Therefore, some practical and theoretical insight may be gained by incorporating empirical methods common in testing a process theory. As the eB2C-RST is not a process theory, the relationship process is not explicitly testable. However, we propose two methods that could be used to inform a process view of this phenomenon. First, such a view may be validated by breaking up the model presented here into stages, testing the stages with longitudinal data.'

Second, we propose a method commonly used in testing the progression and/or dissolution of long-term interpersonal relationships. This method, practiced in clinical psychology, utilizes a comparison technique that classifies relationships based on their current characteristics (Gottman and Levenson, 2000). This technique assumes that the current level, presence, or absence of identified characteristics can be used to determine the current state of a relationship. As discussed, each stage offers qualifying conditions that can be used to assess the current state of a given B2C relationship. Further, by examining a relationship, it is possible to ascertain the stage in which a B2C relationship is currently engaged (see Table 6).

Table 5: Decomposing the eB2C-RST beyond Theoretical Perspective to HCI Factors

<i>eB2C-RST construct</i>	<i>HCI related Antecedents (e.g., performance characteristics, content based perceptions, and interface characteristics)</i>	<i>Examples in literature</i>
Competent Behavior	Download Delay, Security, Navigability, etc.	(Galletta et al., 2006; Salisbury et al., 2001)
Relationship Compatibility	Web content portraying similar values (e.g., ethical standards) and beliefs	(Karahanna et al., 2006; Laroche et al., 2001)
Relationship Receptiveness	Personalized Content and Customization	(Palmer and Griffith, 1998)
Barriers to Entry	Telepresence, Switching Costs, Price, and Virtual Reality	(Cao et al., 2003/04; Chen and Hitt, 2002; Daugherty et al., 2005)
Involvement	Social Presence	(Fortin and Dholakia, 2005; Griffith et al., 2001; Kumar and Benbasat, 2002)
Trust	Disposition to Trust, Trust in Environment, Reliability, Responsiveness, Assurance, Institution-Based Trust, Perceptions of Trustee	(Dinev and Hart, 2006; Gefen, 2002; Gefen et al., 2003; Gefen and Straub, 2003; Mayer et al., 1995; McKnight et al., 2002; Pavlou and Gefen, 2004)
Satisfaction	Usefulness, Expectation Confirmation, Information Quality, System Quality	(Bhattacharjee, 2001; Wixom and Todd, 2005)
Switching Costs	Facets: Procedural, Financial, and Relational as well as Transaction, Learning, and Artificial	(Chen and Hitt, 2002)

Table 6: Qualifying Conditions for Each Stage of the eB2C-RST

<i>Qualifying Condition</i>	<i>Experience with the website</i>	<i>Positive overall perceived rewards of the B2C relationship</i>	<i>Level of self-discloser of personal information</i>	<i>Level of eLoyalty</i>
Stage				
Attraction	L	L	L	L
Build-Up	L to M	H	L to M	L
Continuance	H	H	H	M to H

Note, L = Low, M = Moderate, and H= High

Using the same technique proposed by Gottman and Levenson (2000), these unique qualifying conditions have previously been identified: 1) Past experience with the website, 2) Positive overall Perceived Relationship Rewards, 3) Level of Self-Disclosure of personal information, and 4) Level of eLoyalty. Based on these conditions, the stage of an online B2C relationship for an individual, or target market, can be determined by analyzing the mean responses to the survey items presented in Appendix A. This method of application and testing can be used for validation purposes under a controlled setting. Once an organization determines the current stage of a relationship, eCommerce managers can use the eB2C-RST framework to manage the B2C relationship based on the needs of the customer for a given stage of the relationship.

CONCLUSIONS

Throughout this paper, we have outlined the practical and theoretical contributions that the eB2C-RST brings to research regarding online B2C relationships. Specifically, this proposed framework examines the online B2C

relationship from breadth and depth perspectives, providing a holistic view from which to examine and study such relationships. Additionally, the eB2C-RST offers insight for web developers and eCRM practitioners. Here, we expound on a few of these contributions.

Practical Contributions

The eB2C-RST can be practically applied to enable organizations to focus on the stage (or stages) of a B2C relationship that is most applicable for a target segment of customers without surveying individuals or a market segment. This can be done by intuitively targeting a specific stage and applying the insight of the theoretical relationships presented here. For example, a start-up company may need to focus on enhancing important aspects of Attraction and Build-Up for potential customers, or an organization with a mature consumer base may need to focus on important factors in the Continuance stage. Of course, in such circumstances, the organization would not ignore other stages, as each is critical to a long-term relationship. Specifically, this can be done by using this framework to identify and prioritize investments in specific interface characteristics. Referring to Table 5, this framework can be used to identify significant predictors of various outcome variables identified by the eB2C-RST. Therefore, managers, developers, and website designers can use this understanding to increase desirable outcomes by focusing scarce resources in strategic areas.

Another method of practical application of this theoretical perspective would be for executives to periodically assess a customer base. This could be achieved by surveying a representative sample of an organization's eCommerce patrons and analyzing the snapshot of data to make inferences and strategic decisions. By comparing the mean values, a dashboard could be designed to show the percentage that rated favorable (or unfavorable) on the desirable constructs (e.g., Attraction Toward an Organization, Self-Disclosure, and eLoyalty). Therefore, a strategic understanding of the current customer base could be gained. Also, comparing the mean values of the predicting constructs could give insight into possible strategic action plans to attract, build, or maintain customer relationships.

Theoretical Contributions

We have leveraged the concepts of relationship breadth and depth in our proposition of the eB2C-RST. Although similar concepts have been introduced to various areas of the literature (see Table 1), they have not been integrated and applied to the context of online B2C relationships. This unique perspective provides insight into the initiation, development, and maintenance of these important relationships with online customers. An understanding of the roles played by the endogenous variables (i.e., breadth perspective) and the exogenous variables (i.e., depth perspective) provides this theoretical contribution.

