

**National Culture and Electronic Commerce:  
A Comparative Study of U.S. and German Web Sites**

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**ABSTRACT**

For nearly all companies, an Internet presence is no longer an issue, but rather a question of how the Web site can be used to add value to the company's business. What applies to one company in a certain sector in one country, however, does not necessarily apply to a comparable company in the same sector in another country. National characteristics play a key role in determining human interaction of all forms—also including electronic communication. This paper takes an exploratory approach and analyzes three matched pairs of U.S. and German Web sites of companies drawn from commercial airlines, traditional mail-order companies, and package delivery services. As a result, national culture, telecommunication infrastructure, and market characteristics are identified as key drivers influencing the structure and functionality of corporate Web sites.

**Keywords:** Electronic commerce, cultural differences, Web site evaluation, comparative study.