

# Exploring Women`s attitude in Online Shopping- A review of Literature

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## ABSTRACT

Online shopping an E-Commerce form is on the roar and this trend is accelerating at a fast pace. This form of shopping has altered the perception of the people to shop and made them risk takers in this regard. This study is one of its kind in which the previous literature are studied in exhaustive form and different researchers` ideas are put forth. The study is rare in the field of E-Commerce as the trend and status of women are studied in the light of online shopping. The literature from the past studies was reviewed which impelled the researcher to conclude that the women play a dominant role when it comes to shopping, however in the context of Online shopping they are lagging behind the men. Trust seems the main factor hindering the women to shop online. Most of the women especially young prefer to shop where there is positive word of mouth. The literature also reveals that the risk factor plays a dominant role in the women mindset due to the technicality of e-shopping sites.

**Keywords:** Internet, E-Commerce, Online shopping, Gender and Women online shopping.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION.

The Internet has transformed the lifestyle of the people across the world due to which a rapid change in the lives of people seems remarkable. E-commerce or Electronic Commerce which is the new and updated form of doing business is on the surge since its existence. This has given birth to online shopping and thus altered the traditional way to shop. Prior to this people used to physically visit the store, have the feel of the product, negotiating the prices and thus the final purchases happen. Online shopping has altogether changed this form of shopping allowing the customers an easier and riskier form to pick and pay for their products. Since the past decade's companies are trying to be visible both Online as well as Offline. Hence the concept of Brick and Click came into recognition. A new wave has touched the companies enabling them to stay ahead in the competition and surviving as now to remain technologically sufficient and updated is not a choice but a requisite.

The ongoing innovations in the ICT sector like penetration of Smart Phones and 4G networks, it`s predicted that the E-retail market will grow up to US\$ 188 billion by 2025 [1]. The topmost online shopping sites preferred by the population of India as of 2018 are Amazon, Flipkart, Shopclues, Paytm, Snapdeal and so on [2]. Online shopping is perceived differently by the people belonging to a different gender, age and income group. Hence the demographic factor plays a crucial role in shopping online. Women who are considered to be playing a major role in shopping, their behaviour also differs in this context. The experience of both male and female differs in this regards. Retailers whether online or offline always analyse their customers` database in order to create new and sustainable ways of doing business to target their customers. As per the statistical reports of 2017, the online shopping frequency of U.S as per gender was surveyed and the results put forth that 17 % of the women shop online on a weekly basis while as 23% of the men do the same [3]. The reports of 2015 of India, online shoppers on the gender basis states that 35% of the shoppers were females and the rest were the males [4]. Digital media firm Sokrati`s statistics (2016), has reported some major findings in which it was found that Indian men shop 3 times more than women, Cash On Delivery (COD) is still a preferred mode of payment (70%) and impulsive shopping constitutes 60% of online shopping [5]. This allows us to conclude that the gender differences still exist in online shopping and a huge potential for E-Commerce sites especially E-tailers to tap the under defined population. According to ASSOCHAM the number of online shoppers in India in 2016 was 69mn and is expected to increase by 65% in 2018 [6]. The largest segment of customers purchase is Electronics which constitutes 47% while as apparels segment is the second largest with a share of 31% in E-Commerce retail sector [1].

The demographical (age, gender and income) influence on the E-Commerce sector is crucial to understand the perception and behaviour of people belonging to different segments towards this sector. The study has focused on the women's attitude towards the upcoming online shopping, their behaviour towards it and the products frequently shopped by them. Hence in this paper, the researcher has sought the guidance of past literature and fulfilled the stated objectives. The women hold a dominant position in shopping still the past literature hasn't focused much in this context.

## **2. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES**

The study's first and foremost objective is to understand the online shopping behaviour of Women. Apart from this, the other objectives are to analyse the factors that play a dominant role in both hindering as well as motivating women to do online shopping.