An additional distinction between this work and others is the introduction of the endogenous variables Attraction Toward an Organization, Self-Disclosure, and eLoyalty in the specific context of online B2C relationships. To our knowledge, Attraction Toward an Organization has not been used in eCommerce research. Similarly, Self-Disclosure is an understudied concept in eCommerce. This theoretical perspective posits that Self-Disclosure may be a particularly key variable in this context and may deserve further investigation. eLoyalty is a well known variable as evidenced by the literature cited in support of the propositions 12-15 (Anderson and Srinivasan, 2003; Gefen, 2002; Ribbink et al., 2004; Wang et al., 2006). Although, as summarized throughout, eLoyalty has been a well studied area of eCommerce research, and we believe that this framework provides a unique theoretical perspective through which to view these constructs.

Furthermore, a theoretical contribution of this work is the introduction of a few unique constructs to the area of eCommerce research. Specifically, many of the antecedents to the attraction stage have not been used in this context (excluding visual appeal). As other theoretical perspectives could be integrated into the eB2C-RST, we expect these new variables may offer additional contributions, if integrated. With the additional theoretical contribution provided by relationships posited in the integrated theoretical model, we believe the eB2C-RST offers a significant perspective to eCommerce theory.

Future Research

As this is a conceptual paper, one of its primary foci is to create many future research questions and to inspire empirical work in this area. Therefore, we believe we have provided a platform for numerous such inquiries. For example, some constructs presented in this model are new to IS literature, and others have been used in other models. Exploring the relationship between some of these new constructs and others in the literature could be the focus of many streams of research. Another avenue for future research would be to reconcile this model (or parts of the model, e.g., one stage) with complementing research models. For example, comparing and contrasting the Attraction stage presented here and the technology acceptance model (TAM) in an eCommerce acceptance context could lead to valuable insights into the relational perspective of website acceptance. Additionally, previous research has proposed other key relational variables of interest to HCI and eCommerce research, such as relationship quality

(Sun et al., 2007) and support service functionality (Confetelli et al., 2008). As the eB2C-RST focuses on variables found in Stage Theory, we have not integrated all known constructs into the model. We detailed how the eB2C-RST could be used and decomposed to include any number of interface characteristics; however, we also believe that these relational constructs may be influential to online B2C interactions. Future research should investigate such relationships, especially for later stages of an online B2C relationship.

Implicit in this conceptual undertaking is a call for future research dedicated to the testing of the model and corresponding propositions presented in this paper. As outlined above, we propose that testing the eB2C-RST may be done explicitly by using survey methods. However, applying this theoretical perspective may also be an avenue for design science research. Additionally, this model should also be integrated with previous research (e.g., Table 5 or technology acceptance).

Future research can also include an investigation of this phenomenon from the organization's perspective. This framework is proposed at the individual level, and does not represent the interaction between the organization and the consumer. Future conceptual and empirical work may be warranted to capture organizational perspectives, decision making procedures, and reactions. This conceptual framework also lays the foundation for future conceptual models that could offer a process theory perspective of this phenomenon developing an understanding of how these outcome variables develop over time. A longitudinal study could test the causality of these relationships.

Another avenue for future research could include investigating possible moderating factors such as situational factors (e.g., mood, task, etc.) or various individual differences (e.g., computer playfulness). Although this framework has been developed in the context of online B2C relationships, it is obvious that customers also have interactions with organizations in offline settings. Future research may focus on integrating aspects of online and offline interactions. The dependant variables of the Attraction, Build-Up, and Continuance stages can easily be adapted to encompass other types of interactions and, therefore, a theoretical understanding of online and offline interactions is possible.

Finally, one other avenue of future research would be to extend the remaining stages identified in Stage Theory (e.g., Deterioration and Ending) to the context of online B2C relationships. This paper focuses on the first three stages offered by Stage Theory; however, we expect additional theoretical insights may be provided by extending the final stages of Deterioration and Ending. Relational marketing has successfully extended these final stages in the course of researching offline B2C relationships (Stern, 1997). We expect similar efforts to be fruitful in online relationships.

