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## CONSUMER BEHAVIOR AND SATISFACTION IN E-COMMERCE: A COMPARATIVE STUDY BASED ON ONLINE SHOPPING OF SOME ELECTRONIC GADGETS

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### ABSTRACT

*E-commerce is gaining familiarity among consumers across the globe. The ease of access to products and services in online retail environment has created new opportunities for online businesses and transactions. Online shopping has received much more attention as compared to conventional shopping in stores. Much of the literature on marketing focuses on investigating the online shopping mechanism and behavior of consumers. Although most of the investigational studies describe the hedonic and utilitarian motivations for online shopping, only a few are based on identifying factors affecting online shopping mechanism. The present paper provides some useful insights on consumers' purchasing intention and behavior. In addition, a conceptual model has been proposed to describe the antecedents and consequences of customer satisfaction. A comparative study has been done for identifying and analyzing the key factors influencing the consumers' purchasing behavior on the basis of online shopping of certain electronic gadgets on some e-commerce websites of India. The assessment of online shopping attitudes has been made on the basis of ratings and reviews provided by the customers to the products of the e-commerce. Implications of the findings have been discussed.*

### KEYWORDS

consumer behavior, customer satisfaction, e-commerce, online shopping.

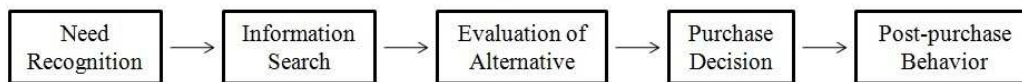
### 1. INTRODUCTION

nowadays, there is a craze for online shopping among the younger and elderly populations in the developed and the developing nations. The growing popularity of online shopping is good news for e-commerce retailers. It saves time and energy by providing a large number of brands and choices at one place. Also, it is quick, fast, reliable, comfortable, economical and cost effective. The number of e-shoppers is growing with the number of internet users who are getting more and more confident in purchasing online. This, of course, looks good from the buyer's perspective while competition between online retailers intensifies, see Webinar [1]. In order to stay ahead in this highly competitive environment, online retailers who really care about their success have to make sure that their online stores are buyer-appealing and customer-oriented. So, they have to maintain a right balance between their efforts to compete *efficiently* and their efforts to compete *effectively*, see Anderson et al. [2].

One of the barriers to the growth of e-commerce is that most of the consumers are reluctant towards making a purchase online. So, there is a growing need of *customer relationship management (CRM)* for creating and maintaining a stronger online consumer base. The success of an e-commerce relies on its relationship with the consumers. Hence, the online retailers make every effort to maintain a positive relationship with the consumers. The best thing is that many e-commerce retailers provide free shipping of products and also cash-on-delivery facility for enhancing their relationship with existing and future customers. A number of theories and models have been developed for highlighting the factors that influence customer relationship in traditional and online retail environments (Duncan and Moriarty [3], De Wulf et al. [4], Palmatier et al. [5], Yoon et al. [6], De Canniere et al. [7], and Balaji [8]).

Over the years, the consumer's purchasing behavior has been a topic of interest among academicians and researchers. As in the case of traditional marketing in the past, most of the recent research and debate is focused on the identification and analysis of factors that, by one way or the other, can influence the consumer's purchasing behavior in online retail environment, see Constantinides [9]. The consumer behavior and purchasing decisions are mostly influenced by demographic, social, economic, cultural, psychological and other personal factors (Dibb and Simkin [10], Kotler and Keller [11], Solomon et al. [12], and Kotler and Armstrong [13]). Some other major factors influencing online shopping behavior include website quality, product characteristics and customer service. According to O'Keefe and McEachern [14], the decision-making process for online purchasing of products consists of five consequent stages, as shown in figure 1. Online retailers can influence the decision-making process of the consumers by creating and delivering a proper online web experience.

**FIGURE 1: FIVE STAGES IN CONSUMER DECISION PROCESS**



(Source: Kotler and Armstrong [13], figure 5.6, page-152)

The consumer's decision-making process is affected by external factors of risk and trust (Kim et al. [15], and Comegys et al. [16]). Consumer's risk perceptions are mainly related to aspects involving the privacy and security of personal information, the security of online transaction systems and the uncertainty of product quality, see Shergill and Chen [17]. The security problem does not stop at the purchase stage but continues to the post-purchase stage because there might be circumstances of misuse of personal information; see Katawetawaraks and Wang [18]. Some recent research studies have clarified that consumer's risk perception is a primary obstacle to the future growth of e-commerce. On the contrary, trust building has a significant role in online shopping. One of the consequences of trust is that it reduces the consumer's perception of risk associated with online shopping. Lack of trust is frequently reported as the major reason that impedes consumers to buy online. Several academic papers have been published with a view to understand the online shopping mechanism and the consumer's purchasing behavior (Butler and Peppard [19], Bellman et al. [20], Liu and Arnett [21], Monsuwe et al. [22], Lin [23], To et al. [24], Hausman and Siekpe [25], Hernandez et al. [26], Khare et al. [27], Lee et al. [28], Zhang et al. [29], Martinez-Lopez et al. [30], and Wang et al. [31]).

