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QUALITIES OF MOST PREFERRED ONLINE SHOPPING PORTALS BY ONLINE CUSTOMERS

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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 by2020. 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 by customers differ in its level based on its security, appearance speed in downloading the pages, navigation friendly and other characteristics of the portals. It is, therefore, worth investigating that what are the popular online portals are preferred by customers and their qualities most considered by the customers while preferring such portals. This information would rightly help the e-marketers to improve the ability of their e-shopping sites in attracting, adding and retaining online customers in their fold.

KEYWORDS

online shopping portals, qualities of portals.

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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. According to Ajay Kaul, CEO of Jubilant, the Indian consumer is on the digitization cycle, it is irreversible. It is causing habit changes which are undiscovered and will provide multiple opportunities to engage with. Internet users who are the potential online customers are expected to reach 600 million by2020. 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 Boston Consulting Group(BCG) reported that Indian e-commerce market was only around \$16-17 billion in 2014 but it is likely to reach \$60-70 billion by 2019. The growth of online shopping is though driven more by demand side factors some supply side factors like qualities of e-shopping websites play a crucial role in attracting and enhancing online customer base. The preference of famous websites like Amazon.in, Flipkart.com, Snapdeal.com, E-bay.in, Myntra.com and others by customers differ in its level based on its security, appearance speed in downloading the pages, navigation friendly and other characteristics of the portals. Almost all prominent retail chains and franchises have opted to make their presence by openings their 'gateways' on the world wide web and selling their products. The success of online portals has been tremendous as every brand of today desires to merge with these online portals and destined to achieve manifold increase in online sales leading to lesser footfalls at all formats of physical stores. It is, therefore, worth investigating that what are the popular online portals are preferred by customers and their qualities most considered by the customers while preferring such portals. 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

Adrita & Goswami (2013) were of the opinion that online marketers had to offer attractive schemes on daily basis to attract online buyers. According to Ruchi Nayyar (2010) the website factors which influence online consumers were web design, fulfillment /reliability, privacy /security and customer service. Gao (2012) found that online seekers are main source of online shopping. They always want to seek information within few clicks and reach the most relevant information according to their requirements such as competitive brands, best price offers, product specification and consumers word- of - mouth. According to Pawan kumar (2012) E-shopping websites should primarily possess 13 major characteristics to attract online customers, which are security, appearance adequate information about products, speed in down loading the pages, navigation friendly, search option\search engine, hyper links to other information, information on member facilities, history and profile of company, ability to provide information in limited pages, option for providing feed back, visitor statistics and availability of interactive online activities.

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 behaviour 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, the preference of popular website portals and their qualities considered by shoppers is worth investigating.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The major objectives of the study are:

1. To find the most preferred online shopping portals by online shoppers.
2. To identify the qualities of most preferred online shopping portals by online customers
3. To offer the suggestions based on the findings of the study

SCOPE OF THE STUDY

This study helps to understand the most preferred online portals by online customers. Further, it also indicates the qualities of online portals most sought offer by online shoppers.

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 customers, who form the sample size for the study. A well-structured and pre-tested questionnaire was used to collect primary data. The popular three online portals preferred by online customers are only considered for major analysis. The identified five quality

criteria are analyzed across three popular portals to determine the specific qualities possessed by these portals. Garrett’s ranking technique used for the analysis. The study was conducted in the Madurai district of Tamil Nadu.

RESULTS AND INTERPRETATION

Based on the multiple response received from the total of 537 online respondents, the most preferred online portals were identified. They are shown in Table-1.

TABLE 1: MOST PREFERRED ONLINE SHOPPING PORTALS BY ONLINE CUSTOMERS (MULTIPLE RESPONSE)

S.no	Shopping Portal	Number	% to total Respondents
1	Amazon.in	467	87
2	Flipkart.com	382	71
3	Snapdeal.com	273	51
4	Myntra.com	240	45
5	E bay.in	254	47
6	Jabong.in	196	36
7	Shopclues.com	202	38
8	Paytm mal.com	251	46
9	Pepperyfry.com	160	30
10	Homeshop18.com	152	28

Source: primary data

Though it is clear from table-1 that the ten shopping portals are popular among online customers, top three portals namely, Amazon.in Flipkart.com and Snapdeal.com are preferred by more than 50% of respondents. Further, to identify the specific qualities possessed by popular, ten general criteria usually considered by customers were identify and given to them to rank according to their preference. The results are furnished in Table 2.

TABLE 2: GENERAL CRITERIA CONSIDERED BY ONLINE SHOPPERS WHILE CHOOSING ONLINE PORTALS (Garretts’ Ranking Technique)

S. No.	Reasons	Mean score	Rank
1	Navigation friendly	76.18	I
2	Security and appearance	68.89	II
3	Adequate information in limited downloads	60.34	III
4	Attractive promotional offers	59.13	IV
5	Search option /search engine	55.73	V
6	Visitors statistics	47.75	VI
7	Availability of interactive online activities	42.49	VII
8	History and profile of company	36.37	VIII
9	Information on member facilities	30.12	IX
10	Word of mouth	18.00	X

Source: computed data

Amongst the ten criteria considered, the criteria which scored above 50 may seem to be most sought after by online shoppers while preferring online portals. They are known from the table-2, such as, ‘Navigation friendly’ (Mean score 76.18), ‘Security and appearance’ (Means score 68.89), ‘Adequate information in limited downloads’ (Mean score 60.34), ‘Attractive promotional offers’ (Mean score 59.13) and ‘Search option/search engine’ (Mean score 55.73). The above said five criteria may be assumed to be the essential qualities to be possessed by any online shopping portal from the view point of online customers. Table-3 exhibits the qualities of portals considered by online shoppers while preferring the respective portals.

TABLE 3: QUALITY- CRITERIA CONSIDERED BY ONLINE CUSTOMERS WHILE PREFETOP THREE SHOPPING PORTALS (Garretts’ Ranking Technique)

S.No	Quality Criterion	Shopping Portals Preferred					
		Amazon.in		Flipkart.com		Snapdeal.com	
		Mean score	Rank	Mean score	Rank	Mean score	Rank
1.	Navigation friendly	72.13	II	64.51	III	51.23	IV
2.	Security & Appearance	60.74	III	53.78	IV	78.91	II
3.	Adequate information in limited downloads	50.64	IV	71.76	II	63.84	III
4.	Attractive promotional offers	89.69	I	82.18	I	87.76	I
5.	Search option/ search engine	42.17	V	45.14	V	44.45	V

Source: computed data

Table-3 has shown that which qualities most attracted the online customers while preferring their top three popular online portals. In the selection of all three portals the quality–criterion ‘attractive Promotional offers’ has become a most sought after quality by customers, as it is ranked first in the order of preference the three qualities, such as ‘adequate information in limited downloads’, ‘security and appearance’ and ‘navigation –friendly’ are found repeatedly but with changes in ranks. It is, therefore, evident that these are the major qualities considered by online shoppers while choosing a particular online portal for their online purchases.

SUGGESTIONS AND CONCLUSION

The present study is a testimony to the fact that the quality- criterion, ‘attractive promotional offers’ helps most of the popular sites becoming the pet gateways of online customers. As the online shopping habit is growing fast among all sections of the society, the online sites are expected to adopt promotional strategy with innovative approach on a continuous basis. Any portal may come into prominence at that time they incorporate the qualities desired by customers. The retail giants who are the ultimate beneficiaries of these online portals have moral as well as business responsibility in their overall creation and sustainability.

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