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The Impact of Website Aesthetics and Trust on Shaping Online Shoppers' Attitudes

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Abstract: *The Internet revolution brought about a paradigm shift in all fields at the end of the twentieth century. Initially, it was perceived and used primarily for communication and social media purposes; however, its use has gradually shifted from hedonic to utilitarian purposes. The present research is an empirical study that adopts a descriptive research method. A total of 417 questionnaires were collected using a convenience sampling technique. The research found that website aesthetics and trust play vital roles among online shoppers in developing a positive attitude towards online shopping.*

Keywords: *Internet, Social Media, Utilitarian, Hedonic, Website Aesthetics.*

I. INTRODUCTION

Internet revolution brought about a paradigm shift in all the fields at the end of twentieth century. In the beginning it was perceived and used for communication and social media purposes, later on its consumption purpose has been shifted from hedonic to utilitarian purpose. As a result, the retailers used internet to promote their business globally through online websites. Though, online websites have their own limitations like absence of feel, interactivity, touch and physical examination of products, they attract customers with their unique features across the world. Indian consumers have felt that shopping through online was an easy, time saving and pleasant experience for them when compared to other shopping modes. Therefore it is vital for the retailers to study the behavioural aspects like customer attitude of online shopping.

As per Statista forecast on Compound Annual Growth Rate (CAGR) on retail e-commerce sector in select countries from 2018 to 2022, India secured 23%. From this predicted data India stood first among select countries because of high growth in internet penetration, usage of mobile devices and Information Technology. This is a good opportunity for the world marketers to capture Indian retail sector. Under these circumstances, the researcher has proposed to make a study on the factors that motivate the consumers to adopt online shopping and also to measure their level of attitude. The objective is to extract the underlying factors that are associated with the attitude of the online shoppers and to study the influence of demographic and other relevant variables on these underlying factors.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

The following dimensions are considered to be important factors for attitude formation towards online shopping such as ease of use, loyalty, digital efficacy, visual appealing, website quality, price, trust and economic benefits of online shopping.

Ease of Use: Davis, (1989) has defined ease of use as "the degree to which a shopper believes that using a particular method would be free from effort". Online shoppers' culture is validated by perceived ease of use on shopping intention (Abdul Ashraf & Auh, 2014).

Loyalty: Loyalty refers to having a positive attitude towards a product or brand, which induces supportive behaviour from the shoppers to go for repeated purchases (Folkman Curasi, 2002). Loyalty is directly and positively influenced by technology acceptance factors, like website service quality and e-satisfaction Li, P. F. (2010).

Digital Efficacy: Bandura, (1997) defined digital efficacy as the belief in one's ability to engage in specific actions that result in desired outcomes. Student digital literacy and positive attitude significantly contribute to self-efficacy for shopping through online (Daniel Prior & David Meacham, 2016).

Visual Appealing: Visual appeal is the features that meet the customers' eye. It can be the combination of colours, fonts, shapes, white space and overall visual balance of a website design. The shoppers' perceived experience on product and flow of information on the websites can be increased by visual and functional control of websites (Zhenhui Jiang, 2004).

Website Quality: Website quality ensures attractive designing, content's quality, user friendly, functional and quickly accessibility and it should also offer reliable information to satisfy the customers' needs and expectations. Online shopping websites should be facilitated with quality which improves the customer awareness on information safety and they should ensure a safe environment for shopping online (Yeh, 2010).

Price: Pricing is the art of converting the value of a product into quantitative terms. It is the consideration for the product purchased. A price discount's magnitude in online shopping is less predictive of buyers intentions in earlier stage of online shopping and the same is more predictive in later and during an online purchase trip (Daniel Sheehan & Alexander Ziegler, 2019).

Trust: Corritore & Kracher (2003) have defined trust as "an attitude of confident expectation in an online situation of risk that one's vulnerabilities will not be exploited". Trust is a significant and important factor to influence the online customers in developed countries like US and UK.

Economical Benefit: A study by Thompson Teo, (2004) among the Chinese consumers, reveals that dependability and transaction cost is positively related. Transaction cost positively influences the customers' willingness to buy online in China and US. Repurchase intention can be formed, when the information search cost in online shopping is reduced by providing ample cues to customers (Lei-Yu Wu & Po-Yuan Chena, 2014).

III. STATEMENT OF RESEARCH PROBLEM

Internet Live Stat published on October 1, 2020 stated that internet users in India were 50% of the total population, out of which only 1.6% of the population were shopping online. Lack of internet literacy and network problems are big challenges for online retailers and online consumers to promote online shopping in urban and rural markets. Internet is still fairly in immature stage in India and new technologies have given rise to numerous cases of abuse and exploitation during the various online activities. Indian legal system has been extremely challenged in keeping up and slowly, at a snail's pace, it is creating and rewriting laws to include cybercrimes. But if the laws are not there, there is little scope to prosecute those who commit mischief and havocs (Bowers, 2000). Nevertheless fake websites, fake URL (Uniform Resource Locator) and misleading advertisements create fear among the online consumers not to shop through online. Hence the researcher has made an attempt to study the attitude, preference and cognitive dissonance experienced by online shoppers especially by those who are residing in urban, rural and hill areas in select taluks of undivided Vellore district of Tamil Nadu. In this context the researcher has developed the following research question to be answered in this study: What are the most inducing dimensions to form attitude for buying product through online?