The e-commerce retailers are facing challenges of converting the potential consumers into the real ones, and retaining them further. For this reason, their main focus is on customer satisfaction. The concept of customer satisfaction occupies a major role in marketing theory and practice. It is also a topic of prime concern in many investigational studies (Anderson et al. [2], Ho and Wu [32], Li and Zhang [33], Shergill and Chen [17], and Engler et al. [34]). A variety of research studies suggest that higher levels of customer satisfaction lead to greater customer loyalty, and in turn increases the chance of repurchasing ability.

The online retailers monitor customer satisfaction in order to determine how to increase their customer base, customer loyalty, revenue, profits, market share and survival. Customer satisfaction is greatly influenced by individual expectations regarding the products, and is measured on the basis of customer's entire experience with the e-commerce. The assessment of that experience is made on the basis of ratings and reviews provided by the customers to the products of the e-commerce.

The objective of the present paper is to identify and analyze the various factors influencing the online shopping attitudes and behavior of the consumers. The present analysis is based on the investigation of responses of online buyers in India.



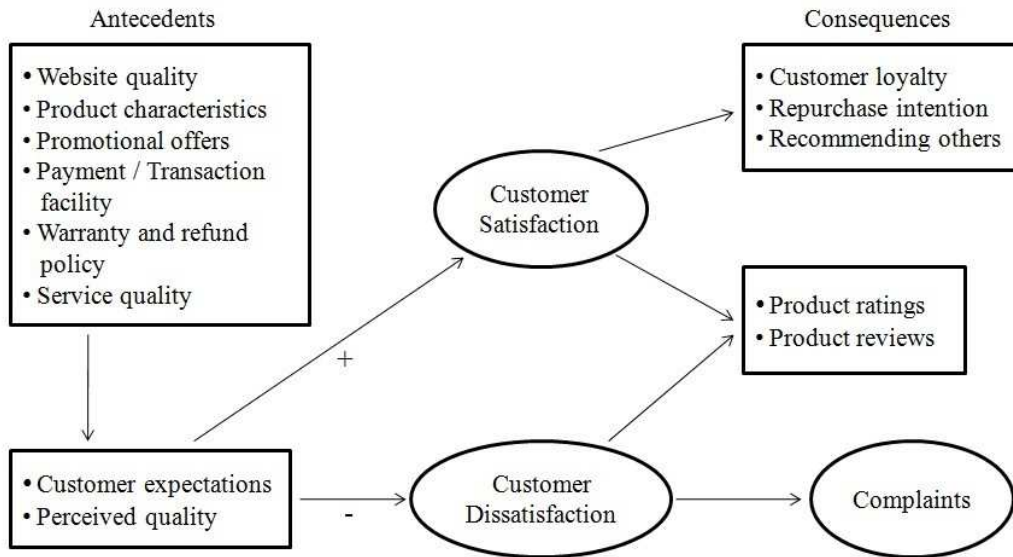
**2. PROPOSED MODEL**

As online shopping has grown over the past decades, so have consumers’ needs and expectations related to the online shopping experience. Understanding the consumers has become indispensable for enhancing their purchasing intention.

In literature, several theories and models have been developed for predicting and explaining the intentions and behaviors of persons (i.e., consumers in the present context), for instance, the theory of reasoned action (TRA) (Fishbein and Ajzen [35]), the technology acceptance model (TAM) (Davis [36], Davis et al. [37]), and the theory of planned behavior (TPB) (Ajzen [38]).

In the present work, a conceptual model is proposed for describing the antecedents and consequences of customer satisfaction in the context of online shopping, by following the works of Bearden and Teel [39], Anderson and Sullivan [40], Fornell et al. [41], and Shankar et al. [42]. The proposed model is depicted in figure 2.

