IMPACT OF GENDER ON PURCHASING HABITS OF CONSUMER WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO E-COMMERCE SECTOR.

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ABSTRACT

The inventions of computers and the internet have brought about massive changes in all aspects of human life. The business market mainly has seen numerous changes. Electric commerce or E-Commerce are those commercial transactions that are conducted electronically over the internet. Day by day, year after year, it is getting bigger and bigger in the overall business market. Along with the demographic factors, gender plays a substantial role in how it affects the consumer's purchasing behaviour. Even the perception of usage/ consumption of products can differ from the gender difference. Men and Women tend to have different choices while making any purchases because of differences in their upbringing, social norms and their effects, etc. Gender has some or the other universal characteristics and hence, it is a crucial factor to consider while understanding consumer behaviour. This can in turn help the marketers to create better strategies to reach their consumers and hence, improve their sales and profits.

Keywords : E-commerce, Consumer behaviour, gender & perception

Introduction :

The inventions of computers and the internet have brought about massive changes in all aspects of human life. The business market mainly has seen numerous changes. Electric commerce or E-Commerce are those commercial transactions that are conducted electronically over the internet. Day by day, year after year, it is getting bigger and bigger in the overall business market. Electronic commerce is one of the business styles which trades through public or private computer network instead of personal interaction (Suki, 2002). Each year, there is exponential growth in sales and profit as well in the e-commerce market. Multiple organisations and research institutes have also made positive predictions in regards to the growth of e-commerce each year.

Advancements in these technologies have aided consumers from any part of the world to purchase from any company/manufacturer operating outside of his or her resident country through a website/app. The company thus has access to unlimited business markets and borders are free in this sense.

In this day and age, online purchasing has become an easy solution. 24/7 business transactions can be conducted and hence, the consumer can make purchases from the convenience of any location, irrespective of the time. There are substantial time and energy saving for the consumer. These factors along with the convenience and ease of online purchasing are influential in increasing the usage and popularity of such websites/apps. The last decade has changed the way shopping is done. Instead of going out, consumers are recognising the ease of purchasing products/services online.

Understanding consumer behaviour poses as an important factor to help improve the market strategies by each online player. If there was no consumer, there would be no business, and in turn no profits. The Internet acts as a new distribution channel which has made online transactions increase rapidly. With this, a need to

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understand the consumers' buying behaviour online arises. Therefore, multiple marketers and researchers are working hard to understand what factors are influential in the consumers' purchasing decisions. Consumer behaviour is typically defined as the study of how individual customers, groups or organizations select, buy, use, and dispose of ideas, goods, and services to satisfy their needs and wants. It includes not only the purchase decisions made but also all the information search done by the consumer and all the evaluating options.

It is said that a marketer should work as a psychologist to have a successful consumer-oriented market from which a solid consumer base can be developed. To achieve this, a detailed study of the consumers' behavioural patterns is essential. Until active efforts are not made to understand consumer behaviour, it is very difficult to establish strengthened relations between the organization and the consumer. Only those companies can be successful who adjust their processes and goals based on their understanding of their consumers.

It has been found that even in the case of Online and Offline purchasing, consumer behaviour can differ. The influence of factors like brand names, prices, etc can be different in both cases. In some cases, it has been found that these factors gained more importance in terms of their influence on consumers in the case of Online purchasing. Also, both light, as well as heavy online purchasers, focused on different aspects. All these studies showed that motivations as well as perceptions of online and offline purchasing are not the same.

In most cases, companies segment their markets based on demographic factors such as age, gender, geographic locations, etc. On the other hand, these demographic factors play a huge role in their influence on consumer behaviour. Frequent communications among consumers about their lifestyle, fashion, living habits, etc are seen not only locally but even globally over the internet.

Of all the demographic factors mentioned above, gender plays a substantial role in how it affects the consumer's purchasing behaviour. Even the perception of usage/ consumption of products can differ from the gender difference. Men and Women tend to have different choices while making any purchases because of differences in their upbringing, social norms and their effects, etc.

Gender has some or the other universal characteristics and hence, it is a crucial factor to consider while understanding consumer behaviour. It is necessary for marketers to understand when and how it affects consumer behaviour during online purchasing. This can in turn help the marketers to create better strategies to reach their consumers and hence, improve their sales and profits.

