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When it comes to E-loyalty, it takes different strokes for different folks

Contact:

Dianne Cyr, SFU Business, [Phone removed], cyr@sfu.ca

Julie Ovenell-Carter, PAMR, [Phone removed]

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With more than one billion Internet users around the world, online shopping now represents a significant global business market. And as SFU Business professor Dianne Cyr has discovered, culture-specific web design can boost the profits of savvy online retailers.

Cyr, whose previous research determined how various aspects of web design differed across cultures, recently completed a study titled *Website Design Across Cultures: Relationships to Trust, Satisfaction and E-loyalty*. This latest research examines how more specific site characteristics such as navigation, visual design or content contribute to trust, satisfaction and online shopping loyalty in different cultures. She notes that since even a five-per-cent customer retention rate can increase profits by as much as 95 per cent, it pays to design a website that will appeal to a broader cultural audience.

Cyr's study involved 571 people from Canada, Germany and China. She found that in China, visual design and navigation result in trust and e-loyalty, while information design is not as important. In that case, she says, trust could be established by enhancing website security and ensuring that the site is sensitively adapted to the Chinese culture.

In Canada, information design and ease of navigation are more important for instilling user trust and confidence than the visual design. And in Germany, where online shoppers appear to be the most risk-averse, Cyr found that neither information and visual design nor ease of navigation helped build trust, although navigation was a strong predictor of how satisfied German users were, even if they didn't necessarily trust the website.

Says Cyr: "Online businesses that aim to be successful in different cultures and with diverse users will need to adapt their websites for those users. Based on our research we now have hard evidence this should be a central concern for businesses that want to successfully expand to international markets."