REFERENCES

- Adams, G. R. and T. L. Huston (1975) "Social Perception of middle-aged persons varying in physical attractiveness," *Developmental Psychology* (11) 5, pp. 657-658.
- Agarwal, R. and J. Prasad (1998) "A conceptual and operational definition of personal innovativeness in the domain of information technology," *Information Systems Research* (9) 2, pp. 204.
- Altman, I. and D. A. Taylor (1973) *Social Penetration*. New York: Holst, Rinehart, Winston.
- Altman, I. and D. A. Taylor (1987) "Communication in Interpersonal Relationships: Social Penetration Theory," in M. E. Roloff and G. R. Miller (eds.) *Interpersonal processes: New direction in communication research*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage, pp. 257-277.
- Anderson, R. E. and S. S. Srinivasan (2003) "E-satisfaction and e-loyalty: A contingency framework," *Psychology and Marketing* (20) 2, pp. 123-138.
- Andrade, E. B., V. Kaltcheva, and B. Weitz (2002) "Self-disclosure on the web: the impact of privacy policy, reward, and company reputation," *Advances in Consumer Research* (29) pp. 350-353.
- Aronson, E. and D. Linder (1965) "Gain and Loss of esteem as determinants of interpersonal attractiveness," *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology* (1) 2 pp. 156-172.
- Arrowood, A. J. (1973) "Agreement, attraction, and self-esteem," *Canadian Journal of Behavioral Science* (5) 3, pp. 242-252.
- Awad, N. F. and M. D. Krishnan (2006) "The Personalization Privacy Paradox: An Empirical Evaluation of Information Transparency and the Willingness to be Profiled Online for Personalization," *MIS Quarterly* (30) 1, pp. 13-28.
- Barocas, R. and P. Karoly (1972) "Effects of physical appearance on social responsiveness," *Psychological Reports* (31) 2, pp. 495-500.
- Benson, P. L., S. Karabenick, and R. M. Lerner (1976) "Pretty Pleases: The effects of physical attractiveness, race, and sex on receiving help," *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology* (12) 5, pp. 409-415.
- Bergen, M., S. Dutta, and J. Orville C. Walker (1992) "Agency Relationships in Marketing: A Review of the Implications and Applications of Agency and Related Theories," *Journal of Marketing* (56) 3, pp. 1-24.
- Bhattacharjee, A. (2001) "Understanding Information Systems Continuance: An Expectation-Confirmation Model," *MIS Quarterly* (25) 3, pp. 351-371.
- Blood Jr., R. O. and M. Blood (1978) *Marriage*, 3rd edition. New York: Free Press.
- Breaugh, J. A. and M. Starke (2000) "Research on Employee Recruitment: So Many Studies, So Many Remaining Questions," *Journal of Management* (26) 3, pp. 405-434.
- Brickmann, P., P. Meyer, and S. Fredd (1975) "Effects of varying exposure to another person with familiar or unfamiliar thought processes," *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology* (11) 3, pp. 261-270.
- Burgess, R. L. and T. L. Huston (1979) *Social Exchange in Developing Relationships*. New York: Academic Press Inc.
- Burnham, T. A., J. K. Frels, and V. Mahajan (2003) "Consumer switching costs: A typology, antecedents, and consequences," *Academy of Marketing Science. Journal* (31) 2, pp. 109.
- Buston, P. M. and S. T. Emlen. (2003) "Cognitive processes underlying human mate choice: The relationship between self-perception and mate preference in Western society." *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America*, 2003100, pp. 8805-8810.
- Byrne, D. (1969) "Attitudes and attraction," *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology* (4), pp. 36-89.
- Byrne, D. (1971) *The Attraction Paradigm*. New York: Academic Press.
- Byrne, D. and G. L. Clore (1970) "A Reinforcement Model of Evaluative Processes," *Personality: An International Journal* (1), pp. 103-128.
- Byrne, D., G. L. Clore, W. Griffitt, J. Lamberth, H. E. Mitchell (1973) "When research paradigms converge: Confrontation or integration?," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* (28) 3, pp. 313-320.
- Cao, Y., T. S. Gruca, and B. R. Klemz (2003/04) "Internet Pricing, Price Satisfaction, and Customer Satisfaction," *International Journal of Electronic Commerce* (8) 2, pp. 31-50.
- Cassidy, J. and P. R. Shaver (eds.) (1999) *Handbook of Attachment: Theory, Research, and Clinical Applications*. New York London: The Guilford Press.
- Celuch, K. G., J. H. Bantham, and C. J. Kasouf (2006) "An extension of the marriage metaphor in buyer-seller relationships: An exploration of individual level process dynamics," *Journal of Business Research* (59) 5, pp. 573-581.
- Cenfetelli, R. T., I. Benbasat, and S. Al-Natour (2008) "Addressing the What and How of Online Services: Positioning Supporting-Services Functionality and Service Quality for Business-to-Consumer Success," *Information Systems Research* (19) 2, pp. 161-181.
- Chaikin, A. L. and V. J. Derlega (1974) *Self-Disclosure*. Morristown, NJ: General Learning.

- Chelune, G. J. (1976) "Reactions to male and female disclosure at two levels," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* (34) 5, pp. 1000-1003.
- Chen, P.-Y. and L. M. Hitt (2002) "Measuring Switching Costs and the Determinants of Customer Retention in Internet-Enabled Businesses: A Study of the Online Brokerage Industry," *Information Systems Research* (13) 3, pp. 255-274.
- Cho, J. (2006) "The mechanism of trust and distrust formation and their relational outcomes," *Journal of Retailing* (82) 1, pp. 25-35.
- Clore, G. L. (1975) *Interpersonal Attraction: An overview*. Morristown, NJ: General Learning.
- Clore, G. L. and D. Byrne (1974) "A reinforcement-affect model of attraction," in T. L. Huston (ed.) *Foundations of Interpersonal Attraction*. New York: Academic Press, pp. 143-170.
- Cody, M. J. (1982) "A typology of disengagement strategies and an examination of the role intimacy reactions to inequity and relational problems play in strategy selection," *Communication Monographs* (49) 3, pp. 148-170.
- Collins, N. L. and B. C. Feeney (2004) "An attachment theory perspective on closeness and intimacy," in D. J. Mashek and A. P. Aron (Eds.) *Handbook of closeness and intimacy*, Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum, pp. 163-187.
- Craig, G. and S. W. Duck (1977) "Similarity, interpersonal attitudes and attraction: The evaluative-descriptive distinction," *The British journal of social and clinical psychology* (16), pp. 15-21.
- Daugherty, T., H. Li, and F. Biocca (2005) "Experiential Ecommerce: A Summary of Research Investigating the Impact of Virtual Experience on Consumer Learning," in C. P. Haugtvedt, K. A. Machleit, and R. Yalch (eds.) *Online Consumer Psychology: Understanding and Influencing Consumer Behavior in the Virtual World*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates Publishers, pp. 457-489.
- Derlega, V. J. and A. L. Chaikin (1976) "Norms affecting self-disclosure in men and women," *Journal of Consulting in Clinical Psychology* (44) 3, pp. 376-380.
- Dermer, M. and D. L. Thiel (1975) "When beauty may fail," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* (31) 6, pp. 1168-1176.
- Dinev, T. and P. Hart (2006) "An Extended Privacy Calculus Model for E-Commerce Transactions," *Information Systems Research* (17) 1, pp. 61-80.
- Dion, K. K. and E. Berscheid (1975) "Physical attractiveness and peer perception among children," *Sociometry* (37) 1, pp. 1-12.
- Dion, K. K., E. Berscheid, and E. Walster (1972) "What is beautiful is good," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* (24) 3, pp. 285-290.
- Duck, S. W. (1982) *Personal Relationships 4: Dissolving Personal Relationships*. London and New York: Academic Press.
- Dwyer, R. F., P. H. Schurr, and S. Oh (1987) "Developing Buyer-Seller Relationships," *Journal of Marketing* (51) 2, pp. 11-27.
- Eiriz, V. and D. Wilson (2006) "Research in relationship marketing: antecedents, traditions and integration," *European Journal of Marketing* (40) 3/4, pp. 275-291.
- Feingold, A. (1992) "Gender Differences in Mate Selection Preferences: A Test of the Parental Investment Model," *Psychological Bulletin* (112) 1, pp. 125-139.
- Festinger, L. (1954) "A Theory of Social Comparison Process," *Human Relations* (7) 2, pp. 117-140.
- Fortin, D. R. and R. R. Dholakia (2005) "Interactivity and vividness effects on social presence and involvement with a web-based advertisement," *Journal of Business Research* (58) 3, pp. 387-396.
- Fournier, S. (1998) "Consumers and Their Brands: Developing Relationship Theory in Consumer Research," *Journal of Consumer Research* (24) 4, pp. 343-374.
- Friedman, T. L. (1999) "Amazon.you," in *New York Times*, pp. A21.
- Galletta, D. F., R. Henry, S. McCoy, and P. Polak (2004) "Web Site Delays: How Tolerant are Users?," *Journal of the Association for Information Systems* (5) 1, pp. 1-28.
- Galletta, D. F., R. M. Henry, S. McCoy, and P. Polak (2006) "When the Wait Isn't So Bad: The Interacting Effects of Website Delay, Familiarity, and Breadth," *Information Systems Research* (17) 1, pp. 20-37.
- Ganesan, S. (1994) "Determinants of Long-Term Orientation in Buyer-Seller Relationships," *Journal of Marketing* (58) 2, pp. 1-19.
- Gefen, D. (2002) "Customer Loyalty in E-Commerce," *Journal of the Association for Information Systems* (3), pp. 27-51.
- Gefen, D., E. Karahanna, and D. W. Straub (2003) "Trust and TAM in Online Shopping: An Integrated Model," *MIS Quarterly* (27) 1, pp. 51-90.
- Gefen, D. and D. W. Straub (2003) "Managing user trust in B2C e-Services," *e-Service Journal* (2) 2, pp. 7-24.
- Gottman, J. M. and R. W. Levenson (2000) "The timing of divorce: Predicting when a couple will divorce over a 14-year period," *Journal of Marriage and the Family* (62) 3, pp. 737-745.

