
Shopping Involvement in Online Shopping : An Exploratory Study

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Abstract

Over the years, there has been an increasing number and variety of firms and organizations exploiting and creating web based business opportunities. Parallel, several researches have been conducted on business to consumer (B2C) e-retailing. However, in a country like India where the culture of E retailing is new, but the potential is huge there is a significant need to determine the drivers for customer satisfaction, trust and repeat purchase. Maintaining customer repeat-purchase intention and avoiding significant switching behavior to sustain operations and gain competitive advantage is thus important for E- retailers.

This research paper aims at investigating the impact of convenience, perceived risk, variety, shopping experience and price on the shopping involvement of the online customers. Moreover, the effect of shopping involvement and customer satisfaction is being evaluated on repeat purchase intentions of the customers. Based on the research findings, this study makes suggestions regarding management strategies typically for retailers who see Indian customers as a prospect for E- Retailing.

Keywords: Online shopping, e-retail.

1. Introduction :

An increasing number and variety of firms and organizations are exploiting and creating web based business opportunities. Parallel, several researches have been conducted on business to consumer (B2C) e-retailing (Benjamin and Wigand, 1995; Jarvenpaa and Todd, 1997; Liu and Arnett, 2000; Collier and Bienstock, 2006; Deng et al., 2010. With the growth of online shopping web sites the customer database has extensively increased in past few years and so has the research on this area. But the data for these studies have predominantly referred to the US markets or European markets, where determining factors for customer satisfaction have been extensively found out for E-retailing. However, in a country like India where the culture of E retailing is drastically new, but the potential is huge there is a significant need to determine the drivers for customer satisfaction, trust and repeat purchase. According to the report "Rebirth of E-Commerce in India, by Ernest and Young, 2011 number of online transactions are increasing at a significant pace and cash on delivery is the most preferred payment option with over 30% of buyers opting for it. Maintaining customer repeat-purchase intention and avoiding significant switching behavior to sustain operations and gain

competitive advantage is thus important for E- retailers (Kuo and Hu, 2012).

So far, the Internet shopping has had a limited impact on Indian way of life. But a healthy growth in consumption and the technological awareness which India has witnessed has significantly led virtual retailers to establish itself in a prominent position in the country's markets. However, with the tightening of time constraints and more busy schedules in today's era has also lead customer's dependence on E- Retailing. In a competitive business environment, where customers have huge options for shopping, switching brands on the same website or even switching the websites appears more attractive. Notably switching costs are insignificant in the online shopping context. Customers can easily switch service providers with the click of a mouse. It has been witness that the tremendous growth on E- Commerce activities has led to an overall growth of E- Retailing (Refer Table 1). According to a report by Internet and Mobile Association of India, 2012 out of 19.6 million who accessed internet for shopping or for finding details related to a specific product or a service, nearly 73% (14.3 million) actually bought a product or a service in the end.

This paper aims at investigating the impact of convenience, perceive risk, variety, shopping experience and Price on the Shopping involvement of the online customers. Moreover, the effect of shopping involvement and customer satisfaction is being evaluated on repeat purchase intentions of the customers. From the practitioner perspective, measuring customer satisfaction

and understanding its underlying dimension on repeat purchase intention is significant because it enables online sellers to benchmark their performance and to identify areas that require improvement. Based on the research findings, this study makes suggestions regarding management strategies typically for retailers who see Indian customers as a prospect for E- Retailing.

Table-1 : Growth of the market size of E- Commerce since 2009 in India.

DIGITAL-COMMERCE MARKET SIZE FROM 2009 TO 2013 (Figures in Crores. Percentages indicate share of the overall market size)					
YEAR	Dec 2009	Dec 2010	Dec 2011	Dec 2012	Dec 2013 (Estimated)
Total market size	19,249	26,263	35,142	47,349	62,967
Online Travel Industry	14,953 (78%)	20,440 (78%)	26,572 (76%)	34,544 (73%)	44,907 (71%)
Online Non-Travel Industry	4,296 (22%)	5,823 (22%)	8,570 (24%)	12,805 (27%)	18,060 (29%)
• E-Tailing	1,550	2,372	3,842	6,454	10,004
• Financial Services	1,540	1,848	2,255	2,886	3,607
• Classifieds	775	1,085	1,682	2,354	3,061
• Other Online Services	431	518	792	1,110	1,388

Source : Digital Commerce Report, 2013 (IAMA).

