

MEASUREMENT OF INTERNET SEARCH AND INTERNET PURCHASES FROM AN INDIAN PERSPECTIVE WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO DELHI/NCR

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ABSTRACT

Internet shopping is one of the fastest-growing subsets of e-business, and is defined as the purchase and sale of goods using the Internet. In the COVID-19 era, it has become a simple and secure way to satisfy customer requests. To determine whether an Internet search precedes an Internet purchase, this study will examine the variables that affect both Internet searches and purchases as well as the nature of their relationships. By sending a structured questionnaire via email with a 7-point Likert scale ranging from Strongly Agree (SA) to Strongly Disagree (SD), 300 respondents from the Delhi/NCR region participated in the study. To test this hypothesis, ANOVA and correlation tests were utilized. The results indicate that convenience, ease of use, perceived benefits, and search capabilities are important factors. Regardless of education level, younger male customers make more Internet purchases than their female counterparts do. This analysis also shows that the most popular products that people use online are apparel, electronics, and services, with clothing and services being the most popular items to buy online. The study also highlights the need for the study, research gaps, limitations and direction for future research.

Keywords: Internet Search, Internet Purchase, Online Shopping Behaviour, Internet Shopping, E-Commerce.

INTRODUCTION

Since the dawn of this decade, there have been several of changes in the marketing sector. It deals with the exchange of products and services between buyers and sellers since its subject matter has not changed. However, the emergence of the World Wide Web (WWW) as a dynamic channelizing medium has altered the nature of marketing, resulting in transactions between buyers and sellers in a virtual marketplace. The rise of e-commerce has altered how companies purchase and sell their goods and services. Furthermore, since online shopping is thought to be the easiest and safest way to make purchases, its popularity has grown throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. In its broadest sense, "e-commerce refers to any type of commercial action carried out over an electronic connection." The Internet and Mobile Association of India (IAMAI) and the Indian Marketing Research Bureau (IMRB) conducted a survey in 2022 and showed that there are 759 million Internet users in India and it will increase to 900 million by the year 2025. The Internet in India Report 2022 states that in order to increase internet usage in India, awareness, access, content, and technology must all be carefully and evenly addressed. It is interesting to note that non-metros likewise indicate that they would be happy to conduct business online if given more secure and comprehensive payment choices.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The literature review process was split into two categories: (i) reviews based on Internet searches and (ii) reviews based on Internet purchases.

Review of Literature with Internet Search

Consumers use the Internet for a variety of reasons, including informational searches, online product purchases and comparison shopping. The Internet has become a vital tool for information sharing and distribution. It is essentially different from today's mass media, which includes radio, television, newspapers, and magazines. Viewed through a business lens, it provides marketers with new tools to cut expenses, improve relationships, create new channels, expedite workflows, and increase shareholder value. Currently, online businesses are the most developed e-commerce sector. The proportion of people who purchase through the Internet is rapidly increasing.

Online shopping is now the third most common Internet activity, immediately after sending and receiving emails and instant messages, as reported by the UCLA Center for Communication Policy (2019). According to the latest report by UCLA (2001), the top five most popular Internet activities are using e-mail and instant messaging, web browsing, buying online, finding entertainment information, and reading news. Evaluating what people do on the Internet is even more popular than looking for news and entertainment-related content.

The process by which a person chooses to, pay for, utilize, or discard goods, services, concepts, or experiences to satiate needs and desires is known as consumer behavior. (Solomon, 1998). Books (46%) are the most commonly purchased commodities online worldwide, followed by apparel (41%), airline tickets and reservations (24%), and hotel reservations (17%), according to ACNielsen's additional analysis. Consequently, the success of any online store depends on its ability to comprehend in-depth how customers obtain information online.

There are few studies available on the behavior of Internet searches, researchers paid more attention to the attitudes and behaviors surrounding Internet purchases. As such, extensive research on online shopping has been made conducted, but relatively little on online searching. Internet information searches are now the first step in internet transactions. Studies show that searching for information via the internet can be done with the purpose of making an Internet purchase or without any intention.

The preceding research provides the following analysis of the antecedents:

Demographics: The age and degree of search were found to be negatively correlated in the studies by Furse et al. (1984), Goldman and Johnson (1978), Hampel (1969), Katona and Muller (1955), Midgley (1983), Philips and Sternthal (1977), Schaninger and Scillimpaglia (1987), and Udell (1966). According to Darley and Smith (1995), Men are more self-reliant, self-assured, competitive, and have higher product risk than women.