- Greenwald, A. G. and C. Leavitt (1984) "Audience Involvement in Advertising: Four Levels," *Journal of Consumer Research* (11) 1, pp. 581-592.
- Greer, T. H. and M. B. Murtaza (2003) "Web personalization: The impact of perceived innovation characteristics on the intention to use personalization," *The Journal of Computer Information Systems* (43) 3, pp. 50.
- Grégoire, Y. and R. J. Fisher (2006) "The effects of relationship quality on customer retaliation," *Marketing Letters* (17) 1, pp. 31.
- Griffith, D. A., R. F. Krampf, and J. W. Palmer (2001) "The Role of Interface in Electronic Commerce: Consumer Involvement with Print Versus On-Line Catalogs," *International Journal of Electronic Commerce* (5) 4, pp. 135-153.
- Hazan, C. and P. R. Shaver (1987) "Romantic love conceptualized as an attachment process," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* (52) 2, pp. 511-524.
- Hensley, V. and S. Duval (1976) "Some perceptual determinants of perceived similarity, liking, and correctness," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* (34) 2, pp. 159-168.
- Highhouse, S., F. Lievens, and E. F. Sinar (2003) "Measuring Attraction to Organizations," *Educational and Psychological Measurement* (63) 6, pp. 986-1001.
- Hill, R., Z. Rubin, and I. Peplau (1976) "Breakups before marriage; The end of 103 affairs," *Journal of Social Issues* (32) 1, pp. 147-168.
- Huesmann, L. R. and G. Levinger (1976) "Incremental exchange theory: A formal model for progression in dyadic social interaction," in L. Berkowitz and E. Walster (eds.) *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology*, vol. 9. New York: Academic, pp. 191-229.
- Huston, T. L. (1973) "Ambiguity of acceptance, social desirability, and dating choice," *Journal of Experimental Psychology* (9) 1, pp. 32-42.
- Huston, T. L. (1974) *Foundations of interpersonal attraction*. New York: Academic Press.
- Huston, T. L. and G. Levinger (1978) "Interpersonal Attraction and Relationships," *Annual Review of Psychology* (29) pp. 115-156.
- Ives, B. and R. O. Mason (1990) "Can information technology revitalize your customer service?," *Academy of Management Executive* (4) 4, pp. 52-69.
- Jecker, J. and D. Landy (1969) "Liking a person as function of doing him a favor," *Human Relations* (22) pp. 371-378.
- Jensen, M. and W. Meckling (1976) "Theory of the Firm: Managerial Behavior, Agency Costs and Capital Structure," *Journal of Financial Economics* (3) 4, pp. 305-360.
- Johnson, M. and A. Tesser (1972) "Some interactive effects of evaluative similarity, structural similarity, and type of interpersonal situation on interpersonal attraction," *Journal of Experimental Research in Personality* (6) pp. 154-161.
- Karahanna, E., R. Argarwal, and C. M. Angst (2006) "Reconceptualizing Compatibility Beliefs in Technology Acceptance Research," *MIS Quarterly* (30) 4, pp. 781-804.
- Kelley, H. H. (1979) *Personal Relationships: their Structures and Processes*. Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Kiesler, S., L. Sproull, and K. Waters (1996) "A Prisoner's Dilemma Experiment on Cooperation With People and Human-Like Computers," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* (70) 1, pp. 47-65.
- Kim, J., J. Lee, K. Han, and M. Lee (2002) "Businesses as Buildings: Metrics for the Architectural Quality of Internet Businesses," *Information Systems Research* (13) 3, pp. 239-254.
- Kotler, P. (1973-1974) "Atmospherics as a Marketing Tool," *Journal of Retailing* (49) 4, pp. 48-64.
- Kumar, N. and I. Benbasat (2002) "Para-Social presence and communication capabilities of a Website: A theoretical perspective," *e-Service Journal* (1) 3, pp. 5-24.
- Kunst-Wilson, W. R. and R. B. Zajonc (1980) "Affective Discrimination of Stimuli that Cannot be Recognized," *Science* (207) 4430, pp. 557-558.
- Landy, D. and H. Sigall (1974) "Beauty is talent: Task evaluation as function of the performer's physical attractiveness," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* (29) 3, pp. 299-304.
- Lane, P. J., J. E. Salk, and M. A. Lyles (2001) "Absorptive Capacity, Learning, and Performance in International Joint Venture," *Strategic Management Journal* (22) 12, pp. 1139-1161.
- Laroche, M., J. Bergeron, and G. Barbaro-Forleo (2001) "Targeting consumers who are willing to pay more for environmentally friendly products," *The Journal of Consumer Marketing* (18) 6, pp. 503.
- Leonard, R. (1975) "Self-concept and attraction for similar and dissimilar others," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* (31) 5, pp. 926-929.
- Levine, J. M., C. J. Ranelli, and R. S. Valle (1974) "Self evaluation and reaction to a shifting other," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* (29) 5, pp. 637-643.
- Levinger, G. (1964) "Task and social behavior in marriage," *Sociometry* (27) 4, pp. 433-448.
- Levinger, G. (1980) "Toward the Analysis of Close Relationships," *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology* (16) 6, pp. 510-544.