2. Literature Review:

Berry et al. (2002) and Seiders et al. (2007) have extensively reviewed the literature on consumer convenience in a service economy and define “service convenience” as consumers’ time and effort perceptions related to buying or using a service. As a context-based concept, consumers’ perceptions of convenience can vary from one retail format to other. Much of the existing convenience literature has typically focused to a study of the development of the multidimensional service convenience construct in conventional stores with brick-and-mortar retailing environment (Clulow and Reimers, 2009; Reimers and Clulow, 2009). But in some recent works on online shopping, construct of convenience is treated as one of the major factors that prompt consumers to access online retailers’ web sites (Ahmad, 2002; Jayawardhena et al., 2007, Jiang et al., 2012). Much of the prior research in the field of e-commerce has treated the convenience construct as one of the predictor variables towards customer service and trust, that affect outcome variables, such as customer satisfaction and behavioral intentions (Colwell et al., 2008; Seiders et al., 2007). The study conducted by Beauchamp and Ponder (2010) is in depth work on the convenience construct which works on both online and offline shopping settings.

Convenience as referred earlier is not only in context to the customer convenience but also for the service

providers. The level of perceived service convenience is primarily influenced by non-monetary costs – those relating to time and effort (or energy expenditure) (Jiang et al., 2012). Berry et al. (2002) had point out that the benefits of service convenience constitute saving time or effort, elements – time and effort. The time-saving aspect of convenience has been intensively investigated in consumer waiting literature, particularly with respect to consumer reaction to waiting time in retail stores (Gehrt and Yale, 1993). According to Schaffer (2000), 30% of the consumers who leave a website without purchasing anything do so because they are unable to find their way through the site. Schaffer (2000) argued that a convenient website provides a short response time, facilitates fast completion of a transaction, and minimizes customer effort. The impact of service convenience on customer involvement is yet to be evaluated for online shoppers. The less time and effort the customers require booking an order online the better he is satisfied with the service. So we can hypothesize that:

H1: Shopping convenience is positively related to customer involvement.

As Hubbard (2007) explains, whenever there is risk, there is always uncertainty (although not vice versa). For online consumers, transaction with online vendors is considered uncertain and is a risky situation as compared

with the conventional buying-selling process. According to Kim and Kim (2005) consumers are given little opportunity to verify the quality of goods on their own and it is also not easy to test goods through interaction with the web vendor. When customers make a purchase from an unfamiliar web vendor, they are unable to judge the quality, and they do not know whether or not the service is reliable and legitimate. Risk affects the attitude and behavior of an individual in dealing with another party. The level of risk is an important factor in forming the customer's attitude and behavior in online transactions. Clearly a high level of risk will make it difficult for customers to utilize e-commerce. Perceived risk is thought of as the degree to which a consumer perceives a potentially negative outcome from the online transactions Featherman and Pavlou (2002). Kathryn and Mary (2002) suggested that perceived risk represents an individual's assessment of the relative probability of positive and negative outcomes of a given transaction or situation. Even though risk is a multidimensional construct, two types of risk are categorized in the context of Internet shopping; product category risk and financial risk. It is suggested that perceived risk correlates negatively with the degree of purchasing products online (Miyazaki and Fernandez, 2001).

H2: Higher the perceived risk, higher is the level of customer involvement.

Compared with a conventional retailer, an e-retailer is typically able to offer a wider range of product categories and a greater variety of products within any given category. A store in a mall is constrained by the availability and cost of floor space, whereas its online counterpart does not have such limitations. To illustrate, an e-retailer may keep only a limited assortment of a given product category in inventory but can form alliances with other suppliers and manufacturers that can ship products to customers of the e-retailer from their own, more extensive inventories. However, the customer has seamless access to the entire range of products carried by the alliance from the e-retailer's website. Bergen, Dutta, & Shugan (1996) noted that consumer search costs associated with shopping across retailers increase with the number of competing alternatives. In contrast, an increase in the number of available alternatives at a single e-retailer can greatly reduce the opportunity costs of time and the real costs of inconvenience and search expended in virtual store hopping (Srinivasan et al., 2002). The e-retailer that offers greater choice can emerge as the dominant, top-of-mind destination for one-stop shopping and thereby increasing overall satisfaction. The role of shoppers involvement and the number of product variety is significantly not been studied. Although it can be judged with the high number of products available the customer involvement will surely increase.

H3: Higher the Product Variety higher will be the Customer involvement.

The (direct) price of e-shopping over the Internet falls into two parts. An individual must first pay the market participation price or purchase the necessary computer

hardware, software, Internet subscription, and provide for future updating and replacement. In our research we have focused upon the price of product as the antecedent to the level of involvement of the customer.

