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INFLUENCE OF DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS IN PREFERRING ONLINE SHOPPING PORTALS**M. RAMYA****Ph. D. RESEARCH SCHOLAR
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MADURAI****ABSTRACT**

The online shopping trends around the world spread fast. Most of the companies are running their portals to sell their products /services online. Internet users who are the potential online customers are expected to reach 600 million by 2020. Increased proliferation of smartphones, lower cost of connectivity and improved quality and expanded reach in lower cities and rural areas due to improved network infrastructure would boost online shopping in the days to come. The preference of famous websites like Amazon.in, Flipkart.com, Snapdeal.com, E-bay.in, Myntra.com and others are though based on the qualities of websites, the demographic characteristics of online shoppers have also played a significant influence in selecting particular shopping portals. The present study has made an attempt aiming to understand the influence of demographic characteristics of online shoppers in their preference of websites.

KEYWORDS

online shopping portals, demographic variables.

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INTRODUCTION

The online shopping trends around the world spread fast. Most of the companies are running their portals to sell their products /services online. Internet users who are the potential online customers are expected to reach 600 million by 2020. Increased proliferation of smartphones, lower cost of connectivity and improved quality and expanded reach in lower cities and rural areas due to improved network infrastructure would boost online shopping in the days to come. The growth of online shopping is though driven more by qualities of websites, the characteristics of demographic variables play a crucial role in attracting of consumers also have a strong influence in their preference. It is, therefore worth investigating that what are the popular online portals are preferred by online customers and the influence of their demographic characteristics behind such preference. This information would rightly help the e-marketers to improve the ability of their e-shopping sites in attracting, adding and retaining online customers to their fold.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Dahiya and Richa (2012) found in his study that online shopping was significantly influenced by demographic characteristics of customers; notable among them were age, gender, marital status, family size and income. According to Wu (2003) consumer characteristics and consumer life styles have significant relationship with the preference of online portals. Cheung et.al (2003) found that five main factors influenced the consumer online purchasing, they were, consumer's individual characteristics, the medium's characteristics, product characteristics, environmental factors and merchant characteristics. They finally indicated the strong influence of consumer characteristics in selecting websites.

According to a survey the top ten online portals in India are Amazon.in, Flipkart.com, Snapdeal.com, Paytm.com, Ebay.in, Jabong.com, Myntra.com, Shopclues.com, Pepperfry.com and Homeshop18.com. Portals like Zovi.com, Infibeam.com, Frist cry.com, Shopping India times.com, Lenskart.com, Croma.com, Americanswan.com and Zoomin.com are also making their presence.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

Most of the studies in the field of online shopping focused on the behavior of the online customers from a broader perspective giving little consideration to the shopping portals, which are the 'Gateways' through which online shopping was conducted. They are being prelude to the shopping process and influencing even the onlookers to engage online purchase. Hence, the preference of popular website portals and the influence of demographic characteristics of shoppers behind the preference of specific shopping portals is worth investigating.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To find the demographic characteristics of online shoppers.
2. To know the top ten Online shopping portals preferred by online shoppers.
3. To analyze the influence of demographic characteristics of online shoppers in their preference of major shopping portals.
4. To offer suggestions based on the findings of the study.

SCOPE OF THE STUDY

This study helps to understand the impact of demographic variables of online shoppers on selecting their website portals for shopping.

METHODOLOGY

It is an empirical study based on both primary and secondary data. By following purposive sampling technique, 700 online customers were chosen and contacted. Responses worthy of consideration received from 537 respondents, who formed the sample size for the study. Responses were obtained on 20 statements expressing the preference of shopping portals by following 5-point Likert type scaling procedure. A well-structured and pretested interview schedule was used to collect primary data. Statistical tools like percentage analysis, weighted average score and chi-square test were used for analyzing the data. The study was conducted in the Madurai district of Tamil Nadu state.

RESULTS AND INTERPRETATION

The results of data analysis are presented in following tables with interpretation.

TABLE 1: DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONDENTS BASED ON THEIR DEMOGRAPHIC VARIABLES

S.No	Demographic variables	Category	Number	Percentage
1.	Age	Up to 25	274	51
		Above 25	263	49
			537	100
2	Gender	Male	356	66
		Female	181	44
			537	100
3	Education	Schooling	111	21
		Degree /diploma	219	41
		Professional	207	38
			537	100
4	Marital status	Married	204	38
		Unmarried	333	42
			537	100
5	Occupation	Students	98	18
		Housewives	302	56
		Employed	137	26
			537	100
6	Family income (monthly)	Up to Rs 1lakh	203	38
		Between Rs1lakh and Rs2lakh	270	50
		Above Rs 2 lakh	64	12
			537	100

Source: primary data

Table-1 reveals that a majority of online respondents belonging to the age category of 'upto 25 (51%),gender category of 'male'(66%),education category of 'degree/Diploma'(41%) marital status category of 'unmarried'(42%), occupation category of 'house wives' (56%) and family income category of 'between Rs 1lakh and Rs 2 lakh'(50%) are dominating the sample.