- Levinger, G. and L. R. Huesmann (1980) "An 'incremental exchange' perspective on the pair relationship: Interpersonal reward and level of involvement," in K. J. Gergen, M. S. Greenberg, and R. H. Willis (eds.) *Social exchange in developing relationships*. New York: Plenum, pp. 165-188.
- Levinger, G., D. J. Senn, and B. W. Jorgensen (1970) "Progress toward permanence in courtship: A test of the Kerckhoff-Davis hypotheses," *Sociometry* (33) 4, pp. 427-443.
- Levinger, G. and J. D. Snoek (1972) *Attraction in Relationship: A New Look at Interpersonal Attraction*. Morristown, NJ: General Learning.
- Li, D., G. J. Browne, and J. C. Wetherbe (2006) "Why Do Internet Users Stick with a Specific Web Site? A Relationship Perspective," *International Journal of Electronic Commerce* (10) 4, pp. 105-141.
- Lindgaard, G., G. Fernandes, C. Dudek, and J. Brown (2006) "Attention web designers: You have 50 milliseconds to make a good first impression!," *Behaviour & Information Technology* (25) 2, pp. 115-126.
- Liu, Y. and L. J. Shrum (2002) "What is Interactivity and Is It Always Such a Good Thing? Implications of Definition, Person, and Situation for the Influence of Interactivity on Advertising Effectiveness," *Journal of Advertising* (31) 4, pp. 53-65.
- Loiacono, E. T., R. T. Watson, and D. L. Goodhue (2007) "WebQual: An Instrument for Consumer Evaluation of Web Sites," *International Journal of Electronic Commerce* (11) 3, pp. 51-87.
- Markus, M. L. and D. Robey (1988) "Information Technology and Organizational Change: Casual Structure in Theory and Research," *Management Science* (34) 5, pp. 583-598.
- Mayer, R. C., J. H. Davis, and D. F. Schoorman (1995) "An Integrative Model of Organizational Trust," *Academy of Management Review* (20) 3, pp. 709-734.
- McCroskey, J. C. and V. P. Richmond (1977) "Communication Apprehension as a Predictor of Self-Disclosure," *Communication Quarterly* (25) 4, pp. 40-43.
- McKnight, D. H., V. Choudhury, and C. Kacmar (2002) "Developing and Validating Trust Measures for e-Commerce: An Integrative Typology," *Information Systems Research* (13) 3, pp. 334-359.
- Mikulincer, M. and O. Nachshon (1991) "Attachment styles and patterns of self-disclosure," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* (61) 2, pp. 321-331.
- Miller, R. L. (1976) "Mere exposure, psychological reactance and attitude change," *Public Opinion Quarterly* (40), pp. 229-233.
- Mishra, D. P., J. B. Heide, and S. G. Cort (1998) "Information asymmetry and levels of agency relationships," *Journal of Marketing Research* (35) 3, pp. 277-296.
- Moon, Y. (2000) "Intimate exchanges: Using computers to elicit self-disclosure from consumers," *Journal of Consumer Research* (26) 4, pp. 323.
- Moore, G. C. and I. Benbasat (1991) "Development of an Instrument to Measure the Perceptions of Adopting an Information Technology Innovation," *Information Systems Research* (2) 3, pp. 192-222.
- Morgan, R. M. and S. D. Hunt (1994) "The commitment-trust theory of relationship marketing," *Journal of Marketing* (58) 3, pp. 20-38.
- Murstein, B. I. (1970) "Stimulus-Value-Role: A Theory of Marital Choice," *Journal of Marriage and the Family* (32) 3, pp. 465-481.
- Nah, F. F.-H. and S. Davis (2002) "HCI Research Issues in E-Commerce," *Journal of Electronic Commerce Research* (3) 3, pp. 98-113.
- Odom, M. D., A. Kumar, and L. Saunders (2002) "Web Assurance Seals: How and Why They Influence Consumers' Decisions," *Journal of Information Systems* (16) 2.
- Palmer, J. W. and D. A. Griffith (1998) "An Emerging Model of Web Site Design for Marketing," *Communications of the ACM* (41) 3, pp. 45-51.
- Parsons, A., M. Zeisser, and R. Waitman (1998) "Organizing Today for the Digital Marketing of Tomorrow," *Journal of Interactive Marketing* (12) 1, pp. 31-46.
- Parsons, T. and R. F. Bales (1955) *Family, socialization, and interaction process*. Glencoe, Ill.: Free Press.
- Pavlou, P. A. (2003) "Consumer Acceptance of Electronic Commerce: Integrating Trust and Risk with the Technology Acceptance Model," *International Journal of Electronic Commerce* (7) 3, pp. 101-134.
- Pavlou, P. A. and D. Gefen (2004) "Building Effective Online Marketplaces with Institution-Based Trust," *Information Systems Research* (15) 1, pp. 37-59.
- Petty, R. E., J. T. Cacioppo, and D. Schumann (1983) "Central and Peripheral Routes to Advertising Effectiveness: The Moderating Role of Involvement," *Journal of Consumer Research* (10) pp. 135-148.
- Pitt, L., P. Berthon, and R. Watson (1999) "Cyberservice: Taming Service Marketing Problems with the World Wide Web," *Business Horizons* (42) 1, pp. 11-18.
- Powers, T. L. and W. R. Reagan (2007) "Factors influencing successful buyer-seller relationships," *Journal of Business Research* (60) 12, pp. 1234-1242.

