

Bearings of Perceived Product Quality, Skepticism towards Store Promotion and Price Orientation on Online Purchase Intention: A First-Hand Reconnaissance

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Abstract—Online shopping, also known as e-tailing, is gaining importance every day. There are more people who are using the internet to make a purchase than ever before. This has resulted in competition between online retailers and physical stores. The literature on the subject brings out that perceived product quality influences online purchase intention. In fact perceived product quality is a gauge of consumer purchase conduct once consumers have evaluated the product. However, efforts to promote the products by sellers face skepticism of potential buyers which ultimately affects purchase intention. Consumers have diverse shopping orientations which influence purchase intention and price is one of them. It is true that the buyers expect the prices to be lower when buying online but this is also true that in the case of customized and conspicuous consumption price plays a limited role. For the customized products buyers are willing to pay extra. The data for this project was collected with the help of a questionnaire. The questions were constructed with the help of published literature and standardized statements were considered. A five point Likert type scale was used to get responses. Reliability and validity tests were run on the constructs for testing the consistency before multiple regression was employed to arrive at results. The results show that perceived product quality, price orientation and skepticism towards online promotion have a significant effect on online purchase intention.

Keywords— Purchase intention, perceived product quality, skepticism, price orientation

1. Introduction

Practice of selling retail goods online is normally delineated as e-tailing and gives rise to the “performance of retail activities online using the internet” (Botha, Bothma and Geldenhuys, 2008) as a basis for dealing with consumers by e-mail, websites, cell phones and any other “means that can be linked to the internet structure” (ibid). It is a retail format in which the seller (retailer in this

case) and buyer “communicate with each other through an interactive electronic network” (Levy and Weitz, 2001). Retailing / e-tailing transactions are normally conducted over the internet where the “buyers and sellers are dispersed at different geographic locations” (Paul and Kapoor, 2012), i.e. are not at the same physical location. Internet technologies are “revolutionizing commerce marketing, retailing, shopping and marketing activities” (Dawn and Kar, July 2011). In the literature on the subject, the terms ‘internet retailing’, ‘e-tailing’, ‘electronic shopping’, ‘internet shopping’, ‘electronic retailing’, ‘virtual shopping’ et cetera, have been used interchangeably, because “this is how they are employed in the wider literature” (Doherty and Ellis-Chadwick, 2010). E-tailing is a hybrid term for electronic retailing and is synonymous with business-to-consumer (B2C) transactions.

Looking at the various categories of e-tailers, we find that there are pure online players which are single channel web firms and sell directly to consumers. There are bricks-and-clicks retail companies, also called multichannel merchants, which have a network of physical stores as their primary channel, but have also introduced online offerings (Laudon and Traver, 2014). Akin to this category, there are also multichannel business models where a company sells in multiple marketing channels simultaneously. There is a category of catalog merchants which consist of companies selling offline but have also incorporated online sales in a competent manner. There are manufacturers, single or multiple-channel, that sell “directly online to consumers without the intervention of retailers” (Hines and Bruce, 2007).

An ASSOCHAM-India Resurgent study states that from 69 million online consumers in 2016, India

may have more than 100 million online consumers by the end of 2017. Two major opportunities for online stores are demonetization and better net banking opportunities. Backed by better infrastructure, broadband and the internet ready devices and a growing middle class by the end of the year 2018, the Indian e-retail industry is expected to be worth USD17.52 billion. In a report published by Retailers Association of India and Boston Consulting Group, the Indian retail market is expected to touch US\$ 50-55 billion by the end of 2021.

The Paypal-Cross Border Consumer Research 2016 projected that the overall online cross border spending in India is expected to touch INR 875,600 crore by the end of 2018. The Indian domestic e-commerce market is expected to see a 17.8% growth in 2017-18. The major reasons that people buy online are the large range of products and their features along with prices, easy to buy, time-saving, free shipping, easy to compare products and prices, shopping convenience and low prices.

Physical stores are no longer the only place for shopping for consumers. In no way, in the past, consumers have been “able to shop from anywhere at any time with a few clicks of their fingers” (Chiang and Dholakia, 2003) as they are able to do presently. The prompt accessibility and growing trustworthiness of online retailing are responsible for generating a “vibrant market space and competition with all other shopping channels” (ibid).