Review of Literature

A. **(**https://www.shopify.com/encyclopedia/what-is-ecommerce**)**

E-commerce, also known as electronic commerce or internet commerce, refers to the buying and selling of goods or services using the internet, and the transfer of money and data to execute these transactions. Ecommerce is often used to refer to the sale of physical products online, but it can also describe any kind of commercial transaction that is facilitated through the internet.

B. **(**www.yourarticlelibrary.com/marketing**)**

Consumer behaviour is the study of how individual customers, groups or organizations select, buy, use, and dispose ideas, goods, and services to satisfy their needs and wants. It refers to the actions of the consumers in the marketplace and the underlying motives for those actions.

C. **(Zhou Et Al, 2010)**

In his study, he mentioned prior online shopping experience, customer traits, time saving factor etc are some of the factors affecting online shopping acceptance of people.

Objectives of the research :

• To understand the role of gender in online purchasing habits

• To understand people's preferred websites/apps to purchase from

• To know which factors in advertisements are most appealing to individuals of different genders

• To understand the preferred categories of

purchases made online by individuals of different genders.

Hypothesis :

1. People of different genders make online purchases since it is convenient.

2. Women actively seek out offers and discounts as compared to men.

3. Men prefer humorous and factual advertisements whereas women prefer colourful advertisements with facts.

Methodology of data collection :

The methodology of data collection used for this research is as follows :

Pre-field method :

This consists of a collection of primary and secondary data on the topic from different sources. To get a comprehensive knowledge of the study area, different books from the college library were referred. The researcher also relied on books, records, journal articles, newspaper articles, websites etc. some latest online articles from different publications were also referred for secondary data.

Field method :

Field observation involves qualitative as well as quantitative methods of data collection. Data were collected by questionnaire method from the age group of above 18.

A sample size of 185 was collected. A Simple Random Sampling method was used. Questionnaires, observations and group discussion methods were used to collect primary data. The research is a descriptive type of research design.

Post-field method :

The data collected both primary and secondary will be processed, assimilated and analysed with the help of multiple methods. Statistical tools were used for analysing the data. A suitable bibliography is prepared to show the references used. As a whole, the research design is descriptive.

Scope of the study :

The research has studied the impact of gender on E-commerce related purchasing habits. Consumers above the age of 18 of different genders were studied. The study intends to give insights into how a consumer's purchasing habits are influenced by their gender.

Limitations :

- An online consumer is influenced by several factors. With this research the main impact of gender on e-commerce related purchasing habits will be identified because of which the research will be limited to only a few factors to investigate each in a better way.

- A consumer is identified by many theories and models. Consumer characteristics and the impact of their gender on the consumer buying process are the two main factors where the research will be limited to identifying the particular impact on the purchasing habits.

- Consumer behaviour differs based on what products and services are purchased.

- The COVID-19 Pandemic made it tough to interact with respondents in person.

Findings

Data through the questionnaire was collected from One Hundred and Eighty-Five respondents (185). There was no specific age group on which this research was based. Also, the data collected was not based on any specific area. It was open research.

The findings of the research are as follows :

Majority of respondents were females which come to around 112 respondents. Whereas, 39.5% of the respondents that are 73 respondents were males.

Occupation

41.6% (77) of the respondents, a majority of the overall respondents were students. Service professionals made up the second-highest number of respondents - 39.5 % (73), followed by Home-makers and Retired individuals each at 5.4% (10 each).

Purchasing Habits :

1. **What method of shopping do you use?**

84.9% (157) out of 185 respondents prefer Both modes of shopping i.e. Online as well as Offline. However, 9.2% (17) of respondents prefer only Online and 5.9% (11) of respondents prefer only Offline shopping.

2. **On a scale of 1-5, how comfortable are you with making online purchases?**

Data indicates that 84 of the total respondents (45.4%) are comfortable with online shopping. 44 respondents (23.8%) are most comfortable while 3 respondents (1.6%) are the least comfortable.

3. **How often do you make online purchases?**

49.2 % of the respondents i.e. 91 respondents make online purchases Monthly. These are followed by Weekly purchasers which constitute 18.4% (34) of the respondents. Only 3 respondents (1.6%) Never make online purchases.