- Prewitt, E. (2002) "How to Build Customer Loyalty in an Internet World," *CIO Magazine*. http://www.cio.com/article/30761/Customer_Relations_How_to_Build_Customer_Loyalty_in_an_Internet_World_.
- Rayport, J. F. and B. J. Jaworski (2003) *e-Commerce*. New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Reichheld, F. F. and P. Scheffer (2000) "E-loyalty: Your secret weapon on the web sites," *Harvard Business Review* (78) 4, pp. 105-113.
- Ribbink, D., A. C. R. v. Riel, V. Liljander, and S. Streukens (2004) "Comfort your online customer: quality, trust and loyalty on the internet," *Managing Service Quality* (14) 6, pp. 446-456.
- Rogers, E. M. (1983) *Diffusion of Innovations*, 3rd edition. New York: The Free Press.
- Romano, N. C. and J. Fjermestad (2002a) "Electronic Commerce Customer Relationship Management: An Assessment of Research," *International Journal of Electronic Commerce* (6) 2, pp. 61-113.
- Romano, N. C. and J. Fjermestad (2002b) "Introduction to the Special Section: Electronic Commerce Customer Relationship Management (ECCRM)," *International Journal of Electronic Commerce* (6) 2, pp. 7-8.
- Rosenbaum, M. E. (1986) "The repulsion hypothesis: on the non-development of relationships," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* (50) 6, pp. 729-736.
- Ross, S. (1973) "The Economic Theory of Agency: The Principal's Problem," *American Economic Review* (63) 2, pp. 134-139.
- Rusbult, C. E. (1980) "Commitment and satisfaction in romantic associations: A test of the investment model," *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology* (16) 2, pp. 172-186.
- Salisbury, W. D., R. A. Pearson, A. W. Pearson, and D. W. Miller (2001) "Perceived security and World Wide Web purchase intention," *Industrial Management & Data Systems* (101) 3-4, pp. 165-176.
- Sarker, S. (2006) "Examining the 'Levels of Analysis' Issue in Group Behavior: The Role of 'Aggregation' and 'Global Constructs' in Understanding Technology Adoption by Groups." *International Conference on Information Systems, Milwaukee, WI, 2006*.
- Sarker, S., J. S. Valacich, and S. Sarker (2005) "Technology Adoption by Groups: A Valence Perspective," *Journal of the Association for Information Systems* (6) 2, pp. 37-72.
- Sawyer, A. G. (1981) "Repetition, cognitive responses and persuasion," in R. E. Petty, T. M. Ostrom, and T. C. Brock (eds.) *Cognitive responses in persuasion*. Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum, pp. 237-261.
- Scanzoni, J. (1979) "Social Exchange and Behavioral Interdependence," in R. L. Burgess and T. L. Huston (eds.) *Social Exchange in Developing Relationships*. New York: Academic Press Inc, pp. 61-98.
- Seligman, C., N. Paschall, and G. Takata (1974) "Effects of physical attractiveness on attribution of responsibility," *Canadian Journal of Behavioral Science* (6) 3, pp. 290-296.
- Settoon, R. P. and K. W. Mossholder (2002) "Relationship Quality and Relationship Context as Antecedents of Person- and Task-Focused Interpersonal Citizenship Behavior," *Journal of Applied Psychology* (87) 2, pp. 255-267.
- Shanteau, J. and G. Nagy (1976) "Decisions made about other people: A human judgment analysis of dating choice," in J. Carol and J. Payne (eds.) *Cognition and social Judgment*. Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum, pp. 221-242.
- Sherif, M., O. J. Harvey, B. J. White, W. R. Hood, C. W. Sherif (1961) *Intergroup cooperation and competition: The robbers Cave experiment*. Norman, OK: University Book Exchange.
- Sheth, J. N. and A. Parvatiyar (1995) "The Evolution of Relationship Marketing," *International Business Review* (4) 4, pp. 397-418.
- Sigall, H. and E. Aronson (1969) "Liking for an evaluator as a function of her physical attractiveness and nature of the evaluations," *Journal of Social Psychology* (5) 1, pp. 93-100.
- Stern, B. B. (1997) "Advertising Intimacy: Relationship Marketing and The Service Consumer," *Journal of Advertising* (26) 4, pp. 7-19.
- Straub, D. W., D. L. Hoffman, B. W. Weber, and C. Steinfield (2002a) "Measuring e-Commerce in Net-Enabled Organizations: An Introduction to the Special Issue," *Information Systems Research* (13) 2, pp. 115-124.
- Straub, D. W., D. L. Hoffman, B. W. Weber, and C. Steinfield (2002b) "Toward New Metrics for Net-Enhanced Organizations," *Information Systems Research* (13) 3, pp. 227-238.
- Sun, H. and P. Zhang (2006) "The Role of Affect in IS Research: A Critical Survey and a Research Model," in P. Zhang and D. Galletta (eds.) *Human-Computer Interaction and Management Information Systems: Foundations*. Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, pp. 295-329.
- Sun, H., P. Zhang, and X. Xiao. (2007) "A Research Model of Relationship Quality in E-Commerce: Connecting IS Factors with Marketing Profitability." *Americas Conference on Information Systems Keystone, Colorado USA, 2007*.
- Sussmann, M. and J. Davis (1975) "Balance theory and the negative interpersonal relationship: Attraction and agreement in dyads and triads," *Journal of Personality* (43) 4, pp. 560-581.
- Tam, K. Y. and S. Y. Ho (2005) "Web Personalization as a Persuasion Strategy: An Elaboration Likelihood Model Perspective," *Information Systems Research* (16) 3, pp. 271-291.