Motives: According to Yoo and Chung's (2002), customers who shop via the Internet do so for utilitarian or hedonistic reasons. Consumers with hedonic motives visit websites primarily for amusement and fun rather than to make a purchase, whereas consumers with utilitarian values look for information to expand their knowledge about products they are interested in and are likely to buy in the near future. According to some researchers, hedonic customers are more likely than non-hedonic ones to conduct internet searches.

Price Consciousness: A price-conscious consumer is concerned about costs and, hence, pays close attention to them. They might browse websites to learn about special offers or promotions

or make comparisons with other business websites. Research indicates that internet search was positively correlated with price consciousness. One of the main reasons why customers might choose one website over another is its low costs.

Perceived Benefits and Costs: Research by Punj and Staelin (1983) and Srinivasan (1990) revealed that search expenses have the opposite effect on search activity as theorized (Stigler, 1961). The benefits perceived by consumers include the freedom to compare information across rival producers and the freedom to search for product information (Alba et al., 1997). Customers' intention to use the Internet to search for product information is influenced by lowered pricing.

Ease of Use: According to Widing and Talarzyk (1993), Internet search and ease of use are positively correlated. User-friendly program features facilitate faster user decision-making.

Ability to Search: Klein and Ford (2003) and Hoffman and Novak (1996) reported that Internet search is closely related to a consumer's capacity to adept Internet use and online environment navigation.

Nature of Product: Nelson (1970) asserts that search advantages for experience goods are significantly lower than those for search goods, and consumers obtain less information on the former than the latter. Research indicates that are comparatively costly products are less Internet searchable.

Product Involvement: According to research conducted in 2001 by Shim, Eastlick, Lotz, and Warrington, those who regularly conduct Internet information searches are highly accepting of online buying. Chaudhuri (2000) also found that a user's attitude toward Internet searches is positively impacted by a high degree of product participation.

Review of Literature with Internet Purchase

Internet-based purchasing encompasses both the first and subsequent phases of product and service procurement. As both mail and phone shopping include an invisible danger and ask users to give over their personal and financial information to an unidentified third party, they can be compared to ordering goods by mail or phone. This means that the two main barriers to internet purchasing are insufficient security and unreliable networkings.

Internet purchase, according to Shafiee and Bazargan (2018) and Ladhari et al. (2019), is a single, homogeneous activity that involves the sale of goods and services over the internet. In addition, Choi et al. (2019) claimed that prior to the transactional buying and logistical phase, internet purchase encourages online businesses.

Based on the body of existing literature, the majority of studies have identified multiple predisposing factors for Internet buying behavior. For instance: Bellman, et al. (1999) examined the relationship between personal traits, attitudes toward Internet shopping, and demography. These authors discovered that persons who lead more wired lives and who are under time pressure are more likely to make frequent Internet purchases. In addition, the study conducted by Bhatnagar, Misra, and Rao (2000) examines the ways in which vendor, service, and product qualities, as well as website quality, impact consumers' attitudes toward Internet shopping and, in turn, their Internet purchasing behavior. They show that there are positive and negative relationships between the two dependent variables (behavior and attitude) and the ease that the Internet provides and perceived danger to consumers.

Precursors to Internet Purchase are

Demographics: Demographics can be understood in terms of gender, age, income and education.

Gender: Research (Donthu and Garcia, 1999) shows that men spend more money and make more Internet purchases than women (Li et al., 1999; Stafford et al., 2004). According to Alreck and Settle (2002), men's opinions on Internet shopping are largely positive, if not more so than those of female consumers (Slyke et al. 2002).

Age: Some research (Stafford et al., 2004) found a negative correlation between age and Internet purchases, while others found a favourable correlation (Joines et al. 2003).

Income and Education: Research by Li et al. (1999), Liao and Cheung (2001), and Susskind (2004) found a favorable correlation between income and education with Internet shopping. No correlation was found between education, income, and Internet purchases by Bagchi and Mahmood (2004), Bellman et al. (1999), Donthu and Garcia (1999), and Mahmood et al. (2004). This could be explained by the fact that making Internet purchases is a simple operation that does not require advanced education.

Subjective Norms: Limayem et al. (2000) and Foucault and Scheufele (2002) identified referent power as a significant antecedent to online purchasing intention. Advice from others has a greater impact on women than on males.