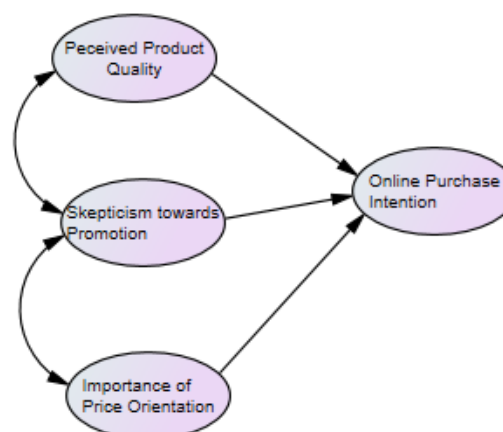
This progress of online retailing, which has thrown down the gauntlet for traditional retailers, the shopping practices of consumers are being reformatted. The convenience of online retailing, also known as e-tailing, has stepped up apace among sellers of diverse shopping channels predominately between retailers which operate online and which function through physical stores.

Goods and Services Tax, implemented from July 1, 2017, is unlikely to make the e-tailing industry go slow or slow down its sales. It is not expected to prove prejudicial to either customers or sellers and will probably create conditions for the stakeholders to work in a systematic fashion. One of the major players of e-tailing in India, Snapdeal is confident that jointly with its selling partners, it will enter into the GST epoch without a glitch (IndianOnlineSeller.com, July 2017). The specialists of this e-tailing firm are expected to carry on supporting and conducting sellers all the way during this era of changeover.

2. Theoretical Framework

Vo and Nguyen (2015) demonstrated that the perceived quality directly influences consumer purchase intention. Rehmat *et al* (2015) found that increase in skepticism will lead to decrease in purchase intention while lessening of skepticism will boost the purchase intention. Shiao and Luo (2012) find that price is one of the factors which causes consumers to boost customers’ online purchasing intention. Hanzae and Yard (2010) have shown that the overall association between price and quality is positive. Mohr *et al* (1998) said that skepticism makes consumers wary of trustworthy pricing practices which may lead them to overlook a truly beneficial pricing deal. Alex and Thomas (2011) find that when the perceived product quality of a product is high, the skepticism towards promotions will be low.

Theoretical Model



2. Review of Literature

2.1 Perceived product quality and online purchase intention

Perceived product quality is identified as perceptiveness of a consumer about overall excellence or superiority of a product (Bei and Chiao, 2001) and correlates with purchase intention of the consumer (Bao, Bao and Sheng, 2001). In the vastly cut throat market place product cues like price, and brand image profoundly influences the buyers in order to deduce the quality of products they purchase” (Paulins and Ann, 2005). Iyengar and Lepper (2000) have observed that perceived product quality is also determined by observable attributes of products like durability or service quality. The Toivonen (2012) study makes known that the quality of a tangible product can be formed by its technical characteristics and aspects of its

performance. Product quality is also influenced by the comfort of use and suitability to meet the needs of an individual and thus contributes to product quality. Perceived product quality, taken as a whole, is the observation of the quality or superiority of a product with respect to its intended purpose relative to alternatives. Superiority includes features and characteristics of a product or services with its competence to placate declared or implied needs. It is considered to be a more specific concept based on product and service features (Saleem, Ghafar, Ibrahim, Yousuf and Ahmed, 2015). It may be put forward that when perceived product quality is looked upon as overall assessments, then perceived product quality is understood as the source of satisfaction (Uusar, Camison-zornoza&Escrig-Tena, 2001).

Alex and Thomas (2012) study defines product quality as the “degree of how well the product specifications fit the customer’s expectation”. If the consumers consider that the product patterns could do with their requirements “they will more likely to think the transactions are worthy” (ibid). It can also be put that the perceived product quality is the approximation crafted by the consumer banking upon the features of the product or service.

Purchase intention is a gauge of consumer purchase conduct after bearing in mind the evaluation of the product (Grewal, Krishnan, Baker and Borin, 1998). According to Ajzen (1991) intentions stand for “motivational components of a behavior, that is, the degree of conscious effort that a person will exert in order to perform a behavior”. In other words, purchase intention echoes the probability that the consumers will “buy certain products or services in the short term buying decision” (Wu, Yeh and Hsiao, 2011). Perceived product quality straightforwardly impacts purchase intention. This is true that the customers have a handful views about the “product quality, price and styles before going to purchasing the product” (Saleem, Ghafar, Ibrahim, Yousuf and Ahmed, 2015). Subsequently to the consuming of product “product purchase intention increases as well decreases” (ibid). If the quality is on the high side, the purchase intention of the customer is also of high level. The study by Vo and Nguyen (2015) pungently shows “the important role of perceived quality that directly influences consumer purchase intention”.