Customer Involvement has often been regarded as one of the important moderators that determine the final purchase decisions of customers (Celsi & Olson, 1988). Consumers tend to perceive the shopping and consumption activities associated with products as personally relevant. Thus, they are likely to experience relatively high levels of enduring involvement with high cost products across many situations, such as electronics (Zaichkowsky, 1985). However, consumers may perceive low-enduring involvement toward frequently purchased household goods for which they pay low price. According to Suh and Yi, (2006) product involvement is likely to affect the satisfaction-loyalty relations by increasing or decreasing the effects on repurchase intentions of advertising, corporate image, and satisfaction.

H4: The higher the price of the product the higher is the level of involvement of the customer.

Shoppers are very often of the 'touch-and-feel' type, who prefers to handle and compare goods before deciding to buy. Indian shoppers regard shopping as an organic experience, and enjoy roaming the super markets, shopping malls and convenience stores in search of bargains while having an outing with the family. Under these circumstances, it is very important to discover whether consumers perceived at the outset that virtual shopping over the Internet would engender a comparable experience, and how significantly it tends to affect decisions to shop online.

H5: Higher the overall shopping experience higher will be the Customer involvement.

Involvement has been treated as major socio-psychological variable that explains individual differences (Festinger, 1957; Slama, 1985). Zaichkowsky (1985) defined involvement as a person's perceived relevance of the subject based on inherent needs, values and interests. The construct of Shopping Involvement has been studied for different retail formats. The difference our study creates is that the shopping involvement of a customer is being measured for the online shopping he makes. The variables being studied under shopping involvement are Perceived Risk, Shopping Convenience, Product Variety, Overall Shopping Experience and Price.

H6: More the customer involvement in shopping more the desire for satisfaction.

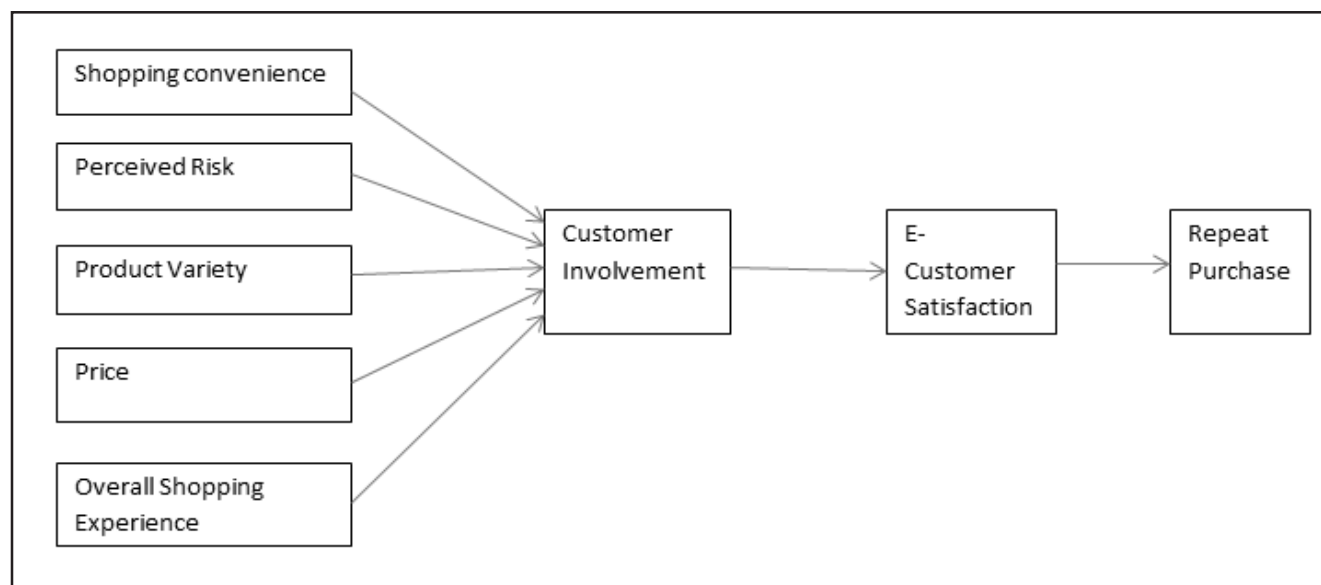
Repeat-purchase is the degree to which customers are willing to purchase the same product or service and it is predictor of future buying behavior (Lin and Liang, 2011). In this customer-oriented era, all retailers pursue customer satisfaction as essential to gaining sustainable growth and competitive advantages (Deng et al., 2010; Udo et al., 2010). The cumulative perspective of customer satisfaction is better for evaluating overall service