Purchasing Motivation: Utilitarian incentives have been thoroughly examined in the context of Internet buying (Bhatnagar and Ghose 2004a, Bhatnagar and Ghose 2004b, Bhatnagar and Ghose 2000, Brengman et al. 2005, Kolsaker et al. 2004) and are thought to be more significant than the hedonic drive. There are several reasons for this, including convenience, time constraints, and accessibility of information while making purchases online (Bellman et al., 1999). Websites with strong visual presence drew on hedonic shoppers. In an interactive setting as opposed to a pure text environment, hedonic shoppers typically experience greater delight, amusement, excitement, and fantasy (Childers et al. 2001).

Convenience: Internet shopping convenience, which allows customers to shop from home 24 hours a day, seven days a week, was noted by Hofacker (2001) as a factor that would boost the adoption of Internet environments.

Risk: The studies conducted in 2017 and 2021 by Abyad & Nasidi et al. (2017) found that internet transactions are considered more riskier than the tradition method of transactions. However, the study conducted by Yoon et al., (2019) posited that the risk associated with the internet experiences was going to decreasing over the period. According to Loketkrawee & Bhatiasevi, 2018, preference to order online is more by the internet users. The intention to shop online is significantly influenced by attitude and perceived risk as studied by Juniwati (2014). Even with all of the advantages of internet purchasing, a lot of individuals remain wary of it because of mistrust and the potential hazards (Suhan, 2015).

Risks related to finances (e.g., is my credit card information safe?), products (e.g., the product of the same quality as viewed on the screen) and non-delivery (e.g., what if the product is not delivered) are the most commonly mentioned risks associated with online purchasing. The degree of uncertainty surrounding the online buying process affects how consumers perceive the risks involved (Bhatnagar et al., 2000).

Need for Research

The web has seen exponential growth in commercial applications. The multifaceted elements of traditional consumer behavior, shift in the context of Internet shopping.

E-marketers can determine which factors have a greater influence on items that drive Internet purchases by examining the effects of antecedents on internet search and purchase behavior. Research on Internet search behavior is extremely scarce. Researchers have concentrated more on attitudes related to "Internet purchase." Only a few extensive studies on Internet searches and purchases are currently available.

This study primarily focuses on whether "Internet search" is an antecedent to "Internet purchase," as it is well known that searching for information via internet before making an Internet purchase.

Objectives of the Study

The following study goals were proposed to better understand the elements that affect consumers' decisions to look for and make purchases via the Internet:

1. To determine the variables influencing consumers' internet search and purchasing behaviour.
2. To ascertain the extent to which these variables influenced the consumer's choice to use the internet as a commercial medium.
3. To evaluate how important these characteristics are in explaining consumers' internet search and purchasing behaviour.

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses are developed in light of the objectives:

1. Older consumers are not likely to be engaged in internet search than younger consumers.
2. Older consumers are not likely to be engaged in internet purchase than younger consumers.
3. Less number of Males do internet search than Females.
4. Less number of Females do internet purchase than Males.
5. Consumers who do not search via the Internet are less educated than those who do.
6. Consumers who do not buy via internet are less educated than who search.
7. There is no relationship between Price consciousness and internet search.
8. There is no relationship between Perceived benefit and internet search.
9. There is no relationship between the perceived cost of Internet search and the extent of Internet search.
10. There is no relationship between Ease of use and Internet search.
11. There is no relationship between Ability to search and internet search.
12. There is no relationship between Inconvenience and internet purchase.
13. There is no relationship between Risk and internet purchase.
14. There is no relationship between Internet Search and Internet Purchase.

Research Methodology and Tools

Data were collected by e-mail through structured questionnaires comprising three products: Clothing, Electronics, and Services. of the 400, 300 questionnaires were found to be usable for the study. The literature review served as the foundation for developing the questionnaire. 7-point Likert scale, with SD=1 denoting strongly disagree and SA=7 denoting strongly agree, was employed. The hypotheses were tested using an ANOVA and a correlation test.

Data Analysis

ANOVA statistical methods were used to examine demographic variables. The findings show that education is more crucial in Internet searching than age, which is not a meaningful

factor. There was also barely any discernible difference in the proportion of men to women who searched the Internet. Regardless of educational attainment, younger male consumers make more Internet purchases than older ones do. Therefore, while null hypotheses 4 and 5 are accepted, null hypotheses 1, 2, 3, and 6 were not supported by our research.