2.2 Skepticism towards store promotion and online purchase intention

Consumer skepticism speaks of inclination of the consumer to be suspicious of or question a company’s motivation to conduct a CRM campaign (Mohr, Eroglu, and Ellen (1998). Obermiller and Spangenberg (1998) defined skepticism about advertising in general as “the general tendency of

disbelief about advertising claims and represents a basic marketplace belief that varies across persons and is related to general personality”. Customarily, skepticism is a doubting stance in relation to unpragmatic competence or perception or perplexity about assertions which are taken to be true. Dissenting thoughts and apprehensions to dispute the authenticity of a campaign are known as skepticism (Anur and Mohammad, 2012). Skepticism is the leaning to disbelieve a contention (Obermiller and Spangenberg, 1998) and may be caused by overstated marketing messages (ibid). Skeptical consumers have an added disapproving stance with regard to advertising communications and are less induced by them, and sometimes evading them entirely. Exceedingly skeptical consumers have feeble beliefs about brands, disapproving attitudes about advertising and fainter purchase intention for products appearing in advertisements. In other words, broadly speaking, exceedingly skeptical consumers “would be more likely to respond less favorably to ward advertising and CRM campaign” (Anuar, Omar and Mohamad, 2013). Alternatively, it can be said that “In general consumers with low level of skepticism tend to have higher intention to purchase CRM products” (ibid).

Rehmat et al (January-June, 2015) in their study found that skepticism demonstrates a powerful sway on the purchase intentions of consumers. Reactions of consumers are affected by negative as well as positive perceptions. Positive views about a product give rise to brand trustworthiness which makes consumers buy that product while the negative view is likely to create doubts and decreasing consumer’s intention to buy the product under consideration. Thus, Rehmat et al (ibid) conclude that increase in skepticism will lead to decrease in purchase intention while lessening of skepticism will boost the purchase intention.

It is true that researchers have linked skepticism to advertising but “other commercial stimuli may also generate consumer skepticism” (Odou and Pechpeyrou, 2010). To mention a few, it may be said that consumers are skeptical towards retailers’ pricing and promotional strategies which are likely to reduce their everyday spending (ibid). These factors are likely to have a negative effect on purchase intentions of buyers.

2.3 Price orientation and online purchase intention

Price refers to the “value of goods and services expressed in monetary terms” (Saputra, Warokka and Naruephai, 2012). Consumers have diverse shopping orientations which are considered to influence their purchase conducts in internet shopping and price is one of the significant factors because of which consumers utilize Internet

shopping (Brown, Pope and Voges, 2003). The shoppers who buy products at the lowest price or try to get the maximum value for their money are known as aneconomic shopper, bargain conscious shopper, low price shopper, price conscious shopper. Consumers belonging to the price conscious group, also known as “economic shoppers” (Zhou, Dai, Zhang, 2007) are “primarily interested in getting the best possible value for their money (Brown, Pope and Voges, 2003). Kwek, Piew and Lau (August 2010) find that economic shoppers have a “major concern for the prices of products” and they shop for the “best choice of quality and price”(ibid). The upshots of Delafrooz, Paim and Khatibi study (April 2011) make known that convenience and price facets have direct and indirect influences on the intention to purchase. Khatibi, Haque and Karim study (2006) finds that price is one of the factors which causes consumers to buy online and also boost customers’ purchasing intention (Shiau and Luo, 2012).

It may also be mentioned here that the consumers expect lower price when shopping online (Risse, 2003) and are also more likely to “purchase a low price than a high price product in an e-commerce environment” (ibid). It has also been noticed that consumers with small income have a “price conscious” shopping orientation “and a strong belief that online shopping saves money”(Punj, 2011) but higher consumers are also acknowledged to obtain larger advantage from online services (Lambrecht and Seim, 2006). Thus, price is the vital constituent to motivate customers to purchase online because customers are able to accomplish comparison of products, save time and convenience in one time (Reibstein, 2002) and is also an important determinant in the consumers’ alternatives evaluation process (D’Souza and Prentice, 2002) and motivation (Kauffman and Wang, 2001).