- Tesser, A. (1972) "Attitude similarity and intercorrelations as determinants of interpersonal attraction," *Journal of experimental research in personality* (6), pp. 142-153.
- Thibaut, J. W. and H. H. Kelley (1959) *The social psychology of groups*. New York: Wiley.
- Thompson, R. L., C. A. Higgins, and J. M. Howell (1991) "Personal Computing: Toward a Conceptual Model of Utilization," *MIS Quarterly* (15) 1, pp. 124-143.
- Tractinsky, N., A. S. Katz, and D. Ikar (2000) "What is beautiful is useable," *Interacting with Computers* (13) 2, pp. 127-145.
- Valacich, J. S., D. Parboteeah, and J. D. Wells (2007) "Not All Interface Characteristics are Created Equal: The Online Consumer's Hierarchy of Needs," *Communications of the ACM* (50) 9, pp. 84-90.
- Van der Heijden, H. (2003) "Factors influencing the usage of websites: the case of a generic portal in The Netherlands," *Information & Management* (40) 6, pp. 541-549.
- Walster, E., V. Aronson, D. Abrahams, and L. Rottmann (1966) "Importance of physical attractiveness in dating behavior," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* (4) 5, pp. 508-516.
- Wang, H.-C., J. G. Pallister, and G. R. Foxall (2006) "Innovativeness and involvement as determinants of website loyalty: Determinants of consumer loyalty in B2C e-commerce," *Technovation* (26) 12, pp. 1366-1373.
- Watson, R. T., S. Akselsen, and L. F. Pitt (1998) "Attractors: Building mountains in the flat landscape of the World Wide Web," *California Management Review* (40) 2, pp. 36-57.
- Wells, J. D., W. L. Fuerst, and J. Choobineh (1999) "Managing information technology (IT) for one-to-one customer interaction," *Information & Management* (35) 1, pp. 53-62.
- Wilson, D. T. (1995) "An Integrated Model of Buyer-Seller Relationships," *Academy of Marketing Science* (23) 4, pp. 335-345.
- Winter, S. J., C. Saunders, and P. Hart (2003) "Electronic window dressing: impression management with Websites," *European Journal of Information Systems* (12) 4, pp. 309-322.
- Wixom, B. H. and P. A. Todd (2005) "A Theoretical Integration of User Satisfaction and Technology Acceptance," *Information Systems Research* (16) 1, pp. 85.
- Zaichkowsky, J. L. (1985) "Measuring the Involvement Construct," *Journal of Consumer Research* (12) 3, pp. 341-353.
- Zajonc, R. B. (1968) "Attitudinal Effects of Mere Exposure," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* (9) Monograph supplement No. 2, Part 2, pp. 1-27.

APPENDIX A: PROPOSED ITEMS FOR EB2C-RST CONSTRUCTS

<i>Measure Name</i>	<i>Code</i>	<i>Item</i>
Attraction Toward an Organization	attO1	This ORGANIZATION is attractive to me as a place to do business.
(Highhouse et al., 2003)	attO2	I am interested in learning more about this ORGANIZATION.
	attO3	This ORGANIZATION is very appealing to me.
	attO4	I would make this ORGANIZATION one of my first choices to do business with.
Barriers to Entry	BE1	There are things that prohibit me to doing business with this organization (e.g., expense, technology difficulties, etc).
	BE2	Doing business with this organization would cause too many problems.
	BE3	Doing business with this organization would be too difficult.
Competent Behavior	CB1	This website does not function competently. *
	CB2	This website is not adequate in doing what it is supposed to do. *
	CB3	This website doesn't do what it is supposed to do. *
Switching Cost**	Cost1	Switching to another vendor would be too expensive.
(Gefen, 2002)	Cost2	Switching to another vendor would take too long.
	Cost3	Switching to another vendor would cause too many problems.
	Cost4	Switching to another vendor would require too much learning.
	Cost5	Switching to another vendor would require too much effort.
Involvement	Inv1	Important / Unimportant *
(Zaichkowsky, 1985)	Inv2	of no concern / of concern to me
	Inv3	irrelevant / relevant
	Inv4	means a lot to me / means nothing to me *
	Inv5	useless / useful
	Inv6	valuable / worthless *
	Inv7	trivial / fundamental
	Inv8	beneficial / not beneficial *
	Inv9	matters to me / doesn't matter *
	Inv10	uninterested / interested
	Inv11	significant / insignificant *
	Inv12	vital / superfluous*
	Inv13	boring / interesting
	Inv14	unexciting / exciting
	Inv15	appealing / unappealing *
	Inv16	mundane / fascinating
	Inv17	essential / nonessential *
	Inv18	undesirable / desirable
	Inv19	wanted / unwanted *
	Inv20	not needed / needed
eLoyalty	Loy1	I would recommend this website to others.
(Gefen, 2002)	Loy2	I would encourage others to use this website.
	Loy3	I would consider this website as first choice.