**FIGURE 2: PROPOSED MODEL OF ANTECEDENTS AND CONSEQUENCES OF CUSTOMER SATISFACTION**



The proposed model can be described as follows:

1. If the antecedents meet the desired customers’ expectations and the perceived quality, the customers are satisfied. The satisfied customers share their views and experience by providing ratings and reviews to the products purchased by them. These customers become loyal to the e-commerce retailers, which in turn increases their repurchasing intention. These customers also recommend others (for instance, friends, relatives and family members) for online shopping of products.
2. On the contrary, if the antecedents do not meet the customers’ expectations and needs, the customers are dissatisfied. The dissatisfied customers provide negative feedback and lower ratings to the products purchased by them. This, in turn, has a negative effect on the purchase intention of a future customer. In some cases, the dissatisfied customer may file a complaint in the consumer forum.
3. The terms ‘customer expectations’ and ‘perceived quality’ can be regarded as internal factors (i.e., factors which cannot be expressed or intangible factors) influencing customer attitude towards online shopping, whereas ‘product ratings’ and ‘product reviews’ can be regarded as external factors (i.e., factors which can be expressed) influencing customer behavior and attitude towards online shopping.

**3. METHODOLOGY**

In recent years, there has been a rapid growth of e-commerce retailers. Several e-commerce websites have emerged, which provide a wide range of options to the consumers for online shopping and business transactions. Some of the e-commerce websites are presented in figure 3.

**FIGURE 3: E-COMMERCE WEBSITES**



For the purpose of the present analysis, the following three e-commerce websites have been considered:

**1. Flipkart.com**

It was founded in 2007 and now India’s top e-commerce website. It supplies electronic stuffs, health products, clothes, books, home appliances, baby’s and kid’s stuff, men’s and women’s stuff, and many other products. It provides

- Free shipping on products which are worth more than Rs 500.
- Cash on delivery.

- 30 days cash back policy, i.e., if one is not satisfied with the purchased product, it can be handed over back and the money is refunded within 30 days of purchase.
- EMI programs.

**2. Amazon.in**

Amazon is one of the most reputed and largest online shopping site for products like electronics, eBooks and others items. Amazon.in is directed by Amazon Seller Services Private Ltd., an affiliate of Amazon.com, Inc. It provides

- Free shipping on products which are worth more than Rs 499.
- Cash on delivery.
- Money back guarantee.

**3. Snapdeal.com**

It is India's one of the largest online shopping website. It was started in 2010 and is now placed at India's top ranking online shopping sites. It serves a huge collection of electronic stuffs, women's and men's garments, home appliances, books and many other products. It provides

- Free shipping.
- Cash on delivery.
- 30 days cash back policy.

**4. EMPIRICAL STUDY**

For making empirical analysis, data have been collected on prices and ratings of certain electronic gadgets among different e-retailers, i.e., Flipkart, Amazon, and Snapdeal. Table 1 depicts the price variations in electronic gadgets among different e-retailers.

**TABLE 1: PRICES\* (in rupees) OF VARIOUS ELECTRONIC GADGETS AMONG DIFFERENT E-RETAILERS**

Electronic gadgets	Brands	Models	E-commerce retailers		
			Flipkart	Amazon	Snapdeal
Mobiles	Nokia	Lumia 530	5512	5624	5373
	Samsung	Galaxy Core 2	7386	7950	7309
Tablets	Asus	Fonepad 7 (ME175CG)	9999	8996	9699
	Lenovo	A7-30	6499	7500	6499
External Hard Drives	Seagate	Backup Plus Slim (1TB)	5032	4342	4317
	Transcend	StoreJet 25M3 (1TB)	4569	6683	4046
	WD	My Passport Ultra (1TB)	4809	4248	4208

\*As per the data collected on February 9, 2015.

Tables 2, 3, and 4 presents the summaries of ratings given by certified as well as non-certified buyers to the various electronic gadgets among different e-retailers. The certified buyers refer to the buyers who have purchased the desired gadgets from the respective e-commerce retailers. On the contrary, the non-certified buyers refer to the buyers who have purchased the desired gadgets from some other sources like offline stores, and have shared their experiences to the e-commerce in terms of reviews and ratings.

**TABLE 2: RATINGS PROVIDED BY CERTIFIED AND NON-CERTIFIED BUYERS TO THE VARIOUS MOBILE BRANDS AMONG DIFFERENT E-RETAILERS**

Ratings	Flipkart		Amazon		Snapdeal	
	Samsung	Nokia	Samsung	Nokia	Samsung	Nokia
5	34	302	56	197	208	779
4	22	160	42	136	120	670
3	10	65	25	66	30	203
2	11	17	10	24	15	71
1	40	48	24	40	35	201
Average Rating	3.0	4.1	3.6	3.9	4.1	3.9

**TABLE 3: RATINGS PROVIDED BY CERTIFIED AND NON-CERTIFIED BUYERS TO THE VARIOUS TABLET BRANDS AMONG DIFFERENT E-RETAILERS**