Price perception is a touchy, complicated and critical issue which can stimulate the customers either negatively or positively (Erickson and Johanson, 1985). When buying online people are not sure that what is presented on the website is consistent with what would be delivered. Under the circumstances price perception plays significant role in determining both satisfaction and post-purchase and intention to return (Jarvenpaa and Todd, 1997)

However, it has to be kept in view that in the case of customized and conspicuous consumption products price plays a limited role. Broekhuizen and Alsem (2002) have put forward that customers are every so often eager to pay extra for customized products because their requirements are better met. If a product is personalized to the customer's, price

becomes a less important factor (Wind and Rangaswamy, 2001).

Hypothesis:

Based on the above discussion the following three hypotheses were framed:

H1a: Perceived product quality has a significant impact on online purchase intention.

H1b: Skepticism towards Store Promotion has a significant impact on online purchase intention.

H1c: Price Orientation has a significant impact on online purchase intention.

4. Research Methodology:

4.1 Research Design: Descriptive research was considered applicable as the account of the problem was clear, hypothesis framed were definite and the nature of information required was clear (Malhotra, 2011).

4.2 Questionnaire Design: The questionnaire was divided into three parts. The first part dealt with the purpose of research and instructions for responses, the second part dealt with scaled response questions and third part dealt with the demographic profile of the respondents.

The items were taken from various sources of the literature. Standardized statements were taken for the purpose of carrying out the research. A five point Likert type scale with points ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5) was used for collecting the responses for the dependent and independent variables. The statements for Purchase Intention at a Website, Sales Promotion Skepticism and Internet Shopping-Importance of Price Orientation were adapted from standardized scales. The scale for Perceived Product Quality was adapted from the study conducted by Garvin (1984). Five point Likert type rating scales may be preferred as increments with regard to reliability were found to be insignificant (Choudhury, 2014).

4.3 Sampling: All the respondents had experience of online shopping. Convenience sampling was used for collecting data from the state of Punjab and the city of Panchkula (Haryana). The sample size for analysis was 659.

The questionnaires were self-administered. A total of 700 questionnaires were distributed out of which 12 questionnaires were not returned. 29 questionnaires were found to be incompletely filled. It was assumed that the respondents were not

keen to co-operate in the survey. The resultant questionnaires were analyzed using SPSS version 21.

5. Data Analysis

Demographic Profile: The males and females accounted for 48.9 % and 51.1 % of the respondents respectively. The majority of the respondents (71%) belonged to Punjab.71% of the respondents were less than 35 years of age, 44.7 % were graduates, 54.8 % were unmarried and 66.3 % belonged to families earning up to eight lac rupees a year.

Reliability Test: All the constructs were tested for the consistency with the help of Cronbach’s alpha and the score for was, for it was,forwas and for price orientation was .683.

Validity Test: Construct validity was used for measuring the validity and factor analysis was used to measure the construct validity. The factor analysis scores were appropriate because the value

of Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) was 0.860 and the statistical test for the Bartlett test of sphericity was significant ($p=0.000$, $df=171$) for all the correlations within a correlation matrix. The extraction method used was Principal Component Analysis and the rotation method used was Varimax with Kaiser Normalization. The rotation converged in five iterations. The Eigen values for all constructs showed a score more than 1, ranging from 5.393 (Perceived Product Quality) to 1.378 (Internet Shopping-Importance of Price Orientation).The factors loadings for all items within a construct were above 0.50, so the conditions for convergent validity were satisfied. There was no overlap in the statements of the different constructs. The items supported the respective constructs meeting the condition of discriminant validity.

Table 1:Total Variance Explained

Component	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings			Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	5.393	28.386	28.386	5.393	28.386	28.386	4.349	22.891	22.891
2	2.209	11.624	40.011	2.209	11.624	40.011	2.272	11.958	34.849
3	1.811	9.532	49.542	1.811	9.532	49.542	2.222	11.693	46.541
4	1.378	7.253	56.796	1.378	7.253	56.796	1.948	10.254	56.796

Table 2: EFA-with factor loading and Cronbach a

Construct	Item	Factor Loading	Cronbach α
Perceived Product Quality	Products displayed on the websites of online stores have a good design.	0.687	0.833
	The navigation and ordering facilities of websites plays an important role in my decision to order online.	0.630	
	Products displayed on the websites of online stores are long lasting.	0.646	
	Products displayed on the websites of online stores are easy to handle.	0.637	
	Products displayed on the websites of online stores	0.650	

are delivered as per the measurements / dimensions shown.	0.628	
Products displayed on the websites of online stores are generally durable.	0.530	
Products displayed on the websites of online stores are not damaged on delivery.	0.646	
Products displayed on the websites of online stores are recommended by friends.	0.635	
I buy products only from online stores which enjoy a good reputation.		

