

# WHAT DRIVES CONSUMERS TO BUY ONLINE? A STUDY ON EXPLORING ONLINE CONSUMER BEHAVIOR



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**ABSTRACT** This research contributes to the understanding of online shopping by investigating influential factors on consumers' online search and purchase intentions. Given the fact that previous studies mostly concentrated on the utilitarian and hedonic aspects and yet still provided mixed results, a comprehensive theoretical framework is developed that combines current research on utilitarian and hedonic values and factors that lead to those values while also emphasizing the importance of the perceived congruence between the consumer and online shopping and linking it to both hedonic values and to online search and purchase intentions. The structural model design tested with 358 online consumers enables the researchers to evaluate all factors in a holistic fashion and our results demonstrate the importance of making use of the properties of the medium while also providing the consumer with a shopping experience that is rich in information, sensory stimulation, and also in self-expression. Results are consistent across demographics and product categories.

**Keywords:** *Online shopping, Hedonic motivation, Utilitarian motivation, Self-concept congruity*

**Jel codes:** *M1, M10, M30, M31*

**Scope:** *Business*

**Type:** *Research*

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# MÜŞTERİLER NEDEN ELEKTRONİK ORTAMDA SATIN ALIYOR? ELEKTRONİK SATINALMA ÜZERİNE BİR ÇALIŞMA



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**ÖZ** | Bu çalışma müşterilerin elektronik ortamda arama ve satın alma niyetlerine etki eden faktörleri inceleyerek literatüre katkı sağlamayı amaçlamaktadır. Daha önceki çalışmalarda çoğunlukla faydacı ve hedonic yararlarla yoğunlaşılması, buna rağmen çelişkili sonuçlar elde edilmesi sebebiyle bu çalışmada literatürde kullanılmış olan bu faydalara ek olarak müşteri ve elektronik satınalma arasında yaşanan imaj açısından uyumun eklenmesi ile geniş açılı bir teorik model oluşturulmuştur. Oluşturulan yapısal eşitlik modeli 358 adet elektronik müşterinin cevapları doğrultusunda test edilmiş ve sonuçlar elektronik ortamın özelliklerinin ve müşteriye sunulan bilgi, duygular ve kendini ifade etme açısından yoğun satınalma deneyiminin elektronik ortamda arama ve satın alma niyetlerine etkisi olduğunu göstermiştir. Sonuçlar farklı ürün kategorileri ve demografilerde farklılık göstermemektedir.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Elektronik satınalma, Hedonik yarar, Faydacı yarar, Kimlik uyumu

**JEL Kodu:** M1, M10, M30, M31

**Alanı:** İşletme

**Türü:** Araştırma

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## **1. INTRODUCTION**

In 2018, online B2C sales are believed to reach to 2.36 billion U.S. dollars (B2C e-commerce sales, 2015). In 2018, only in the U.S. 79.6 % of internet users are expected to purchase at least one item online (Number of digital buyers, 2015). Turkey, having one of youngest populations in Europe, is not missing the trend and is expected to experience an annual growth of 13.7% in online sales revenue between 2016 and 2021 (Statistica, 2016). These numbers reflect that online shopping will continue growing rapidly in the world, mainly because an increasing number of consumers started to get more comfortable with using the Internet and devote more time and resources to online consumption, which turns e-commerce into a vital channel for shopping. On top of that, many consumers, even though they do not consider purchasing anything online, use online channels to gather information to potentially eliminate their purchase related problems. Hence, offline channels have become substituted by the online channels and the unstoppable growth of online channels either as the primary channel or within an omni-channel strategy creates a significant challenge for traditional venues. This further necessitates particularly B2C companies to develop a clearer understanding of why consumers are shopping and browsing online to be able to provide additional differentiating values in their channels and to attract as well as to retain more consumers (Ghazali et al., 2016, pp 157-171; Wu et al., 2014, pp. 2768-2776), since this growth in e-commerce will mostly result from current online shoppers (Centre for Retail Research, 2014).

Prior academic research on online shopping identifies an extended set of factors that may have an influence on the online search and purchase intentions of the consumers while concentrating mainly on the separate roles of utilitarian and hedonic values gained through online consumption (Yoon, 2002, pp. 47-63) and on the factors that influence those value perceptions (Childers et al., 2001, pp. 511-535; Fiore, Jin & Kim, 2005, pp. 669-694; Forsythe et al., 2006, pp. 55-75; Martínez-López et al., 2006, pp. 188-204; Nambisan & Watt, 2011, pp. 889-895; Sénécal et al., 2002, pp. 483-484; Trevinal & Stenger, 2014, pp. 314-326). However, while prior studies analyze the influence of the functional/hedonic dichotomy on online consumer behavior, most of the work seems to neglect the influence of symbolic values within the online environment (Trevinal & Stenger, 2014, p. 316; Yoon, 2002, p. 51) which can be particularly captured in the self-concept congruity between the consumer and online shopping behavior. Consumers knowingly or unknowingly leave footprints behind, when they search or shop anything online. With the latest developments within consumer rights,

most companies warn consumers about the cookies they use to track their online behavior. Moreover, studies note that online consumption, just like the offline act, is a social phenomenon where consumers interact with other consumers or employees (Trevinal & Stenger, 2014, p. 316). Aghekyan-Simonian et al. (2012, p. 327) suggest that within online platforms consumers are less concerned about self-concept congruence, however given the importance of the image concerns in explaining consumers' purchase motivations (Sirgy, 1982, pp. 287-300), and the role of symbolic motivation on consumption (Grubb & Grathwohl, 1967, pp. 22-27; Malhotra, 1988, pp. 1-28; Sirgy, 1985, pp. 287-300) as well as the symbolic value gained through consumption (Smith & Colgate, 2007, p. 12), the influence of self-concept congruence on online purchase behavior is non-negligible. Hence, similar to offline counterparts, online platforms also offer image-related symbolic benefits to consumers.