performance of the online retailer, and also more effective for predicting customer post-purchase behaviors or repeat purchase (Johnson et al., 2001; Liu et al., 2007). This study thus adopts the cumulative perspective and defines customer satisfaction as “an overall evaluation of past experiences with products or services purchased from a shopping website (Maxham and Netemeyer, 2002; Seiders et al., 2005). Many studies have concluded that customer satisfaction is positively related to repeat-purchase intention (e.g. Brady et al., 2001; Cronin et al., 2000; Zeithaml et al., 1996), and is a determinant of

long-term repeat-purchase (Ranaweera and Prabhu, 2003). That is, higher cumulative satisfaction can lead to higher repeat-purchase intention and frequency (Maxham and Netemeyer, 2002; Seiders et al., 2005). But the studies which talk about the same in online retailing are limited. Like the same was found among studies of e-retailing and online shopping (Collier and Bienstock, 2006; Lee and Lin, 2005). So we can frame our hypothesis as:

H7: Customer satisfaction positively influences repeat-purchase intention in online shopping.

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework



3. Research Method :

A structured questionnaire was developed which comprised of valid and reliable questions extracted from the previous literature. The questionnaire was then adopted in a pilot test involving 100 undergraduate and graduate students from two universities (Mahathma Gandhi University, Kottayam and Cochin University of Science and technology, Cochin) in Kerala. The score of 0.50 was used as the criteria for item deletion in overall item analysis. This was done to judge whether the removal of the items could significantly enhance the total reliability of the questionnaire was considered.

Subsequently, this study used Cronbach's alpha to test the construct reliability. According to the results of the above analysis, no items were deleted and all constructs had Cronbach's coefficients exceeding the 0.70 threshold, revealing considerable reliability (Nunnally, 1978).

Data were collected from a formal questionnaire consisted of four sections. The first section asked certain questions related to online shopping and shopping websites. The second section screened participants by its demographic profiling, the third part consists statements of variables

Perceived Risk, Shopping Convenience, Product Variety, Price and Overall shopping Experience. The fourth part of the questionnaire had variables of Customer Involvement, Customer Satisfaction and Repeat Purchase. All items were assessed using five-point Likert scales ranging from 1= “strongly disagree” to 5= “strongly agree.” Except for “Pricing” and “Product involvement” all the other constructs are derived from the previous literature works. Table I lists the research constructs and items included in the questionnaire which were taken from existing literature. A total of 300 respondents from different areas in the jurisdiction of these Universities were administered with the questionnaire. But there was a risk of whether the respondent had a prior knowledge of shopping online or not. To eliminate this we asked the first set of questions which had information about certain shopping websites. Later the questionnaires were screened for the answers; the respondents who gave the right answer for the first set of questions those questionnaires were included. So in all 264 questionnaires were screened as ideal for the further investigation. The scales used for the study are mentioned in Table 1.

4. Data Analysis:

Table -1: Measurement Scales used in questionnaire

We used SPSS.22 for the analysis. We first analyzed the each of the construct for reliability and validity. The process of purification considered of factor analysis (varimax rotation and elimination of items with multiple loading above 0.74) followed by examination of the levels of internal consistency (Coefficient Alpha Criteria).The KMO Bartlett test for scale reliabilty was .692.The sample items were first checked for the reliability using Cronbach's Alpha. A value of 0.6 or less generally indicates unsatisfactory results (Malhotra, 2007, p. 282 and Hair, 2007, p.88). The value of Cronbach's alpha for the sample selected for the study came .885 which is

greater than .6; it implies that data collected was reliable. Reliability of data collected was tested on individual scales also. The Cronbach's alpha for the individual constructs was tested and was satisfactory. The model described in Fig.1 was tested using structural equation modeling in LISREL 8. The whole statistics establish acceptable model fit (CFI= .985, NFI= .984, RMSEA=.072, $\chi^2 = 359.86$ with $df= 163$). Normality, skewness, and kurtosiswere examined through descriptive analysis. The outcome of confirmatory factor analysisdemonstrate overall fit was acceptable (CFI= .988, NFI=.991, RMSEA = .063, $\chi^2 =381$ with 191 df).