4. **What products/services do you usually purchase online?**

Meals orders constituted maximum to product/services purchased online usually at 72.4%. Apparels were the next most purchased items at 61.1%. These were followed by Electronics and OTT platforms purchases.

5. **Which of the following websites/apps do you use most?**

Amazon was the most popular - 89.7% of respondents use it frequently. Along with that, Amazon Prime was also highly selected. Netflix and Zomato were also high contenders each at 60% and 58.4% of respondents selecting them.

6. **Which among the following factors motivates you to shop online?**

Convenience was the biggest reason for people choosing to purchase online - 87.6% of respondents selected it. Offers and Variety were the contenders which followed - at 63.2% and 50.3% respectively.

7. **Choose the most appropriate option. (Likert Scale)**

I. *I like to scroll through apps for leisure*: Here, 75 people agreed whereas 20 people Strongly Agree. 4 people Strongly Disagree with this statement.

ii. *I regularly add things to my wishlist*: 56 people Agree with this statement. 50 respondents were Neutral and 46 respondents Disagree.

iii. *I like choosing colourful alternatives of the same product*: 58 respondents were Neutral about this statement, whereas 52 respondents Agree. 9

respondents Strongly Disagree with this statement.

iv. *Celebrity/ Influencers have an impact on my purchase decisions*: 64 people Disagree with this statement while 38 respondents Strongly Disagree. 8 respondents Strongly Agree with this statement.

8. **Do you have your own accounts on most e-commerce apps/websites?**

It can be seen that 57.8% of the total respondents (107 respondents) have their own accounts on most e-commerce apps/websites. 37.8% (70 respondents) share some of their accounts while 4.3% (8 respondents) share all their accounts with friends/ relatives.

9. **Which mode of payment do you prefer most?**

47% of the total respondents i.e. 87 people prefer Debit Cards/ Credit Cards as modes of payment. 45 respondents i.e. 24.3% prefer Cash on Delivery while 41 respondents - 22.2% prefer Google Pay/ Paytm/ etc. Only 12 people (6.5%) prefer Netbanking.

10. **Do you make active efforts to get the best offer for the same product across different apps/websites?**

Here, it was found that 46.5% of the total respondents make active efforts for best offers only Sometimes. 42.7% make active efforts regularly while 10.8% don't make efforts to get the best offers for the same product.

11. **Do you come across advertisements about various e-commerce apps often?**

69.2% of the total respondents - 128 people come across advertisements about e-commerce apps often. 23.8% - 44 people were unsure while 7% - 13 respondents do not come across advertisements often.

12. **If yes, what attracts you the most towards the advertisement(s)?**

The main product/ service being advertised is the most attractive feature of the advertisements according to 148 respondents. Humour and colours are also very attractive to the respondents. Texts/ Fonts, as well as Offers, make up a small percentage in terms of attractiveness. For some people, these advertisements are not attractive at all.

13. **Do you prefer a one-stop app where you can get all kinds of products (e.g. Amazon, etc.) or product-specific apps (eg H&M, etc.)?**

36.8% of the total respondents i.e. 68 respondents prefer one-stop apps whereas 10.8% - 20 respondents prefer Product-Specific apps. However, 52.4% i.e. 97 respondents prefer both kinds of apps.

14. **Which of the following causes you discomfort while making online purchases?**

The chances of getting lower quality products are one of the biggest causes of discomfort among the respondents. Lack of touch and feel and even Security Concerns make the respondents skeptical while making online purchases. These are followed by Delayed Delivery concerns for the respondents. However, 13 respondents (7%) do not feel any discomfort while making online purchases.

Suggestions

Frequency of online purchasing is dependent on comfort and availability of information for the customers. Hence, to improve people's frequency of online purchasing, online retailers must have proper provisions to help provide all necessary and accurate information to the customer.

1. Ease of Navigation: Individuals belonging to the higher age groups do not always find these apps/ websites easy to navigate. Some options must be provided so as to assist them in the difficulties they face.

2. Delay in Delivery: Online Retailers must take required steps to ensure smooth functioning of the logistics such that these delays are avoided as far as possible.

3. Awareness can be spread about the benefits of cashless payment options like Google Pay/ Paytm etc such that individuals can make an informed decision for the same. Many women face discomfort while trusting these apps and hence, disseminating accurate information is crucial.