In line with this reasoning, one for the main purposes of this paper is to address this gap in literature by combining and extending existing research on online shopping into a cohesive whole and to contribute to the understanding of consumers' online shopping behavior and particularly of consumers' online behavioral intentions by relating them to utilitarian, hedonic, as well as to symbolic values gained through various elements of the online shopping environment. Hence, our contribution to online consumer behavior lies mainly in that we attempt to present a theoretically driven and comprehensive conceptual model of online buying behavior focusing mainly on the various factors leading to online search and purchase intentions and test it without specifying any product category with a sample of Turkish online consumers. Smith et al. (2013, pp. 328-335) mentions that online consumption behavior is culture dependent. Nevertheless, majority of the studies investigating online consumption employ a western sample, where only a few papers acknowledge the cultural differences reflected in online shopping (Christodoulides, Michaelidou & Theofania Siamagka, 2013, pp. 153-173; Barnes et al., 2007, pp. 71-93). Hence, our paper also extends literature by providing a non-western view on online shopping while using a large array of different product categories.

In the rest of the paper, we present a review of the relevant research, develop a conceptual model and drive a set of hypotheses. Sampling and measurement are discussed in the methodology section, followed by the presentation of the results. Finally, the paper ends with a discussion and implications section followed by limitations and directions for future research.

## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESES DEVELOPMENT**

### **2.1. Online Shopping Values**

Beginning with the early 1990s, online channels have begun to be incorporated as an important sales channel by many manufacturers and retailers, influencing the shopping process of consumers and even being the first choice of many shoppers within different industries. Some companies implemented online stores into their multi-channel strategy, whereas many others existed only online, nonetheless online sales emerged to cover a large proportion of overall, specifically, of B2C transactions, where online channels are utilized by the consumers either to search for or to purchase anything. Hence online channels represent a very important venue for omni-channel consumer experiences.

According to the Expectancy-Value Theory (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980, pp. 466-487) expectations and anticipated values generated by a specific behavior trigger behavior and behavioral intentions (Zeithaml, 1988, pp. 2-22). Hence, individuals' experiences not only shape their current behavior but also influence value expectations affecting their future intentions. Consumers' perceived value determines many relational exchange activities (Wu et al., 2014, pp. 2768-2776), and particularly influence consumers' offline (as well as online repeat purchase behavior (Chiu et al., 2014, pp. 85-114). Park, Jaworski & MacInnis (1986, p. 140) define three basic human needs; functional, experiential (i.e. hedonic), and symbolic; that underlie consumers' three types of value perceptions. In general, utilitarian values are based on the assumption that consumers are rational problem-solvers (Bettman 1979) and relate to functional, economic, or extrinsic benefits, which are based on logical and rational evaluations of the product/service (Engel, Blackwell & Miniard, 1995). For utilitarian motivated individuals shopping is perceived as a mission, and whether or not the mission is completed in the expected way distinguishes the perceived acquired benefits by the consumers (Babin, Darden & Griffin, 1994, p. 645). On the other hand, perceived hedonic values are intrinsically satisfying, providing pleasure and fun, and appeal to emotional or experiential senses of the consumers and even in some cases help them to forget their problems (Babin et al., 1994, p. 647), which make the shopping experience and eventually purchase pleasant and entertaining (Babin et al., 1994, p. 656; Holbrook & Hirschman, 1982, pp. 132-140). For the hedonically motivated consumers, shopping rather creates enjoyment. Online environments provide memories and valued experiences to the shoppers (Trevinal & Stenger, 2014, p. 316) that are mainly studied within literature within the dichotomy of hedonic/utilitarian shopping (Nambisan & Watt, 2011, 891).

Within the online environment, similar to its offline counterpart, utilitarian values relate to consumers' external motives to use the Internet instrumentally to search for information, mainly to solve a problem (Kim, Lee & Kim, 2004, p. 29) or to compare prices and products to enhance their knowledge regarding products or services, which the consumer is interested in or is considering to buy. In the case of hedonic motivations, regardless of whether consumers eventually purchase anything or not, the value consumer gains through searching online is associated with the flow state that further evokes fun and enjoyment (Bäckström, 2011, pp. 200-209; Novak, Hoffman & Duhachek, 2003, pp. 3-16; Smith & Sivakumar, 2004, pp. 1199) and particularly with the emergence of social media and its influence on online shopping experience, the hedonic motivation has received attention (Fang et al., 2016, pp. 116-131).

Both, hedonic and utilitarian values are part of the online shopping experience (Trevinal & Stenger, 2014, p. 317) and a significant number of consumers seek simultaneously both values particularly from the aspect of online search intentions, because of the fact that the overall perceived value is regarded as a critical contributor to online repurchase intentions (Fang et al., 2016, pp. 116-131; Kim et al., 2012, p. 376). Compared to utilitarian motivations, hedonic motivations were found to be more important in generating online search (Kim et al., 2004, p. 30; Kim & Eastin, 2011, pp. 68-90) and shopping intentions (Childers et al., 2001, pp. 511-535; Scarpi, 2012, p. 53) as well as affective commitment (Bilgihan and Bujisic, 2015, p. 222), whereas the opposite was discovered in To, Liao & Lin (2007, pp. 774-787) for search and in Bridges & Florsheim (2008, pp. 309-314) for online shopping intentions. Hence, past research is inconclusive in terms of utilitarian and hedonic comparative influences on online behavior. Overall, based on this discussion we posit the following hypotheses to be able to compare the impact of utilitarian and hedonic values on search intention:

***H1:*** *Utilitarian value gained through online shopping is positively associated with online search intention*

***H2:*** *Hedonic value gained through online shopping is positively associated with online search intention*

Apart from the utilitarian and hedonic shopping values, consumers further

gain symbolic value from consumption when their self-enhancement, role position, and ego and group membership needs are satisfied (Smith & Colgate, 2007, p. 12). Consumption helps consumers build identities and self-images (Firat and Dholakia, 1998, pp. 123-162). However, despite the fact that the symbolic meaning within the social dimension of shopping has long been noticed, where products are consumed based on consumers' identity and meaning is produced by a triad of consumer, product, and society, resulting in self and status enhancement (Belk, 1988; Grubb & Grathwohl, 1967, pp. 22-27), previous research analyzing online consumption motivations only acknowledges consumers' need to get in touch with others but mostly overlooks the symbolic aspect of consumption (Yoon, 2002, p. 53). According to symbolic interactionism, use of products, particularly the act of shopping, enables consumers to assign meaning and to reflect an identity to themselves and to others (Belk, 1988; Sirgy, Grewal & Mangleburg 2000, pp. 127-138; Solomon, 1983, pp. 319-329), where consumers' attitude toward using or purchasing a product is influenced by the perceived match between the self and brand/product/shop etc, which is referred as self-concept congruity (Sirgy, 1985, pp. 287-300). In this aspect, consumers compare themselves with any kind of stimuli (Liu, Mizerski & Soh, 2012, p. 930) and reflect higher levels of congruity when they perceive themselves similar to them. Further, previous research shows the influence of self-concept congruity on behavior (Malhotra, 1988, pp. 1-28), particularly on shopping (Christodoulides & Veloutsou, 2009, p. 190; Sirgy et al., 2000, p. 127).

Tauber (1972, pp. 46-49) identifies the importance of social motives such as in-group attraction, that are further found to be related to hedonic motivations (Sheth, 1983, p. 10) and particularly applicable to online shopping environment (Parsons, 2002, pp. 380-392; Wu et al., 2014, pp. 2768-2776). Extending this logic, we focus here on the perceived match between the consumer's actual identity and online shopping. Consumers who perceive a congruity between their self-concept/image and the image reflected by online shopping activity, will presumably gain not only more hedonic value towards online shopping through intrinsic motivation but also reflect higher intentions to search and shop for products/services online.

***H3:** Self-concept congruence is positively associated with (a) hedonic motivation, (b) online search intention, and (c) online purchase intention*

**2.2. Determinants of Utilitarian and Hedonic Value**

Articles that study online utilitarian and hedonic motivations and perceived values report various factors that lead to both values. Some of these factors were identified for offline shopping but modified to the online counterpart, whereas some are specific for the online shopping environment. We make use of the factors that are associated with online shopping either as a benefit, a feature of the environment, or a factor that leads consumers to be more active as online shoppers. In Table 1 below, we provide a review of the related research and identify most significant factors that have an influence on consumers' perceived utilitarian and hedonic values within online shopping. Next, we discuss each factor and develop corresponding hypotheses

Table 1: Factors Effecting Utilitarian and Hedonic Values Discussed within Literature

	Factor(s) identified	Author(s)
Utilitarian	Control	Wolfenbarger and Gilly (2001); Martínez-López et al. (2014); Korgaonkar and Wolin (1999); Chiang (2001); Bhatnagar and Ghose (2004a); Bhatnagar and Ghose (2004b); Wolfenbarger and Gilly (2001); Kulviwat et al. (2004); Swaminathan et al. (1999); Donthu and García (1999); Rohm and Swaminathan (2004); To et al. (2007); Morganosky and Cude (2000); Chiang and Dholakia (2003); Martínez-López et al. (2014); Burke (1997); Forsythe et al. (2006)
	Convenience	Donthu and García (1999); Rohm and Swaminathan (2004); Moe (2003); Eastlick and Feinberg (1999); To et al. (2007); Martínez-López et al. (2014); Wolfenbarger and Gilly (2001); Forsythe et al. (2006)
	Assortment	Chiang (2001); To et al. (2007); Peterson et al. (1997); Kulviwat et al. (2004); Chiang and Dholakia (2003); Martínez-López et al. (2014); Korgaonkar and Wolin (1999)
	Economy/Cost Saving	Wolfenbarger and Gilly (2001); Foucault and Scheufele (2002); Moe (2003); Rohm and Swaminathan (2004); Eastlick and Feinberg (1999); To et al. (2007); Martínez-López et al. (2014)
	Availability of information	Arnold and Reynolds (2003); Forsythe et al. (2006); Korgaonkar and Wolin (1999); Parsons (2002); Bridges and Florsheim (2008); Mathwick et al. (2001); Mathwick and Rigdon (2004)
Hedonic	Adventure	Arnold and Reynolds (2003); Wolfenbarger and Gilly (2001); Korgaonkar and Wolin (1999); Parsons (2002)
	Social	Keeney (1999); Arnold and Reynolds (2003); Parsons (2002)
	Value/pleasure for bargains	

**2.2.1. Online Shopping Factors Related to the Utilitarian Value**

**Perception**

Individuals have an innate desire to have control over their environment, that is demonstrated by their tendency to show competence and superiority (White, 1959, p. 297) and reflects itself either in efforts to control life events or

in avoiding the perception that they are out of control of their environment (Burger, 1992, p. 147). Within shopping, utilitarian motivated consumers are found to prefer retail stores that provide control during the shopping experience (Lunardo & Mbengue, 2009, p. 434) and to have a better mood and enhanced involvement towards them (Ward & Barnes, 2001, 141). Online consumers also possess a desire to have power, authority or status over various elements such as length of time, content and sequence of the information presented or to monitor the sales process, all of which mainly give them a sense of freedom (To et al., 2007, p. 783; Wolfinbarger & Gilly, 2001, pp. 34-55). Perception of control may have consequences such as positive attitudes, enhanced intentions or fulfillment of utilitarian motivation (Wolfinbarger & Gilly, 2001, p. 38), whereas the lack of it may make the consumer nervous and even result in the foregoing of the shopping process (Kamis, Stern & Ladik, 2010, pp. 160).