The top 10 online shopping portals preferred by respondents given in Table-2

TABLE 2: TOP TEN ONLINE SHOPPING PORTALS PREFERRED BY RESPONDENTS (Weighted Average Method)

Portal	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Tot-al	Total score	WAM score	Rank
Amazon.in	203	123	60	65	30	25	10	09	08	04	537	4514	8.41	1
Flipkart.com	189	120	54	59	24	20	20	19	18	14	537	4246	7.91	2
Snapdeal.com	175	110	44	49	19	30	39	24	28	19	537	3992	7.43	3
Myntra.com	257	100	74	46	31	09	08	07	03	02	537	3676	6.85	4
E bay.in	130	80	34	40	43	50	59	44	37	20	537	3542	6.60	5
Jabong.in	227	102	75	50	31	14	12	11	10	05	537	3500	6.52	6
Shopclues.com	90	67	20	25	23	40	81	64	77	50	537	2716	5.06	7
Paytm mal.com	75	52	15	21	20	60	91	69	80	54	537	2690	5.01	8
Pepperyfry.com	50	34	14	19	23	65	96	89	85	62	537	2417	4.50	9
Homeshop18.com	27	20	10	10	20	78	111	106	90	65	537	2117	3.94	10

Source: Computed data

Table-2 shows the overall preference of shopping websites, amongst the first, second and third ranks are occupied by Amazon.in, Flipkart.com and Snapdeal.com respectively. Other seven websites are also ranked based on their respective weighted average score.The influence of demographic variables of shoppers on the preference of major shopping portals is analyzed with a help of chi-square test and results are furnished in the following tables. For the purpose of analysis, the websites ranked from fourth to tenth were clubbed together under the heading 'others'.

Null hypotheses framed for the study are:

- NH1- Age of online shoppers does not influence the preference of online shopping portals.
- NH2- Gender of online shoppers does not influence the preference of online shopping portals.
- NH3- Educational level of online shoppers does not influence the preference of online shopping portal.
- NH4- Martial status of online shoppers does not influence the preference of online shopping portals.
- NH5- Occupation of online shoppers does not influence the preference of online shopping portals.
- NH6- Family Income of online shoppers does not influence the preference of online shopping portals.

TABLE 3: RESULT OF CHI-SQUARE ON DEMOGRAPHIC VARIABLES

S.No	Demographic variables	Shopping Portals							
		Amazon.in		Flipkart.com		Snapdeal.com		Others	
		'P' value	NH A/R	'P' value	NH A/R	'P' value	NH A/R	'P' value	NH A/R
1	Age	0.001	R	0.028	R	0.037	R	0.669	A
2	Gender	0.000	R	0.000	R	0.000	R	0.000	R
3	Education	0.001	R	0.000	R	0.029	R	0.682	A
4	Marital status	0.084	R	0.021	R	0.000	R	0.117	A
5	Occupation	0.000	R	0.065	A	0.091	A	0.001	R
6	Family income	0.001	R	0.009	R	0.000	R	0.030	R

Source: computed data NH- Null Hypothesis, A/R- Accepted or Rejected

It is inferred from the result of above analyses that-

- In respect of Amazon.com, except marital status, the null hypotheses for the remaining demographic variables are rejected.
- In respect of Flipkart.com and Snapdeal.com except occupation, the null hypotheses for other demographic variables are rejected.
- In respect of 'other' portals, the null hypotheses for variables namely gender, occupation, and family income are rejected.

It may be finally concluded that with the exception of variables like marital status and occupation, all other demographic variables have strong influence on the preference of major three shopping portals ie Amazon.in, Flipkart.com and Snapdeal.com. In respect of preference of all other portals, the influences of these variables are complex.

SUGGESTIONS AND CONCLUSION

As the result of the study having clearly indicated the influence of age, gender, education, and family income of online shoppers while preferring the online portals, it is suggested that while designing portals, features which are likely to influence these group of customers have to be incorporated. Also, it has to be ensured that the strategies adopted have to be changed from time to time when targeting different categories of these groups based on their specific requirements like attractive graphics, looks, ease of navigation, improve downloading speed, attractive promotional offers etc. The growing potential of online shopping in India though offers a great business oppournity in 'business to consumer' (B2C) segment, it still remains a big challenge too. The retail giants who are the major beneficiaries of these online portals have moral as well as business responsibility in their overall creation and sustainability.

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