## **3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The study follows an exploratory research design to fulfil the research objectives. A secondary form of data collection method was inculcated which includes the literary work of researchers in this area, statistical reports on E-Commerce and Online shopping, Journals, books and websites. The articles mainly focused on the women shopping attitudes were taken into consideration for the study.

## **4. LITERATURE REVIEW**

An extraordinary surge in E-commerce acceptance is seen across the world and India is no exception. The online e-retail sales are expected to reach \$64bn by 2021 [7]. In 2015, the major proportions of online users in India were male and same was the case with online shoppers. An imbalance was prominent but despite this, women will account for 42% of overall India's e-retail by 2020, from 20% in 2015 [8].

Many prior studies have highlighted the gender gap in Information Technology [9, 10 & 11]. As per Nirmal, Puspa & Dewi (2011) [11], women shoppers have lower intentions to shop for fashion products online as compared to their male counterparts. This gender gap in online shopping was also mentioned in Stafford, Turan & Raisinghani (2004) [12], the paper where in its existence was present across cultures and nations.

### **4.1 Gender and Trust**

The use of the internet can be related to the perception towards computers as such the previous literature postulates that major male population see internet and other technologies in a positive way. Internet in the past was dominated by male population but now the gap is thinning. In India the same can't be said as only 29% of all internet users are females (UNICEF), the main reason is the persisting culture which refrains the women or girls to get exposed to new technologies [13]. The ageing cycle of men from childhood to adult is seen more using computers and having more experience and knowledge of it [14].

Online shopping is accelerating at a fast pace irrespective of the gender, mostly driven by the good number of millennial population (46.6%). A good quantity of research is present which depicts that when it comes to trust factor male and female perception differs. A study in the past reveals that women are weak both in income and education; it can be the major factor for having trust issues [15]. Females know less about Information Technology (IT) and hence interpret more software related issues [16] restricting them to try anything new. The income of a person does have an influence on the use of Internet and E-Commerce, especially the experienced users this was emphasized by the previous researchers in their study. Another study conducted on trust and gender put forth that women trust less than men but comparatively they are more trustworthy than men [17], also the perception of women towards internet and computer technology was seen negative with the computer anxiety in women seen more than men [18].

### **4.2 Online shopping motives**

As per Kumar (2014) [19], women's shopping motives can be hedonic and utilitarian. The hedonic shopping is done by women just for enjoyment and fun while as utilitarian type of shopping is done when a need or problem arises, a problem solver approach. They are motivated by other reasons like socializing and enjoyment. Shoppers while doing web based shopping look for trust, security and privacy of information, efficiency, convenience, prices and a wide range of products to shop from [20]. Online shopping is not only limited to purchase and pay it's beyond that concept. According to Tauber, (1972) the shopping motives are bifurcated into social and personal motives. The author also emphasis that impulse shopping can also lead to actual shopping as the behavior of customers is not so planned [21] and this trend is snowballing with the increase in ease of shopping be it home, office, recreational or social club etc. In concern with E-Commerce few factors are there which explains why women seem less satisfied with online shopping. The first is the perceived emotional benefits, followed by trust and convenience (practicality) and on these three factors, women's dissatisfaction towards online shopping could be predicted [22]. N. Arora & Aggarwal (2018) [23], in their paper has put forth the important factors of online shopping which are considered by Indian women: a variety of products [24 & 25], Convenience and price [26]. The

convenience of shopping online was also emphasized by Raman (2014) in his study as the most important factor [27]. Seock, Yoo & Bailey (2008), in their study has postulated seven shopping attitude factors: enjoyment, fashion and price consciousness, shopping, time efficiency, in home shopping, brand/store/site loyalty. Out of these female were seen more inclined towards enjoyment, brand consciousness, price and shopping, hence they achieve hedonic motives [28].