*H4: Desire to control is positively associated with utilitarian value perception*

Contrary to traditional shopping, online shopping provides consumers the comfort to shop while being at home (Wolfinbarger & Gilly, 2001, p. 41), without any limitations of time and space, where consumers can easily save time, effort, and energy (Childers et al., 2001, p. 515; Ganesh et al., 2010, pp. 106-115; Rohm & Swaminathan, 2004, pp. 750). Consumer behavior scholars often define convenience in terms of saving time, emotional, physical and mental effort (Berry, Seiders & Grewal, 2002, p. 1-17; Nickols & Fox, 1983, p. 200), as well as ease of placing or of cancelling orders or delivery (Gehrt, Yale & Lawson, 1996, p. 20). Within online commerce, convenience refers to overall positive online consumer assessments on access, search, evaluation, transaction and post-purchase experiences (Jiang et al., 2013, pp. 249-263). Online stores provide 24/7 non-stop and interactive services that provide all aspects of convenience and enhance consumers online shopping intentions (Joines, Scherer & Scheufele, 2003, p. 100; Korgaonkar & Wolin, 1999, p. 56). Thus, convenience is one of the primary benefits associated with online shopping preference (Chiang & Dholakia, 2003, p. 180; Forsythe et al., 2006, p. 56; Joines et al., 2003, p. 100; Morganosky & Cude, 2000, 20) and with utilitarian motivation (Bhatnagar & Ghose, 2004, p. 760; Rintamäki et al., 2006, p. 9; Wolfinbarger & Gilly, 2001, p.38), leading to behavioral intentions (Seiders et al., 2007, p. 150) and to the success of online retailers (Jiang et al., 2013, p. 251).

*H5: Convenience is positively associated with utilitarian value perception*

Consumers have an interest to have a wide selection of goods and services at their disposal to select from and specifically online consumers are particularly variety-oriented (Donthu & Garcia, 1999, p.52; Forsythe et al., 2006, p. 56). Assortment refers to the selection and variety of products or services the consumer can choose from that enables more effective comparisons (Keeney, 1999, p. 540; Van Herpen & Pieters, 2002, p. 336). In online stores, a larger assortment compared to offline stores encompassing all variants can be offered for consumer choice and comparison without any inventory or storage restrictions (Alba et al., 1997, pp. 38-51; Szymanski & Hise, 2000, p. 312; Wolfinbarger & Gilly, 2001, p. 49), that has a positive influence to online shopping specifically for utilitarian motivated shoppers (Srinivasan, Anderson & Ponnnavolu, 2002, p. 45; Wolfinbarger & Gilly, 2001, p. 49).

***H6: Assortment is positively associated with utilitarian value perception***

Economic motivation has been documented to be an important determinant in offline (Westbrook & Black, 1985, p. 82) as well as in online environments (Joines et al., 2003, p. 101; Korgaonkar & Wolin, 1999, pp. 58-59). Availability of price opportunities in terms of finding information about competitive prices, deals, and promotions that offer savings is what some consumers regard as value shopping (Arnold & Reynolds, 2003, p. 80) and is one of the primary reasons why some consumers choose online over offline channels (Alba et al., 1997, p. 42; Burke, 1997, pp. 352-361; Chiang, 2001, p. 163; Martínez-López et al., 2014, pp. 188-204; Peterson, Balasubramanian & Bronnenberg, 1997, p. 330). Online consumers search for better value for their money, helping them to overcome the pain of paying (Chandon, Wansink & Laurent, 2000, p. 73) and savings in terms of money contribute to consumers' online shopping motivations by increasing their utilitarian value perceptions (Rintamäki et al., 2006, p. 12).

***H7: Economy/cost saving will lead to an increase in utilitarian value perception***

Online consumers, specifically the utilitarian oriented, rational shoppers look for easy-to-access information to reduce their costs of searching and evaluating alternatives. Online shopping allows consumers search and compare prices for available purchase options which is one of the main reasons why consumers choose e-commerce over brick-and-mortar stores (Mukherjee & Nath, 2007, p. 1175; Wolfinbarger & Gilly, 2001, p. 49) that also influences their online

repurchase intentions (Wu et al., 2014, p. 2772). The benefits stemming from information availability clearly distinguishes online shopping from traditional shopping and relates to the utilitarian value and motivation of the online shopper (Wolfenbarger & Gilly, 2001, p.50), influencing shopping intentions (Joines et al., 2003, pp. 90-108; Korgaonkar & Wolin, 1999, p. 53).

*H8: Availability of information is positively associated with utilitarian value perception*

### **2.2.2. Online Shopping Factors Related to the Hedonic Value Perception**

We next consider anticipated relationships between experiential elements related to online shopping and hedonic value perceived by the consumers. One way online shopping is utilized by many shoppers is to experience it for "stimulation, adventure, and the feeling of being in another world" (Arnold & Reynolds, 2012, p. 404). Babin et al. (1994, p. 653) identifies an adventurous aspect of shopping that leads to hedonic shopping value. The feeling of adventure emerges when consumers find something novel and interesting within the shopping process and reach to an excitement and "sensory stimulation" (Westbrook & Black, 1985, p.84). Though having different names such as escapism or playfulness (Mathwick, Malhotra & Rigdon, 2001, p. 42), within the context of online shopping, characteristics such as excitement and surprise are associated with the hedonic side of shopping (Mathwick & Rigdon 2004, pp. 324-332; Wolfenbarger & Gilly, 2001, p. 51). and for some consumers even surfing and searching for an item without buying it is entertaining and motivating (Close & Kukar-kinney, 2010, pp. 986-992), helping them to escape the real-life and to relieve from boredom (Bridges & Florsheim, 2008, p. 311; Parsons, 2002, p. 382; Wolfenbarger & Gilly, 2001, p.51).

*H9: Adventure is positively associated with hedonic value perception*

Some consumers enjoy shopping especially when they can share their experience with friends and family. For those consumers, consumption stretches further than the actual act but entails social experiences (Woodward & Holbrook, 2013, p. 325). Shopping in a sense enables them to get bonded not only with close ones but also with others that share similar interests (Arnold & Reynolds, 2012, pp. 399-411; Tauber, 1972, pp. 46-49). Accordingly, Korgaonkar & Wolin (1999, p. 56) and Wolfenbarger & Gilly (2001, p.54) argue that sense of community that

is created by some online shopping sites and the social benefits generated, give rise to increased enjoyment and pleasure by some consumers. Previous research identifies this social aspect (Arnold & Reynold, 2012, p. 401) and demonstrates its correlation with online shopping (Joines et al., 2003, pp. 90-108). Particularly from the perspective of online experiences, social experiences such as contact with other shoppers through interacting via reviews (Trevinal & Stenger, 2014, p. 317) or co-existence with other shoppers through co-browsing (Wei et al., 2017, pp. 84-99) have been found very appealing to many consumers increasing their overall engagement.