Measure Name	Code	Item
	Loy4	I am inclined to do more business with this company.
Perceived Relationship Rewards	PR1	Doing business with this organization would be a rewarding experience.
	PR2	Customers most likely find doing business with this organization to be a rewarding experience.
	PR3	I feel that there are more positive consequences than negative in dealing with this company.
Relationship Compatibility	RCP1	Based on this website, I believe that this organization and I have harmonious beliefs and values.
	RCP2	I agree with this company's beliefs.
	RCP3	I agree with this company's values.
	RCP4	My perspective on ethics and values seems to be aligned with those of this organization.
Relationship Receptiveness	RR1	Based on this website, I think that this company is trying to get as many customers as it possibly can, and would like me to be a long-term customer.
	RR2	This firm really desires me to be their customer.
	RR3	Based on this website, I think that this company really wanted me to be a long-term customer.
Satisfaction		How do you feel about your overall experience:
(Bhattacharjee, 2001)	Sat1	Very dissatisfied/Very satisfied
	Sat2	Very displeased/Very pleased
	Sat3	Very frustrated/Very contented
	Sat4	Absolutely terrible/Absolutely delighted
Self-Disclosure	SD1	I am willing to provide my personal information when asked by this e-vendor.
	SD2	I am willing to disclose even sensitive personal information to this e-vendor.
	SD3	I am willing to be truthful in revealing my personal information to this e-vendor.
Trust	Tr1	Even if not monitored, I'd trust this organization to do the job right.
	Tr2	I trust this organization.
	Tr3	I believe that this organization is trustworthy.
	Tr4	I am quite certain what to expect from this organization.
Visual Appeal	VAP1	The website is visually pleasing.
	VAP2	The website displays visually pleasing design.
	VAP3	The website is visually appealing.

* Reverse coded

** For a more comprehensive measure see (Chen and Hitt, 2002)

ABOUT THE AUTHORS



Damon E. Campbell is an Assistant Professor of Management Information Systems in the Else School of Management at Millsaps College. He holds a Ph.D. and M.B.A. from Washington State University. His primary research interests include eCommerce, human computer interaction, and interface design. Damon has published research in the *Journal of the Association for Information Systems*, the *Journal of Electronic Commerce Research*, as well as national and international conference proceedings.



John D. Wells is an Associate Professor in the Department of Information Systems at Washington State University. Professor Wells received his Ph.D. in Management Information Systems from Texas A&M University. His research focuses on Business-to-Consumer (B2C) interface design, eCommerce customer relationship management (eCRM), and eCommerce strategy, and has appeared in outlets such as *Information Systems Research*, *Journal of Management Information Systems*, *European Journal of Information Systems*, *Information & Management*, and *Communications of the ACM*.



Joseph S. Valacich is the George and Carolyn Hubman Distinguished Professor in MIS at Washington State University. His primary research interests include technology-mediated collaboration, mobile and emerging technologies, e-business, human-computer interaction, and distance education. His work has appeared in publications such as *MIS Quarterly*, *Information Systems Research*, *Journal of Management Information Systems*, *Management Science*, *Academy of Management Journal*, and many others. He is currently also serving as a Senior Editor at *MIS Quarterly*.

Copyright © 2009 by the Association for Information Systems. Permission to make digital or hard copies of all or part of this work for personal or classroom use is granted without fee provided that copies are not made or distributed for profit or commercial advantage and that copies bear this notice and full citation on the first page. Copyright for components of this work owned by others than the Association for Information Systems must be honored. Abstracting with credit is permitted. To copy otherwise, to republish, to post on servers, or to redistribute to lists requires prior specific permission and/or fee. Request permission to publish from: AIS Administrative Office, P.O. Box 2712 Atlanta, GA, 30301-2712 Attn: Reprints or via e-mail from ais@aisnet.org.



Transactions on Human-Computer Interaction

ISSN: 1944-3900

Editors-in-Chief

<http://thci.aisnet.org/>

Dennis Galletta, U. of Pittsburgh, USA

Ping Zhang, Syracuse U., USA

Advisory Board

Izak Benbasat U. of British Columbia, Canada	John M. Carroll Penn State U., USA	Phillip Ein-Dor Tel-Aviv U., Israel
Paul Gray Claremont Graduate U., USA	Jenny Preece U. of Maryland, USA	Gavriel Salvendy, Purdue U., USA, & Tsinghua U., China
Ben Shneiderman U. of Maryland, USA	Jane Webster Queen's U., Canada	K.K Wei City U. of Hong Kong, China

Senior Editor Board

Fred Davis U. of Arkansas, USA	Mohamed Khalifa Abu Dhabi U., United Arab Emirates	Anne Massey Indiana U., USA
Lorne Olfman Claremont Graduate U., USA	Kar Yan Tam Hong Kong U. of Science & Technology, China	Dov Te'eni Tel-Aviv U., Israel
Viswanath Venkatesh U. of Arkansas, USA	Susan Wiedenbeck Drexel U., USA	

Associate Editor Board

Michel Avital U. of Amsterdam, The Netherlands	Jane Carey Arizona State U., USA	Hock Chuan Chan National U. of Singapore
Carina de Villiers U. of Pretoria, South Africa	Matt Germontprez U. of Wisconsin Eau Claire, USA	Khaled Hassanein McMaster U., Canada
Milena Head McMaster U., Canada	Traci Hess Washington State U., USA	Shuk Ying (Susanna) Ho Australian Nat. U., Australia
Netta Iivari Oulu U., Finland	Zhenhui Jack Jiang National U. of Singapore, Singapore	Weiling Ke Clarkson U., USA
Sherrie Komiak Memorial U. of Newfoundland, Canada	Paul Benjamin Lowry Brigham Young U., USA	Ji-Ye Mao Renmin U., China
Scott McCoy College of William and Mary, USA	Fiona Fui-Hoon Nah U. of Nebraska Lincoln, USA	Sheizaf Rafaeli U. of Haifa, Israel
Stefan Smolnik European Business School, Germany	Jeff Stanton Syracuse U., USA	Heshan Sun U. of Arizona, USA
Jason Thatcher Clemson U., USA	Noam Tractinsky Ben-Gurion U. of the Negev, Israel	Horst Treiblmaier Vienna U. of Business Admin. & Economics, Austria
Ozgur Turetken Ryerson U., Canada	Mun Yi U. South Carolina, USA	

Managing Editor

Michael Scialdone, Syracuse U., USA

SIGHCI Chairs

<http://sigs.aisnet.org/sighci>

2001-2004: Ping Zhang	2004-2005: Fiona Fui-Hoon Nah	2005-2006: Scott McCoy
2006-2007: Traci Hess	2007-2008: Wei-yin Hong	2008-2009: Eleanor Loiacono
2009-2010: Khawaja Saeed	2010-2011: Dezhi Wu	2011-2012: Dianne Cyr

