

The role of tactile product descriptions in online retailing

Master Thesis submitted in fulfilment of the Degree

Master of Science in Management

Submitted to Dr. Marion Garaus

Slavko Dasic

61904054

Vienna, 22nd June 2022

ABSTRACT

Among all industries, one of the characteristics of recent years is the growth of e-commerce. As the number of internet users continues to grow and more retailers transition to online platforms, marketers should pay attention to emerging trends and subsequently modify their market strategies. However, online retail can be a challenging environment in which to apply known marketing techniques, especially techniques based on sensory marketing. Some of the previous research shows that consumers rather purchase so-called material products (that require touching for better perception) like clothing and fashion in classic retailing stores. The changing retail landscape and the associated trend of online retail increase the importance of compensating for the lack of a sense of touch in an online environment. Therefore, it is essential to investigate if there are any compensation methods for a sense of touch.

The overall objective of this research was to gain a deeper understanding of the product description effect on the consumer's purchase decision in an online retail environment. Therefore, exploring tactile product description and the effect of this kind of description on consumers' haptic imaging of the product was of great importance. Finally, in addition, another research focus was the purchase decision and the positive influence of haptic imaging on the purchase decision.

To assess and ascertain the answer to the research question and to get closer to the objective of the current thesis, an online experiment has been conducted on a sample of recent online shoppers. The research framework of the study measures constructs such as quality of product information, perceived haptic imagery, and purchase intention.

The current research contributes to the existing literature by confirming some of the previous research that has focused on product or service descriptions in different industries; and, in addition, the findings extend to the implementation of sensory marketing strategies in the online clothes retail sector.

Finally, one of the most important findings of this study is the significance of haptic signals in the purchasing experience. This study shows that information in the description about how the product feels elicits and stimulates higher degrees of haptic imagery. The research indicates that evoked haptic imagery eventually impacts purchasing intentions via perceived haptic imagery.