***H10:** Social interaction is positively associated with hedonic value perception*

As the final factor associated with hedonic value, value shopping refers consumers' enjoyment when finding a sale, discount, or a bargain (Arnold & Reynolds, 2003, p. 81). According to Tauber (1972, pp. 46-49), some consumers may gain pleasure of bargaining and a thrill of paying less than its normal price for a product, leading to hedonic value (Babin et al., 1994, p. 644). As stated within the factors leading to utilitarian value, one of the benefits consumers gain through online shopping is the opportunity to get information about competitive prices, deals, or promotions. At the same time, getting a discount would rejoice consumers as they would regard this as a personal achievement and value themselves as smart shoppers or super bargainers (Babin et al., 1994, p. 644; Chandon et al., 2000, p. 75). As a result, paying attention to prices and trying to find the best value for money can also be associated with hedonic shopping.

***H11:** Value shopping is positively associated with hedonic value perception*

### **2.3. Online Search and Purchase Intention**

Information search is essential to arrive at a purchase decision. Engel et al. (1995) define the search process as “the motivated activation of knowledge in memory or acquisition of information from the environment.” Influenced by the motivations of the consumer, pre-purchase search helps them get through the decision making process that ends with a purchase. Within the online environment, where consumers' product acquisition process is enhanced by the easy access to information feature of the Internet (Brown, Pope & Voges, 2001, 16678), consumers who use the Internet more often are more likely to purchase

through the Internet (Wolfenbarger & Gilly, 2001, pp. 34-55). Shim et al. (2001, p. 398) even argue that online information search is the single most important factor for purchase intention. As such, previous research finds a positive correlation between online information search intention and online purchase intention (Joines et al., 2003, p. 90-108; Kim et al., 2004, p. 30).

**H12:** *Online search intention is positively associated with online purchase intention*

Our conceptual model with the key constructs concerning consumers' online shopping behavior and their hypothesized relationships identified in the study is displayed in Figure 1.

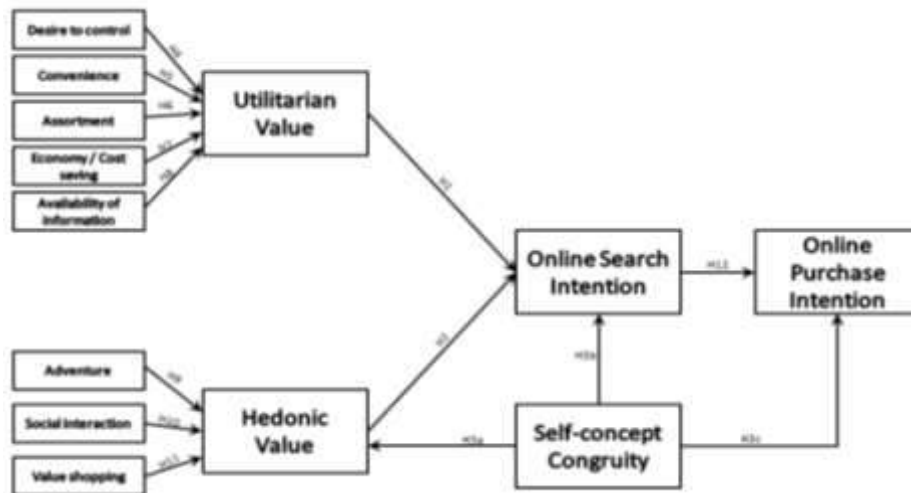


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

### 3. Methodology

A face-to-face administrated questionnaire containing previously validated multi-item scales with acceptable levels of Cronbach's alpha reliability were employed to measure utilitarian and hedonic values (Voss, Spangenberg & Grohmann, 2003, p. 312), online shopping factors related to hedonic value, online search and purchase intention (Arnold and Reynolds, 2003, p. 82) as well as to

capture all hypothesized online shopping factors related to utilitarian value (Martínez-López et al., 2014, pp. 188-204). Items aiming to assess the perceived congruence between a person's self-concept and the image they reflect while online shopping were self-constructed by the researchers taking literature on congruence into consideration. All scales had at least three items to establish an identified model constituting a total of 61 items which were translated to Turkish and then back translated to English by two Ph.D. students. Within this phase of the research, based on the feedback attained, revisions on the phrasing of some questions were made to improve face validity. Next, the questionnaire was pre-tested with a small sample of university students before moving forward with the main study to increase face validity.

For the main research, although there were no theoretical restrictions on the sample, a convenience followed by a systematic sampling was utilized to collect data. With this aim, three major shopping malls in Istanbul, Turkey were selected as the sampling frame, where out of every three by-passers were approached as survey respondent, to limit self-selection bias (Sudman, 1980, p. 425). We selected shopping malls in Istanbul for two reasons. First, according to the Turkish Statistical Institute, 18.6% of the overall Turkish population lives in Istanbul (Tuik, 2015). And second, consumers in Istanbul reflect a mixture of Turkish people because of the high migration rates from almost all cities in Turkey (Göregenli, Karakus & Gökten, 2016, pp. 413-428). Respondents were initially asked a couple of screening questions, such as whether they have ever searched and/or shopped a product (service or physical good) online and how much they have spent online within the last year to assess respondents' expertise on online shopping and to increase their involvement with the study. As a result, a negative answer to any of the screening questions resulted in the termination of the study. Next, respondents provided answers for the previously mentioned measures and demographics.

In terms of the sample characteristics, with a 47 % response rate, among the meaningful 358 responses, there were 192 male (53.9%) and 166 female (46.4%) respondents. The mean age ranged from 18 to 60 with a mean of 29.2 and a standard deviation of 8.17 while 192 respondents were aged within the ranges of 18-27, 118 within 28-37, 29 within 38-47, and finally 19 within 48-60. The majority of the sample had a college degree (30.7%) and classifying as middle (52.0%) or upper-middle class (39.4%).