#### **4.3 Online shopping and price**

Earlier physical touch and feel of the product was more important. Women with high disposable income spend it on leisure activities and shopping [23]. They being the household runner are always the prime person in buying [29]. Price-sensitive women have a positive attitude towards online shopping which is in line with the study of A. Biswas & Blair (1991) [30] that discount on prices does have a positive link with shopping intentions. Price was of least importance when Indian women shop online and the majority of them belongs to a working group, hence the price doesn't make much difference in shaping the online shopping behavior of Indian women [23].

#### **4.4 Online shopping and Risk**

Gender perception of risk is seen in online buying and it seems very likely in many studies. In particular women, perception towards risk are seemed positively correlated in other domains as well like financial, medical and environmental [31, 32 & 33]. Risk and reliability issues were considered as the major hurdle towards online shopping in India [27]. Risk and insecurity (theft) concepts were seen more in the non- online women shoppers [34]. Wu (2003)[11], found that women have a relatively less positive attitude towards online buying [11, 35, 36 & 37], even their preference towards products are also different. With the increase in income, the risk factor perception of the users is minimized [37 & 38]. The marketers are trying to minimize the risk factor when it comes to women even if they are experienced users [11]. Less experience in the field of the computer enables in perceiving complexity in web based shopping [39]. However risk decreases when the recommendations from friends take place hence word of mouth is very influential while targeting women segment [10 & 40]. Word of mouth has a positive relation when it comes to online trust [41].

#### **4.5 Online shopping and Products**

Types of products also influence the gender perception of online shopping. In the infancy of web based shopping computers hardware and software, electronics and male category of products were mostly favored online. In mid-2000's these items sales were much higher than the sales of female focused products like apparels and home shop [39]. In 2000 (Clickz.com) [42], a survey conducted depicts the same results that women shop for clothing, health, beauty products and toys while as men prefer to purchase electronics, computers and videos. Women who purchase apparels online perceive it as safe, convenient, secure and relative advantageous. It was also mentioned in the past that female customers usually buy items of home décor, apparels and jewelry [43]. P. Zollo (1995) [44], put forth that female customers spend more on cosmetics, clothes and jewelry. Another survey reported that online female shoppers buy fragrances and beauty aids, jewelry and luxury goods, apparels and toys [45]. A study of 2016 (Statistica) [46] reveals that women have been seen high shoppers in beauty care, clothing, pet care items and baby care products. Apparels, health and beauty items, games and toys, garden and home products are also seen in another study shopped by women more than men [46].

## **5. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION**

The overall review of literature enables the researcher to reach at the conclusion that irrespective of the knowledge and experience gender gap is obvious when it comes to the use of the Internet, computer and online shopping. Women tend to see them in a complicated way and refrain from doing online shopping. For them shopping involves hedonic motive; enjoyment and fun. Online women shoppers once gain experience, their perception of risk decreases. They are motivated by the convenience, price, efficiency and loyalty judged in terms of good service. The study also suggests the products which are usually brought in online shopping are apparels, beauty products, toys and home decor. Word of mouth from friends and family play a major role to change their attitude towards e-shopping. Once the experience is gained they are the frequent shoppers.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

Women are the influencers and are involved in the actual purchasing process [9], so to target such a big audience is of great advantage to the retailers. They are involved in the negotiation process and before actual purchase, they search a wide range of products. It's recommended that for targeting women, different methods should be adopted to attract them. From the past literature, factors that influence their mind set could be drafted; few of those which have been highlighted in this study are a convenience, variety of products, price, brand loyalty and word of mouth. The trust, privacy and security is also an issue, hence the e-tailers should provide them with flexible payment and return policy to encourage them to shop. Positive word of mouth related to a particular store or site and that too from friends and family does influence them and motivate to shop, in this regard it is suggested to provide bonus points or vouchers to the existing customers on inviting a new one who would shop with them. Complexities of technology hinder them as such the e-retail sites should be user friendly and interactive like the virtual stores and virtual trial rooms giving them an option to try the products and explore the sites. The concept of 3D modeling can be entertained.

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