The above result was supported by previous research (Kline, 2005, Steiger, 2007). Consequently convergent validity was evaluated by examining the magnitude, direction, and statistical significance of the examined standardized factor loadings (Anderson and Gerbing, 1988). The entire significant factor loading are represented in Table.1. This research reported the average variance extracted (AVE) and reliabilities for different construct. The result was braced by previous research Gerbing and Anderson (1992). The reliability and AVE of different construct were reported for perceived risk (0.95, 0.869), Shopping convenience (0.93, 0.927), product variety

(0.85, 0.827), price (0.88, 0.852), customer involvement (0.86,0.793), overall shopping experience (0.93,0.901), customer satisfaction (0.96,0.846), repeat purchase (0.91, 0.846). Table2. Explained the correlation which supported the AVE value of any two constructs should be greater than squared correlation. The outcome of nested models, sequentially fixing correlation (phi's) to 1 Anderson and Gerbing (1998). This research examined one pair of factor at a time, and found support for discriminant validity which was supported from (Dabholkar et al., 1996).

Table-2 : Correlation

construct	Perceived Risk	Shopping Convenience	Product Variety	Price	Customer Involvement	Over all Shopping Experience	Customer satisfaction	Repeat Purchase
Perceived Risk	0.932							
Shopping Convenience	0.349	0.962						
Product Variety	0.219	0.628	0.909					
Price	0.594	0.107	0.763	0.923				
Customer Involvement	0.629	0.392	0.548	0.361	0.890			
Over all Shopping Experience	0.429	0.586	0.326	0.259	0.673	0.949		
Customer satisfaction	0.395	0.418	0.295	0.471	0.512	0.305	0.946	
Repeat Purchase	0.462	0.523	0.287	0.372	0.371	0.634	0.459	0.919

Table 3: Multiple Regression Analysis

	B	Standardized Coefficients Beta	t- Value	Sig
Constant	3.069		4.985	0.000
Shopping Convenience	0.353	0.228	3.714	0.000
Perceived Risk	0.316	0.435	3.281	0.000
Product Variety	0.492	0.177	3.807	0.000
Price	0.410	0.049	2.333	0.000
Overall Shopping Experience	0.463	0.219	2.795	0.000

A multiple regression analysis was run to assess the degree to which the shopping convenience, perceived risk, product variety, price and overall shopping experience are associated with the customer involvement. Table 3 depicts the results of multiple regressions. Entering the five variables as the independent variables in the multiple regression the R value came out to be .843 and p=.000. The Durbin and Watson value was recorded as 2.65. The findings of the result depicted shopping convenience (B= 0.353), Perceived Risk (B=0.316), Product Variety (0.492), price (0,410) and Overall shopping experience (0.463) all five had a strong impact on customer involvement. Among the five variables, product variety was found to have the strongest impact with t=3.807, p=0.000. So the results of multiple regressions prove our hypothesis H1, H2, H3, H4 and H5. Another important aspect of the study was to study the relationship between customer involvement and

customer E satisfaction and also to analyze the relationship between Customer E satisfaction and Customer Retention. A linear regression was run to analyze the customer involvement is significantly related to customer satisfaction, the results also demonstrate the same. The linear regression was run between customer involvement as independent variable and customer E satisfaction as dependent variable. The R value came out to be .862 and p=.000. The findings of the result depicted that customer involvement (B = 0.534, T = 3.084 and p= 0.003) had a strong impact on customer E satisfaction. Hence hypothesis H6 is proved. Similarly, the linear regression between Customer E satisfaction and Customer Retention was run. The value of R came out to be 0.813 and p= 0.000. The findings depicted that customer e satisfaction is (B= 0.424, T= 0.360, p= 000) had a strong impact on customer E satisfaction. Hence hypothesis H7 is proved.

5. Conclusion :

The conclusion drawn from this study makes contributions in two main areas. First it helps to derive the antecedents to customer involvement and secondly it explains the relationship of customer involvement, Customer E satisfaction and Customer Retention. More specifically, Perceived Risk, Shopping Convenience, Product Variety, Price and Overall shopping Experience have significant relationship with online shopping involvement. Further, the results showed a positive relation between customer involvement and customer E involvement and also between customer E satisfaction and Customer Retention. The analytical results are generally consistent with previous studies (Muniz and Guinn, 2001). Our study is important from the perspective of academicians and managers. E-Retailers must build and manage high quality, long-term relationships with their customers. Therefore, our study has important implications for the management of online customer retention. Moreover the study focuses on the construct of Customer involvement. It suggests that e- retailers should pay more attention towards building customer involvement. Specifically through emphasizing of the five variables being focused in the study. It is widely recognized that customer retention has a powerful impact on the performance of Internet based businesses. This study confirms the robustness of Shopping involvement, explaining Perceived Risk, Shopping Convenience, Product Variety, Price and Overall shopping Experience for users within the context of online shopping.

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