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Determining the cross-channel effects of informational web sites

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Document Version

Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

Publication date:

2007

[Link to publication in University of Groningen/UMCG research database](#)

Citation for published version (APA):

Teerling, M. L. (2007). *Determining the cross-channel effects of informational web sites*. [Thesis fully internal (DIV), University of Groningen]. s.n.

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**Determining the Cross-Channel
Effects of Informational Web Sites**

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Published by: Labyrinth Publications
Pottenbakkerstraat 15 – 17
2984 AX Ridderkerk
The Netherlands

Print:  Offsetdrukkerij Ridderprint B.V., Ridderkerk

ISBN 90-5335-106-X
978-90-5335-106-2

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RIJKSUNIVERSITEIT GRONINGEN

**Determining the Cross-Channel Effects of
Informational Web Sites**

Proefschrift

ter verkrijging van het doctoraat in de
Economische Wetenschappen
aan de Rijksuniversiteit Groningen
op gezag van de
Rector Magnificus, dr. F. Zwarts,
in het openbaar te verdedigen op
donderdag 15 maart 2007
om 13:15 uur

door

Marije Leonie Teerling

geboren op 29 september 1976
te Groningen

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ISBN 90-5335-106-X
978-90-5335-106-2

Preface

The Internet has changed the world we live in. With blogs and Wikipedia, everyday people increasingly add their own content to the Web. We determine when, where and which information we gather. From the comfort of our own home, we order products, use services, contact our loved ones or entertain ourselves in virtual worlds. Second Life, an example of a virtual world, is a game with unlimited possibilities and currently one of the biggest hypes. Internet is described as the marketing trend of 2006 (Financieel Dagblad 10/11/06). Overall the Internet provides everyday people with a plethora of opportunities. One of which is for instance the use of Web sites to search for information.

Fifteen Web sites have altered our lives (NRC Next 08/22/2006). Among these sites, for instance Nu.nl or Funda.nl, only one offers the possibility to purchase products. The majority offer information or entertainment. In my dissertation research, I study the impact of such an informational Web site on customer behavior. My interest in this area of research started with my Master thesis. Without the enthusiasm and coaching of my Master thesis supervisor, I would probably not have written this dissertation.

Even though the virtual world offers a lot of possibilities, I am indebted to many people who have supported and coached me on various aspects during my Ph.D. in the 'traditional' world. Primarily, I am deeply grateful to my advisors, Peter Leeftang and Eelko Huizingh for their continuous support and guidance. Peter: "I am grateful for the knowledge you shared with me, your insights into marketing research and model building. I am thankful for your patience with me during the first year of my Ph.D. period." Eelko: "Your belief in my abilities and your enthusiasm were like the water and sun that a seedling needs to grow." Most of all, I am indebted to both of you for your warmth and understanding during my final year of my dissertation.

Besides Peter and Eelko, I had the privilege of working with two more brilliant men. I would like to thank Erjen van Nierop for sharing his knowledge on Multivariate Probit models with me. I have really enjoyed working with him on both the study and other creative work. I hope that we will continue to do so in the future. As for Koen Pauwels from Dartmouth College, my time at The Tuck School of Business was probably the most productive of my entire Ph.D. I would like to extend

my gratitude to him for making me feel welcome, helping me with time series modeling and for the conversations that had nothing to do with research.

Next, I extend special thanks to the members of my reading committee, professor Ruth Bolton from the Arizona State University and professors Tammo Bijmolt and Peter Verhoef from the University of Groningen. Working on their suggestions, comments and questions has definitely improved my dissertation.

Without the aid of a number of organizations, this research could not have taken place. Firstly, I am thankful for the willingness of a major Dutch retailer to participate in the research. Secondly, I express my gratitude to Acxiom for providing demographic data free of charge. Lastly, the Nederlandse Organisatie voor Wetenschappelijk Onderzoek (NWO) provided the financial resources to visit Dartmouth College, Tuck School of Business.

I am grateful for working in an environment with so many warm and inspiring colleagues. Special thanks go out to Liane Voerman for giving me the courage to explore my scientific boundaries. During emotional difficulties, especially in my final year, the support of colleagues like Liane Voerman, Janny Hoekstra, Jenny van Doorn, Jeanette Wiersema, Hanneke Tamling and Adriana Krawczyk were very valuable to me. My thanks also go out to Peter Ebbes, Tessa Wouters, Ivan Orosa Paleo, Thijs Broekhuizen, Gijsbert Willenborg and Marcel Turkensteen. Lastly, I extend my thanks to Jennifer Jordan my office mate and most of all friend during my stay at Tuck.

My two paranimphs, Simone Teerling and Marbel Schoemaker are very special women in my life. I am grateful for their help in organizing my defense. Most of all, I am grateful for their support throughout the years and for their ability to lighten my spirits.

My family and friends have always supported me, even though at times I was absent (minded). The illness of my father that has partly characterized my Ph.D. period provides perspective. The unconditional support and love of my parents is one of the biggest forces in the completion of this dissertation. Mum: "Thank you for being my safe haven." Dad: "Thank you for your wisdom and faith."

Marije Leonie Teerling
Enschede, January 2007

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