4. Advertisements can be made inclusive such that individuals of all genders are attracted to the different aspects that make up the advertisement, thus boosting interest in purchasing the product/service being advertised.

5. Transparency in terms of costs and processes will help increase confidence among individuals for making these purchases.

6. Interfaces to avail best offers can be created such that men and women can find the best deals for their requirements.

7. There are no specific laws for online purchases; they can be implemented to avoid anonymous intruders. This can help in maintaining security and private information.

8. Easier Return Policies: Some of the individuals in the respondents have faced difficulties in return policies multiple times. In order to avoid such disgruntled customers, online retailers must work to have seamless and straightforward return policies.

9. Online marketers should use advanced, innovative and attractive sale promotion activities in order to maintain their existing customers and attract other potential e-buyers.

10. Durability of products sold online should not be compromised. Individuals prefer strong, long lasting products and hence, online retailers must ensure high quality services.
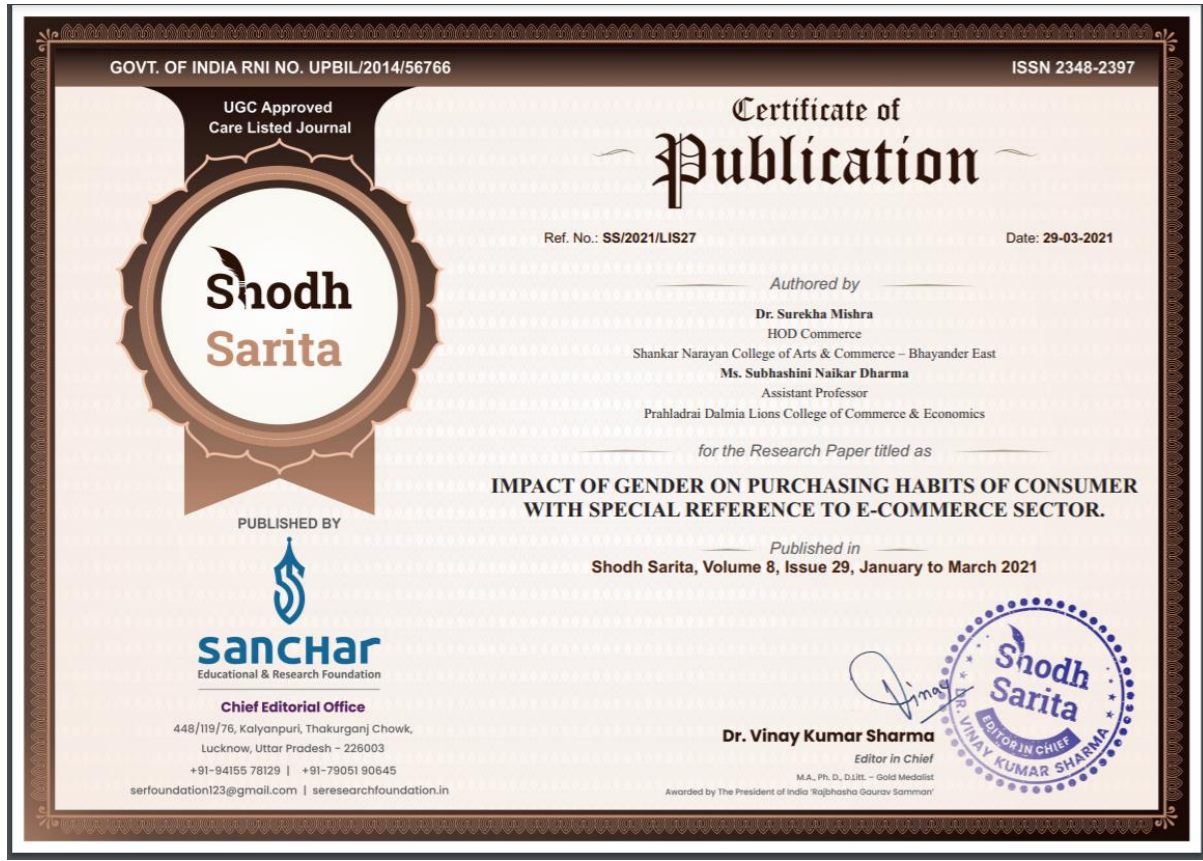
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Abstract :