Ratings	Flipkart		Amazon		Snapdeal	
	Asus	Lenovo	Asus	Lenovo	Asus	Lenovo
5	126	392	169	53	4	105
4	89	308	124	47	1	92
3	29	101	36	10	1	37
2	11	41	8	7	1	11
1	30	72	18	15	1	35
Average Rating	3.9	4.0	4.2	3.9	3.8	3.8

**TABLE 4: RATINGS PROVIDED BY CERTIFIED AND NON-CERTIFIED BUYERS TO THE VARIOUS EXTERNAL HARD DRIVES AMONG DIFFERENT E-RETAILERS**

Ratings	Flipkart			Amazon			Snapdeal		
	Seagate	Transcend	WD	Seagate	Transcend	WD	Seagate	Transcend	WD
5	214	2140	4231	1826	220	2069	1454	1456	1094
4	95	986	1696	826	79	976	716	750	596
3	13	124	248	112	17	163	117	110	119
2	1	47	63	29	5	53	44	43	32
1	15	133	161	90	20	102	113	101	123
Average Rating	4.5	4.4	4.5	4.5	4.4	4.4	4.4	4.4	4.3

**5. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION**

In recent years, e-commerce has evolved into a global phenomenon. Large numbers of consumers are attached with the e-commerce in comparison to the traditional brick-and-mortar stores. Before making an online purchase of a product, the consumers compare the prices of the same product among different e-retailers, and prefer the one having a lower price. To stay ahead in the highly competitive online retail environment, it is indispensable for e-retailers to know the purchasing intention and behavior of consumers. To gain popularity the e-retailers sometimes provide promotional schemes such as special offers, discounts on products, deal of the day, and festive offers. Such schemes are beneficial for attracting large number of online consumers, and for converting the low frequency online buyers into the regular ones.

Customer satisfaction is the key point to the success of an e-commerce. With the rapid growth of e-retailers, it has become a challenging task among e-retailers for building and sustaining relationships with consumers. The e-retailers make every possible effort to attract large number of consumers by advertising their web stores through internet, television, as well as through print media like newspapers, magazines and hoardings.

From Table 1, it is observed that there is a huge fluctuation in prices of various gadgets among different e-retailers. As the same product is available for different prices, it becomes easier for consumer to pick up the product with lowest price. Though the price of a product has a significant role on the purchasing intention of a consumer, it is the ratings and reviews, which influence the consumers' decision to a large extent. On the basis of ratings and reviews, the potential consumer decides whether to purchase or not to purchase the desired product. Tables 2, 3, and 4 describe the ratings given to the various gadgets among different e-retailers. Higher ratings attract the consumers for online purchasing whereas lower ratings impede the consumers.

The present study provides some useful insights on consumers' purchasing intention and behavior. It has been revealed that the three key factors, i.e., price, ratings, and reviews affect the consumers' intention for online shopping. Positive reviews on products enhance the purchasing intention of potential consumers, whereas negative reviews have reverse effect on the purchasing intention. In some cases, brand name and brand's perceived quality, irrespective of brand price, have significant role in consumer's decision making process for online shopping. Consumers are much attracted towards popular brands as compared to others.

## 6. MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

The findings of the present study have several implications. Firstly, it emphasizes on providing price discounts on products for enhancing consumers' intention for online shopping, and thus enabling e-retailers to gain popularity. Secondly, e-retailers should focus on advertising their web stores through online and print media to reach more and more consumers. Although some e-retailers are adopting these strategies and are on top, while others are lagging behind.

Though the online retailers offer customers with variety of products and services, some products like apparels are less likely to be purchased online. Most of the consumers prefer to buy apparels offline. Hence the online retailers should make every possible effort to analyze which products are more suitable for selling online. The e-retailers should also focus on the customer's requirements, product characteristics, and after sales services to meet the desired level of customer's expectations. In addition, the web stores should be buyer-appealing and user friendly so that the online shopping becomes easier. Gaining popularity among consumers enhances purchasing behavior and repurchasing intention, and is directly related to the success of an e-commerce.

It is of great importance to take feedback from consumers. It helps e-retailers to analyze the performances of their products and services, and to make necessary changes if desired. In addition, e-retailers should emphasize on providing customers with detailed product information and secure online transaction facility.

Consumers feel more comfortable to purchase products from online stores as compared to offline stores. Hence the online retailers have to build and maintain trust with the consumers. Though sending promotional e-mails to consumers provide an attractive opportunity for online retailers to get closer to consumers, excess of unwanted e-mails may even annoy the consumers and have a negative impact on relationship building. In order to facilitate online shopping, the online retailers should focus on reinforcing the relationship with consumers.

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