The correlation technique was used to test the relationship between price consciousness, perceived benefit, perceived cost, and ease of use with "internet search." The results indicate significant positive relationship between price consciousness, perceived benefit, and ease of use with Internet search, indicating that consumers are more aware of special offers and discounts and prefer to visit multiple websites to find out about promotional deals, particularly in clothing and services. Consequently, null hypotheses 7, 8, and 10 are rejected, and since conducting an internet search requires little time or effort, perceived cost is no longer a major predictor of doing so. The literature is supported by these results, but only in the area of clothes. It follows that our study was unable to provide evidence in favor of null hypothesis 9.

Relationship between Ability to Search and Internet Search: The results indicate that, with the exception of apparel, consumers' ability to search is a major positive predictor of their Internet search behavior, as accepted by the research. According to the regression analysis of Internet search on this variable, there is a positive link overall, but clothes do not support the relationship at the disaggregate level. The only plausible explanation could be clothing's insignificance, which makes it a popular product to hunt online these days. Therefore, our research does not support Null Hypothesis 11.

Correlation was used to examine the association between convenience and internet purchase. This outcome refutes null hypothesis 12, which postulates the existence of a significant positive link between the two. Furthermore, this suggests that security is a significant aspect, as e-tailers enhance the security of their online stores to draw in a broader customer base to their cutting-edge, a new way of purchasing.

Correlation analysis was used to examine the relationship between risk and Internet purchases, and the results showed a negative relationship. Customers feel risk when they shop online. There are hazards related to non-delivery, products, and personal information. There is a concern that credit card and bank information may be compromised and improperly used by hackers. Therefore, our analysis fully supports the null hypothesis H13, but only in the case of services, where consumers are willing to use online services without hesitation. The main explanation might be that there are more reputable websites that are simple to use and do not require long bank lines.

Internet search has a favourable impact on intention to use the Internet, according to the results of a correlation test used to examine the association between internet search and internet purchase. The investigation supports up the hypotheses both overall and in terms of specific details. Customers are more likely to buy clothing and services after searching. Consequently, null hypothesis 14 was unsupported.

Discussion

The study's conclusion suggests that a several variables affect how Indian customers seek and make purchases via the Internet. The majority of the conclusions support those of earlier research projects examining looking at various geographic configurations. Ease of Use and Perceived Benefits are the two antecedents. Convenience and searchability are important because they positively influence Internet search and buying behavior, respectively. Taking into account demographic factors, independent of education level, younger male customers make more

Internet purchases than do female consumers. The findings indicate that education has no effect on consumers' Internet buying habits. Hence, e-marketers have a dual chance to reach consumers: they may leverage the female market's potential while fortifying the male sector's younger market segment. In addition, our data show that the most frequently searched items on the Internet are apparel, electronics, and services, with clothing and services being the most popular categories for purchases.

CONCLUSION

To encourage the expansion of online sales and increase revenue, e-tailers should concentrate more on these criteria. Moreover, security and privacy are two important concerns that e-tailers should address. Because of this, online marketers ought to release ads that increase consumers' trust in Internet purchase.

Limitations

Each study begins with a set of presumptions that restrict its scope. Among these is our research as well. However, this method has some drawbacks that restrict the scope of our investigation. These are as follows:

1. Data were collected from the Delhi/NCR only. Thus, the results are not be universally applicable because of their limited geographical scope.
2. Our sample size was quite small (300) and represented a one-time data collection. A large sample size and longitudinal study would be more useful to avoid such disadvantages.
3. The nature of the sample, data collection method and research structure is limitations as we used convenient random sampling.
4. Owing to time and cost constraint, we only considered three products. It is advisable to an upcoming researcher to consider more products to add richness and refine their analysis.
5. The determinants studied in the research do not represent an exhaustive list of factors that influence consumer's decisions to search for or purchase over the Internet.

Research Scope

1. In addition to the information search and buy stages, future studies must incorporate stages such as problem identification, alternative evaluation, and post-purchase into the decision-making processes related to purchases.
2. Future researchers may be able to more effectively defend their results with a larger sample size and longitudinal study.
3. In addition, new online stores selling specific products such as Carwale.Com, are opening up every day which may serve as a future research topic for scientists looking into its cause.
4. Researchers can expand this investigation to include other cultural groups.
5. Future research can also examine the influence of moderators on consumers' decisions to make purchases and conduct Internet searches.

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