**3.1. Measurement, Reliability and Validity**

Missing data is problematic in SEM (Hair et al., 2010), so data were analyzed and cleaned carefully before the analyses. The items were initially subjected to a descriptive analysis followed by an Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) to check if the hypothesized structure was supported by the data. Table 2 provides means, standard deviations and interconstruct correlations of all the constructs within the study.

**Table 2: Means, Standard Deviations, and Correlations of the Constructs within the Study**

Constructs	Mean	St. Dev	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
Desire to control (1)	5.15	1.21													
Convenience (2)	5.41	1.25	.634												
Assortment (3)	5.15	1.34	.638	.712											
Economy (4)	4.91	1.22	.563	.627	.668										
Availability of information (5)	5.21	1.16	.572	.617	.538	.527									
Customization (6)	4.9	1.29	.515	.571	.547	.539	.600								
Adventure/ Explore (7)	4.36	1.48	.425	.420	.401	.474	.404	.491							
Social (8)	4.03	1.47	.303	.228	.228	.347	.332	.334	.582						
Value (9)	4.91	1.64	.314	.353	.359	.450	.380	.379	.527	.457					
Utilitarian motivation (10)	5.59	1.15	.605	.645	.651	.619	.596	.592	.390	.262	.344**				
Hedonic motivation (11)	4.81	1.36	.423	.405	.417	.515	.392	.419	.577	.524	.522**	.538			
Self-concept congruity (12)	4.09	1.51	.389	.430	.451	.444	.305	.345	.518	.427	.501**	.412	.566		
Search intention (13)	5.22	1.33	.464	.539	.524	.509	.597	.490	.479	.424	.583**	.554	.530	.455*	
Purchase intention (14)	4.95	1.35	.540	.659	.624	.585	.569	.564	.557	.380	.535**	.639	.550	.602*	.704

Within EFA, following a series of iterative procedures using principle component factoring with varimax rotation, a final structure was obtained. All items were analyzed with respect to insignificant (< 0.5) loadings and cross-loadings; and, two items from desire to control, three items from convenience, and two items from availability of information were eliminated. The reliabilities of each factor using Cronbach’s alpha as a measure of internal consistency were further encouraging with all values being greater than the benchmark of 0.60, as recommended by Bagozzi & Yi (1988, p. 77). Next we moved on with the confirmatory factor analysis (CFA). The initial measurement model (CFA) was significant. After some minor modifications based on the information obtained

from the modification indices as part of the Amos output, CFA yielded a normed chi-square value of 1.9, reflecting a very good fit (Hair et al., 2010). The fit indices also supported an acceptable fit with values above the threshold of 0.9 (CFI=0.912; TLI=0.908 ; RMSEA=0.073. When the CFA output was further analyzed, all critical ratios were significant and above 1.96. Among the indicators of the convergent validity (Fornell & Larcker, 1981, p. 384), all item loadings were positive, significant ( $p < .01$ ) and greater than 0.5, and all composite reliabilities (CR) were found to be higher than 0.7. In addition, all values were above 0.5 for average values extracted (AVE), as suggested by Fornell & Larcker (1981, p. 385), which is again an indication of convergent validity. CFA also reassures discriminant validity, as the AVE values were higher than the squared correlation estimates (SQE) between factors (Hair et al., 2010), indicating that corresponding indicators were truly elucidating the latent construct better than other constructs. Nomological validity was gauged by analyzing whether the correlations among the constructs were acceptable and reasonable (Hair et al., 2010), which was also supported by the model. Finally, we checked for the existence of common method bias. Within the questionnaire design period, we altered the scale anchors and format to control for common method bias. In addition, we performed Harman's single-factor test and the common latent method to test for common method bias. Tests reported values of 33.65% and 22.45% respectively, indicating no significant problem with common method bias and reassuring discriminant validity.

### **3.2. Model Estimation, Fit and Hypothesis Testing**

Following the successive statistical tests and refinements, the proposed model was then subjected to SEM. Demographic variables such as age and gender were added to the structural model as control variables, as their influence on online consumption behavior has been demonstrated in previous literature (Alhouti, Johnson & D'Souza, 2016, p. 25; Fang et al., 2016, pp. 116-131). Hence, their effects on the endogenous variables were also tested to be able to provide a deeper understanding. All values indicated an acceptable fit and the inspection of the modification indices revealed that the model was stable and robust. The normed  $\chi^2$  value ( $\chi^2/df$ ) of the structural model was 2.02 with a RMSEA value of 0.057. Additional fit indices were as follows: CFI = 0.895, IFI = 0.896 and Standardized RMR = 0.0716. Thus, Appendix A represents the results of CFA, reliability and the standardized path estimates in the final structural model with the critical ratios.

Hypothesis testing results are displayed in Table 3. All hypotheses were validated with statistical significance. Factors that affect hedonic value gained through online shopping explain 16.9% of variance. Social interaction ( $\beta=0.26$ ,  $p<0.001$ ) and self-concept/online shopping congruence ( $\beta=0.23$   $p<0.001$ ) are the most important factors leading to hedonic value gained within online shopping, whereas for utilitarian value all factors were found to explain 15% of the variance and be equally important with  $\beta$  values ranging from 0.14 to 0.19 ( $p<0.001$ ); with availability of information being the most important one. Among the factors leading to online search intention, utilitarian value ( $\beta=0.47$   $p<0.001$ ) was found to be followed by hedonic value ( $\beta=0.25$   $p<0.001$ ) and self-concept/online shopping congruence ( $\beta=0.15$   $p<0.001$ ), explaining 39.5% of variance. The results also indeed show that 58.5% of the variance of online purchase intention has been explained by online search intention ( $\beta=0.64$   $p<0.001$ ) and by the self-concept/online shopping congruence ( $\beta=0.34$   $p<0.001$ ).