IV. RESEARCH GAP

The following conceptual gaps are identified based on the review of literature on attitude, preference and cognitive dissonance experienced by online consumers in online retail industry. Limited published research works are available on attitude, preference and cognitive dissonance with rural and urban based online shoppers. Furthermore, inadequate research is available to connect information sources available for online shopping, consumer attitude and online shopper preference. Also, limited published research is available on cognitive dissonance with online shopping.

V. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The present research is an empirical study and has adopted descriptive research method. It is quantitative in nature. The researcher has chosen the undivided Vellore district as the study area for this research purpose and it was the third large district in terms of population in the state of Tamil Nadu as per 2011 census. The researcher has developed the questionnaire in order to collect the primary data and it has been developed based on the extensive review of literature and after having had discussion with online shoppers, logistic centre personnel and delivery boys. The researcher has used Likert five point scale to measure the attitude of online shoppers.

The attitude construct has forty one statements to measure the attitude of the respondents on online shopping. The respondents are expected to indicate their responses in five point Likert's scale which have their range from 'Strongly Disagree' to 'Strongly Agree'. There were nine taluks in the undivided Vellore District which were Vellore, Tirupattur, Arakonam, Wallajah, Gudiyatham, Katpadi, Vaniyambadi, Ambur and Arcot. Out of which, the researcher has selected four taluks namely Vellore, Arakonam, Ambur and Tirupattur. These taluks were selected using lottery method. The researcher has taken 115 respondents from each taluk and distributed questionnaires to a total number of 460 respondents in four taluks which were taken for the study. Out of the 460 questionnaires distributed 442 respondents returned them. The percentage of collected questionnaires is 96 and 4% are unreturned questionnaires. After careful editing, 417 questionnaires were taken for further analysis and 25 questionnaires were rejected as they were incomplete. The rate of rejection in percentage is 5.43.

VI. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

This study is confined to undivided Vellore district in Tamil Nadu and it does not cover other districts in Tamil Nadu. The study does not cover services offered by websites like sale of used goods, ticket booking for air, train and bus travels, online cab booking and online insurance payment services etc.,.

VII. DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

The researcher has made an attempt to study the correlation among the various dimensions of attitude towards online shopping. These dimensions are ease of use, loyalty, digital efficacy, visual appealing, website quality trust and economical benefits. Further he also tries to find the correlation between overall attitude and the various dimensions of the customers' attitude.

Table-1 Dimensions of Customers Attitude towards Online Shopping
(Correlation Co-efficient Matrix)

Dimensions	Ease of Use	Loyalty	Digital Efficacy	Visual Appealing	Website Quality	Trust	Economical Benefits	Overall Attitude
Ease of Use	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Loyalty	.546**	1	-	-	-	-	-	-

Digital Efficacy	.478**	.332**	1	-	-	-	-	-
Visual Appealing	.400**	.303**	.219**	1	-	-	-	-
Website Quality	.469**	.360**	.238**	.438**	1	-	-	-
Trust	.380**	.237**	.278**	.211**	.187**	1	-	-
Economical Benefits	.503**	.423**	.422**	.262**	.320**	.197**	1	-
Overall Attitude	.781**	.623**	.574**	.493**	.530**	.420**	.533**	1

Source: Primary Data

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The above correlation matrix table-1 states that there is a significant positive relationship between all the dimensions pertaining to customers' attitude towards online shopping as ($p=0.01$). The above analysis further exhibits that there is a high positive relationship found between the ease of use and loyalty ($r = 0.546$). It means that customers' loyalty on online shopping can be enhanced by improving the ease of use in online shopping sites. According to Cohen (1998), r value is 0.546 that is large or larger than typical effect.

Likewise, customers loyalty towards online shopping could be improved by offering more economic benefits to the online shoppers ($r = 0.423$). According to Cohen (1998), r value is 0.423 that is medium or typical effect. When there is ease in online shopping, the customers may trust the online shopping. The customers also trust online shopping since the correlation value is 0.380.

Multiple Regression Analysis for Level of Attitude towards Online Shopping

Identifying the most crucial factor of attitude is essential to formulate the marketing strategies in the field of digital marketing to attract the new customers and to retain the existing digital customers. Hence, multiple regression analysis has been performed by the researcher on consumer attitude towards online shopping (Dependent Variable) and dimensions of attitude which are ease of use, loyalty, digital efficacy, visual appealing, website quality, trust and economical benefits (Independent Variable).

Table-2 Determinants of Level of Attitude towards Online Shopping - Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error	Durbin Watson
1	0.871 ^a	0.759	0.755	0.294	1.877

Source: Primary Data

a. Predictors: (Constant), Attitude on Ease of Use, Loyalty, Digital Efficacy, Visual Appealing, Website Quality, Trust, and Economical Benefits.

b. Dependent Variable: Level of Attitude of the Customers towards Online Shopping.