Importance of Price Orientation	There are a lot of special deals on products sold online.	0.763	0.717
	There are a lot of advertisements about the sales offered on new products sold online.	0.801	
	There is a high frequency of sales or special deals for products sold at online stores.	0.746	
Skepticism towards Store Promotion	I think that online stores offer promotions to mislead customers.	0.815	0.764
	I think online stores want to get more sales by fooling customers.	0.824	
	I think online stores are not sincere in offering the promotions.	0.782	
Purchase Intention at Website	After browsing the website of an online store, I intend to purchase from that website.	0.849	0.759
	After browsing the website of an online store, the likelihood of my purchasing from the website is high.	0.819	
	I rate my chances of repurchasing from the same website as high.	0.675	

All six conditions before the application of multiple regression were addressed. The normality assumption was met because the distributions of residuals were unimodal and symmetric. The scatter plot showing the residuals to be randomly scattered, thus meeting the condition of linearity and free from heteroscedasticity. The condition of independence of error term was met because the value of Durbin-Watson stood at 1.807. The VIF values and tolerance statistics were below 10 and above 0.2 respectively meaning data did not suffer from multicollinearity. The P-P plot analysis showed that the data was free from outlier and influential observations because the normal probability plot was seen to be a straight line.

The customer online purchase intention explained by the combination of three independent variables is 23.4 %.

As given in Table3 below, the p value for perceived product quality, internet shopping-price orientation and skepticism towards a store's promotion ($p=0.000$) is less than alpha value of 0.05. The value for price orientation is greater than 0.05, meaning that price orientation is an insignificant indicator of online purchase intention.

Multiple Regression

Table 3: Values of Unstandardized Coefficients and Collinearity Statistics

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics		Adjusted R ²
	B	Std. Error	Beta			Tolerance	VIF	
(Constant)	1.814	.301		6.031	.000			.234
Internet Shopping-Price Orientation	.009	.051	.008	.182	.047	.951	1.051	
Perceived Product Quality	.566	.060	.430	9.507	.000	.928	1.077	
Sales Promotion Skepticism	-.161	.043	-.167	-3.778	.000	.968	1.033	

Based on the SPSS output, the following equation was formulated:

$$\text{Online Purchase Intention} = 1.814 + 0.566 (\text{Perceived Product Quality}) - 0.161 (\text{Skepticism towards a Store Promotion}) + 0.009 (\text{Internet Shopping-price orientation})$$

The values of unstandardized beta coefficients show that perceived product quality has the highest effect on explaining online purchase intention.

6. Results

It has emerged that perceived product quality and skepticism towards online promotions have a significant effect on online purchase intention. In

the digital age, as the customers cannot actually physically check the product before buying, it is imperative that aesthetic images of the products are put up on the shopping websites for customers to draw meaningful conclusions related to the product quality.

Skepticism towards store promotions also has a significant and negative effect on online purchase intention. Efforts need to be made to ensure that the store promotions are realistic and meet the expectations of the customer. Skepticism towards online promotions should be minimized as skepticism will result in loss of trust in the online store which would further erode sales volume and profits. Best promotion practices need to be followed.

Price orientation is found to have an insignificant effect on online purchase intention. This may be attributed partly to the fact that a majority of the respondents were youngsters who were not earning. These respondents were more tech-savvy and were dependent on the elders for their financial needs and consequently were less influenced by the pricing of the online stores.

7. Limitations

The study has offered several meaningful insights into the domain of purchase intention, however, it is not devoid of any limitations. The study suffers from the constraints of time and effort. Convenience sampling was used for drawing the sample. The sample size was limited. The study was not carried out keeping specific online stores in mind. Only direct effects were studied in the research. Moderating variables need to be identified and their effect needs to be studied for a more comprehensive understanding of the factors affecting online purchase intention.

8. Recommendations for Further Research

Upcoming studies should talk about the potential shoppers rather than the actual shoppers and should deal with their inhibitions regarding online shopping. It is advised to include the older segment of the population for carrying out upcoming research to gain a clear insight into the factors which shape their online purchase intention. Psychographic variables need to be studied for a more comprehensive understanding of the consumer online buying intention. Probability

sampling techniques can be used to produce more generalized results. The sample size should be increased so that the sample is more representative of the population. Future research needs to be carried out keeping specific online stores as the focal point of the study and should be aimed at identification of other factors which influence online purchase intention. Apart from this the role of the mediating and moderating variables also should be taken into consideration.

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