**Table 3: Hypotheses Testing Results**

Hypothesis (sign)	Relationship	Standardized estimate	t-value	Conclusion
H1 (+)	Utilitarian motivation → online search intention	0.47	8.82**	supported
H2 (+)	Hedonic motivation → online search intention	0.25	4.52*	supported
H3a (+)	Self-concept congruence → hedonic motivation	0.23	4.26**	supported
H3b (+)	Self-concept congruence → online search intention	0.15	2.66*	supported
H3c (+)	Self-concept congruence → online purchase intention	0.34	7.42*	supported
H4 (+)	Desire to control → utilitarian motivation	0.14	2.26*	supported
H5 (+)	Convenience → utilitarian motivation	0.15	2.12*	supported
H6 (+)	Assortment → utilitarian motivation	0.15	2.1*	supported
H7 (+)	Economy/cost saving → utilitarian motivation	0.15	2.4*	supported
H8 (+)	Availability of information → utilitarian motivation	0.19	2.87*	supported
H9 (+)	Adventure → hedonic motivation	0.15	3.94**	supported
H10 (+)	Social interaction → hedonic motivation	0.26	2.32*	supported
H11 (+)	Value shopping → hedonic motivation	0.16	2.89*	supported
H12 (+)	Online search intention → online purchase intention	0.64	12.66*	supported

When the influence of the control variables on the endogenous variables of utilitarian and hedonic motivation and online search and purchase intentions were

analyzed, the results indicate that age has an effect on utilitarian motivation ( $\beta = 0.04$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), hedonic motivation ( $\beta = 0.01$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), online search ( $\beta = 0.02$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) and online purchase intention ( $\beta = 0.07$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). Nonetheless, inspection of the coefficients reveal that its effect is quite negligible compared to the effects caused by other hypothesized factors. On the other hand, gender and product category was found to display no influence on any of the mentioned aspects of online consumption behavior.

#### **4. Discussion and Implications**

The goal of this study is to extend current literature on online consumer behavior by developing a comprehensive theoretical model that combines research on online shopping into a cohesive whole while also taking the symbolic side of consumption into account. Hence, the current study initially extends previous research on online shopping with hedonic or utilitarian motivations' perspectives and various different factors or benefits that are related to them and integrates those findings into a single framework. The structural model design enables the researchers to evaluate hedonic and utilitarian aspects of the online environment in a holistic fashion, as it is in real online shopping environment and to investigate their aggregated effect. Within online shopping, some studies report that consumers are motivated in a utilitarian way (Overby & Lee, 2006, p. 1164; To et al., 2007, p. 775; Wolfinbarger & Gilly, 2001, pp. 34-55); whereas others demonstrate a significant influence of hedonic orientations (Brown et al., 2001, 1667). On top of that Fang et al. (2016, p. 119) further demonstrate that consumers' experiential or task-related intentions shape their overall value perceptions. When considering both motivations in shaping online consumers' search intentions, our findings highlight the fact that it is consumers' utilitarian motivations that play a dominant role, and that they are followed by the hedonic motivations. According to the results of the current study, it appears that consumers search online primarily for utilitarian reasons, such as to be able to find information; however, the experiential nature of the Internet is still evident in their online behavior.

Understanding the influence of both utilitarian and hedonic motivations on online search intentions and factors that create those motivations is crucial in attracting both task-oriented and experiential online visitors to be able to create intrinsic as well as extrinsic rewarding experiences for the consumers (Fang et al., 2016, p. 119). In this regard, this paper also concentrates on various factors

that create either utilitarian or hedonic values for the online consumers. When considering utilitarian values obtained, availability of information is the most important factor followed by equally important aspects of control, convenience, assortment and cost saving/economy. These results are in apparent alignment with the rich-in-information nature of the environment, though in contradiction to previous literature demonstrating convenience (To et al., 2007, p. 776) or economy/cost saving (Brown et al., 2001, p. 1668; Mathwick et al., 2001, p. 43; Martínez-López et al., 2014, pp. 188-204) as the primary determinants of consumers online shopping motivations. In terms of the experiential aspects, among the factors leading to hedonic value, social aspects are in fact more value-adding. Hence, we find that social interactions and image congruence are creating hedonic value, followed by the factors that result from the rich-in-flow-experience character of the medium. Factors such as adventure and value that make the consumer feel to be in a different world are obviously less effective.

In addition, we extend previous work by including self-concept related symbolic value to the overall conceptualization, mainly to be able to capture all aspects of online shopping and to underline the importance of self-concept within the online context. In this context, we emphasize the perceived congruence between the consumer and online shopping and link it to both hedonic value gained and to online search and purchase intentions. As hypothesized, we find that perceived congruence leads to an enjoyment and intrinsic motivation of the consumers (hedonic value) that turns out to be equally important as the enjoyment resulting from social interactions. Moreover, the influence of symbolic value acquired thorough the perceived congruence not only strongly affects consumers' purchase intentions but also plays a non-negligible role among the factors that lead to online search intention. This finding, providing the evidence of image considerations' significance within e-commerce, is inevitably important given the fact that previous studies mostly concentrate on the utilitarian and hedonic aspects and yet still provide mixed results. Our results cast light on earlier findings and demonstrate that utilitarian values work as a prerequisite, nonetheless hedonic and symbolic values experienced through online shopping differentiate the outcomes. As one of features of online shopping, companies implement cookies to track every move made by the consumers. As a result, not only what consumers search for but also what they purchase online can easily be made visible to other visitors or shoppers and can also be used as a recommendation mechanism. Consumption entails identity concerns; as a result, when consumers search for an offering online, self-concept related considerations also play a role, which are in fact more significant than in the case of online

purchasing, as offline purchasing may trigger online search as well. Hence, from a managerial standpoint, our results demonstrate that apart from the functional and experiential attributes, e-commerce sites also need to differentiate themselves from the competitors in terms of their images reflected to prospects, just as offline stores do. For instance, online retailers may assess how they are perceived by the consumers and make necessary adjustments to reflect images that are in congruence with their target consumers.