The model summary of multiple regression analysis discloses that 76% ($R^2 = 0.759$) of variations in the shoppers attitude towards online shopping could be explained by the variations in the independent variables. Likewise, the relationship between independent variables and dependent variable is highly positive with R value of 0.871. According to Cohen (1998), R value is 0.871 that is much larger than typical effect. It could be concluded that the effect of independent variables on the level

of shoppers attitude towards online shopping, is very high as adjusted R^2 is 0.755. Hence, the attitude of online customers could be improved by making improvements in independent variables.

Table-3 Determinants of Level of Attitude towards Online Shopping - ANOVA^a Result

Model	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	111.640	7	15.949	184.485	0.000
Residual	35.358	409	0.086		
Total	146.998	416			

Source: Primary Data

a. Dependent Variable: Level of Attitude of the customers towards Online Shopping

b. Predictors: (Constant), Attitude on Ease of Use, Loyalty, Digital Efficacy, Visual Appealing, Website Quality, Trust, and Economical Benefits.

The above Table 3 reveals that the regression model between independent variables and dependent variable is fit, since significance value is less than 0.05 ($p = 0.000$). Hence, it could be stated that all the dimensions of attitude significantly predict the level of attitude towards online shopping.

Table-4 Determinants of Level of Attitude towards Online Shopping - Coefficients^a

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	<i>t</i>	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval for B		Collinearity Statistics	
	B	Std. Error	Beta			Lower Bound	Upper Bound	Tol.	VIF
(Constant)	-0.533	0.079		-6.707	.000	-.689	-.377		
Ease of Use	0.391	0.036	0.382	10.832	.000	0.320	0.462	.473	2.113
Loyalty	0.211	0.031	0.205	6.860	.000	0.151	0.272	.658	1.521
Digital Efficacy	0.228	0.032	0.205	7.138	.000	0.165	0.290	.715	1.398
Visual Appealing	0.147	0.030	0.138	4.921	.000	0.088	0.205	.752	1.331
Website Quality	0.135	0.031	0.126	4.338	.000	0.074	0.196	.693	1.444
Trust	0.096	0.025	0.103	3.879	.000	0.047	0.145	.839	1.192
Economical Benefits	0.071	0.029	0.071	2.412	.016	0.013	0.129	.673	1.485

Source: Primary Data

Dependent Variable: Level of Consumer Attitude on Online Shopping

The Significance values in the above Coefficients table 4 confirm that there is a significant linear relationship between dimensions of attitude and overall shoppers attitude towards online shopping as $p=0.05$. The strongest predictors of attitude of online shoppers are ease of use ($\beta = 0.391$) and digital efficacy ($\beta = 0.228$). One unit increase in the level of ease of use and digital efficacy will result in 0.391 unit and 0.228 unit improvement in the level of positive attitude of customers of online shopping.

VIII. DISCUSSIONS

There is a significant positive relationship between all the dimensions pertaining to customers' attitude towards online shopping as ($p \geq 0.01$). Positive correlations were found between dimensions like ease of use, loyalty, digital efficacy, visual appealing, website quality, trust, economical benefit and overall attitude towards online shopping. 76% ($R^2 = 0.759$) of variations in the shoppers' attitude towards online shopping could be explained by the variations in the independent variables. 87% of the attitude could be developed through ease of use, loyalty, digital efficacy, visual appealing, website quality, trust and

economical benefit dimensions of online shopping. The strongest predictors of attitude of the online shoppers are ease of use ($\beta = 0.391$) and digital efficacy ($\beta = 0.228$). One unit increase in the level of ease of use and digital efficacy will result in 0.391 unit and 0.228 unit improvements in the level of positive attitude of customers' of online shopping. Websites aesthetics and trust play a vital role among the online shoppers to have high level attitude towards online shopping. To build trust on online shopping, whenever the consumers interact with recommendation agents, they should act as relationship builder between online shoppers and online retailers. To enhance websites aesthetics, the online retailers should improve the visual appearance of website/mobile apps. This can be achieved by using attractive images, colours, fonts, styles, icons, etc. Online retailers should encompass user-friendly and interactive features like animations, sounds and symbols to make the websites attractive and lively.

IX. CONCLUSION AND FEATURE RESEARCH

The present research has been carried out in undivided Vellore district to study the attitude experienced by online shoppers. This study has made a significant contribution in the field of buyer behavior by developing regression models relating to customers attitude towards online shopping and their preference of online shopping. Ease of use and digital efficacy are the two important factors that predict and influence the customers' attitude towards online shopping. Online shoppers' needs and wants may also be increasing along with the increase in internet consumption and its users. Online retailers should provide detailed and unbiased information on product quality, price, discounts, offers, after sales services etc. Online shopping sites should not deceive the shoppers by giving wrong and misleading information and they should not collect hidden charges for the products. Further the online shopping sites should be designed with multiple language options for facilitating the shoppers to have better shopping experience. Return policy should have inbuilt flexibility and it should allow and accept various reasons to return the products purchased through online. Future direction of the research may be studying the online buying behaviour patterns of pre-purchase, post-purchase and how it influences the online shoppers' intention in the future.

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