Finally, findings confirm that consumers' online purchase intention is positively influenced by their online search intentions as stated by previous literature. Online searching behavior is particularly important. Consumers may use online stores to gain information on various shopping related aspects and then go and shop offline, hence online shops need to convince the consumers to continue with the shopping journey and buy from them. Previous research suggests that in terms of purchase, consumers find that the offline context provides different benefits than the online context, hence consumers may eventually purchase from both (Scarpi, Pizzi & Visentin, 2014, p. 263); but when it comes to online search in either way they tend to search online (Voorveld et al., 2016, pp. 385-400). On the other hand, as stated earlier, we also find support for the anticipated relationship between consumers' congruity perceptions and online purchase intentions. As according to various theories such as Theory of Planned Behavior, intentions are important predictors of actual acts, online consumers' image concerns need to be addressed by online retailers as this would affect actual online consumption. Christodoulides et al. (2013, p. 163) point out that collectivists are more prone to community needs than their individualistic counterparts. Hence, we strongly believe that the collectivistic nature of Turkish online consumers is reflected in our results.

Overall, online shopping continues to be an important phenomenon for both consumers and marketers. The research reported here tries to contribute to the understanding of online shopping by analyzing the factors that are influential for consumers to engage in online search and purchasing. By having an understanding on the underlying motivations and factors that lead to the values gained by online shopping, current research aims to make academic as well as managerial contributions. From a theoretical perspective, this research attempts to offer a theoretical framework to adequately explain and predict online intentions of the consumers. The results validate the influence of a mixture of different factors. As noted earlier, contrary to the majority of previous research, we took both utilitarian and hedonic aspects into account, while also considering

the symbolic aspect of consumption that is reflected by the self-concept/online shopping congruity. Overall, our findings highlight the need to address all motivations from a managerial perspective and we conclude that the future of online shopping not only depends solely on hedonic or utilitarian factors, but also on consumers' perceptions regarding the image of online shopping. Hence, our results demonstrate the importance of making use of the properties of the medium while providing the consumer with a shopping experience that is rich in information, sensory stimulation, and self-expression. Though not stated as formal hypotheses we also checked for the influence of age and gender. Our results demonstrate that gender does not have an influence neither on utilitarian or hedonic motivations nor on online search and online purchase intentions. On the other hand, age seems to be influential on all aspects, though its effect is negligibly weaker compared to the other effects mentioned in the study. Hence, we can conclude that the findings of the current study are stable across sample demographics.

Further, the proposed structure was confirmed using a non-western sample and a large array of products. Consequently, the understanding of online shopping in the literature is hoped to be improved. Turkey is a developing country with many technological improvements and with 45% of Turkish population being younger than 25 years. Hence, Turkey is expected to display a higher growth rate in e-commerce compared to whole Europe and North America (PayPal Global Mobile Research Report, 2015). As a result, this research reflecting Turkish consumers' e-commerce preferences may not only shed light to non-western, collectivist consumers in the rest of the world, but would also create opportunities for international online retailers that operate in Turkey.

### **5. Limitations and Further Research**

While contributing to the understanding of consumers' online behavior, this research has some limitations common to social sciences. During the design of the study, we tried to control for common method biases by applying a pilot survey with the proposed items, by distancing the predictor and criterion variables, and by assuring for complete anonymity of the participants to avoid evaluation apprehension. However, minor issues such as common rater effects or item characteristics and context effects could not be eliminated. The main limitation of the study is that it was conducted with a non-probability sampled consumer group, and thus may not be generalized to the whole consumer population. Hence, analyzing how the model fits within different consumer

populations or in different countries may lead to some interesting results and therefore is suggested as an avenue for further research. Second, the data used in the study involves self-reported intentions of the consumers. Previous research shows that consumers intentions to purchase a product or service is a good predictor of actual purchase (Morwitz, Steckel & Gupta, 2007, pp. 347-364); and consumers who report higher purchase intentions were also found to have higher actual buying rates (Berkman & Gilson, 1978, p. 455). Nevertheless, testing the conceptual model with actual consumer behavior, or extending the model with actual buying behavior as an additional outcome, may create interesting managerial results. Future researchers may capture weighted differences between the motivations and intentions leading to a deeper understanding of online consumer behavior. As our results demonstrated, benefits that rise due to the features of the medium play a significant role in online consumer behavior. As such, future research may also add perceived interactivity or ease of use as significant contributors to consumers' online shopping and search intentions.

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### Appendix A

Dimension	Item	EFA Loading	Composite Reliability	Path Estimates	AVE
Desire to control	By using price comparison tools I feel more in control of the entire buying process	0.78	0.90	0.81	0.78
	I like to feel I have control over my online consumption process	0.73		0.82	
	The Web allows me to control my consumption visit	0.74		0.86	
	Opportunity to elaborate upon or participate in the Web content makes me feel in control	0.72		0.85	
Convenience	Shopping online saves me a lot of time	0.78	0.92	0.76	0.81
	Online shopping makes my life easier	0.73		0.82	
	The Internet is a convenient way of shopping	0.77		0.87	
	Online shopping fits my schedule	0.73		0.80	
	Online, I can go shopping whenever I want	0.71		0.80	
	What I value a lot is the convenience of ordering over the Internet	0.79		0.82	

Dimension	Item	EFA Loading	Composite Reliability	Path Estimates	AVE
Assortment	I buy online because there I can get what I want	0.71	0.93	0.82	0.75
	I buy online because it provides me with easy and quick access to products/services I do not have in my local area	0.78		0.93	
	I like to buy online because of the wide selection of products and services	0.70		0.92	
	Internet provides me with a broad selection of niche products, and/or products I would not otherwise look for	0.78		0.84	
Economy	Online, I can get good value for my money	0.77	0.89	0.76	0.73
	You can save a lot by shopping online	0.78		0.77	
	Thanks to comparison shopping tools, I know I get the best value for the price I want to pay	0.77		0.86	
	On the Internet, I come across real bargains and/or competitive prices	0.68		0.79	
	I go shopping online to take advantage of sales or special offers	0.67		0.78	
Availability of information	What I value in online shopping is the availability of information – not only from the retailer and manufacturer, but also from other customers	0.79	0.88	0.73	0.68
	Thanks to price comparison tools, I get quick and easy access to the information I need	0.76		0.83	
	Due to quick and easy access to large volumes of information, I feel more empowered	0.77		0.81	
	When I plan my shopping I often use the information I find on the Internet	0.78		0.73	
	Even if I bought the product in a physical store, I turn to the Web for product support information	0.74		0.74	