



Research Article

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Understanding Online Consumer Behaviours for a Better Customer Journey

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ABSTRACT

It's crucial for businesses to have a firm grasp on the customer journey and experience over time. Customers' interactions with businesses are now more social, taking place across various channels and media. To adapt to these shifts, businesses must coordinate the efforts of numerous internal departments as well as third-party vendors to ensure that customers always receive the best possible service. During the pandemic, most of consumers preferred online purchases. This sparked a new pattern of behavior of consumers in buying products. This made business units to come up with new strategies to cater the services to the consumer. Surprisingly these new strategies continued even post-pandemic period. Today most of marketers has continued these new strategies. The researchers, through this paper hope their efforts will help readers better comprehend the increasingly complex customer behavior of modern times by providing a deeper appreciation for the customer experience and the customer journey.

INTRODUCTION

The behaviours of people who shop online have developed at a breakneck pace recently. This development results from significant shifts in how e-commerce has developed as a direct consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic. COVID-19 ushered in a new age of retail by kicking off the beginning of e-commerce in the future, which was well beyond any reasonable or predictable expectations.

This new era in retail is characterized by the shift of the customer buying experience away from traditional brick-and-mortar stores and toward online shopping. And it took place much more swiftly and on a much larger scale than anyone had ever anticipated it would. E-commerce businesses that want to be successful need to have a solid understanding of the new patterns that have emerged in the shopping habits of customers as a direct result of the pandemic. What motivates customers today is different from what motivated them in the past. When

taking into consideration the entirety of the e-commerce shopping experience, beginning to end, what do customers anticipate now? What things can brick-and-mortar stores do to better satisfy customers in the face of the rapid and profound changes brought about by online shopping?

Understanding the behavior of people who shop online should come before looking at emerging trends in online retailing and figuring out how to satisfy customer demand.

OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

- To understand the changes in the behavior of the consumer after the pandemic situation
- To know the strategies adopted by marketers to understand the behavior of the consumers

What exactly is the behavior of consumers who shop online

Consumer behavior online refers to the process through

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which customers make choices regarding the things they buy through online commerce.

The expectations and requirements of individuals change with time, and as a result, so do the actions that individuals engage in, such as recognizing an issue or deciding to make a purchase. Even while the needs of each buyer are unique, the new expectations shaping how consumers behave when they purchase online are increasingly becoming standardized.

Consumers' expectations regarding things like product availability, delivery transparency, affordable shipping, and, more recently, a convenient buying journey all play a role in determining whether they will decide to make purchases online (and whether or not they will continue to be loyal customers once they have made a purchase).

Pandemic and online shopping

When the COVID-19 epidemic struck, e-commerce underwent a spectacular and unparalleled transformation. Many physical stores were forced to close, and clients were ordered to remain at home. Subsequently, buyers placed an extraordinary and unpredictably high demand on the internet marketplace to offer the things they had previously purchased in person. In 2020, 84% of people shopped online more frequently than in the past.

Initially, online retailers struggled to satisfy this extraordinary demand. Products sold out at an unprecedented rate, stock diminished or vanished, and expedited shipping and delivery trailed behind. Eventually, e-commerce retailers started to adapt to this new, increased demand. Alongside this increase in product demand, however, there was also a shift in consumer expectations regarding the online shopping experience.

These increased consumer expectations resulted in distinct shifts in online consumer behavior. Even as brick-and-mortar establishments began to reopen, most consumers continued making e-commerce purchases. Consumers recognized aspects of online buying they loved that were absent from the conventional offline shopping experience. These good internet buying experiences promoted new consumer behavior trends to become entrenched availability, delivery transparency, inexpensive shipping, and, more lately, a convenient shopping journey influence consumers' willingness to purchase things online (and if they will remain loyal customers after making a purchase).

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Constantine E.(2002) has established the fundamental notion of marketing-mix, which was required to carry out web marketing activities. This new web-marketing Mix strategy established four S elements: scope, site, synergy, and system.

Chang Su-Jane, 2003 examined the fundamentals of online purchasing with an emphasis on comprehending the online

shopping procedure. When it comes to online purchasing, common questions include: how do online shoppers describe their shopping experience? Is there a standard paradigm for online shopping? What are the fundamental aspects of an individual's online purchasing experience? How do the underlying dimensions affect the satisfaction of online consumers with their purchases? Still, the answers to these questions remained hidden. Based on in-depth interviews and a follow-up survey, this study identified three common components of online shopping: interactivity, transaction, and fulfillment.

Srinivasan S. (2004), examined the significance of Trust in e-commerce from a transactional standpoint. Accessibility to product and service descriptions, ease of order placement, order confirmation, order monitoring, and after-sales service were identified as factors that contribute to transactional Trust.

Journal of Fashion Marketing and Management, 2005, "A consumer shopping channel extension model: attitude shift towards the online store" This research will use a theoretical approach to examine the shift from offline to online shopping by consumers. Results indicated that attitude played a significant influence in online purchase intent.

Mukherjee A. et al. (2007), "Role of electronic trust in online retailing", *European Journal of Marketing*, vol. 41, issue 9/10, pages 1173 – 1202. This study highlighted the importance of Trust and loyalty in the online world. The focus was on how websites can acquire buyers' Trust and deliver on their promises to foster long-lasting customer relationships. This paper also re-examined the commitment-trust theory (CTT) within the context of online retailing.

The website's privacy and security features facilitate the development of Trust, which ultimately leads to the formation of bonds. Karjaluoto J. 2007. This study examined the factors that influenced e-commerce trust and presented an integrative trust model. As demonstrated in Exhibit No. 6, the model classified a variety of external and internal factors. Trust primarily motivated repeat purchases, which ultimately led to long-term commitment.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

For the study, researchers have made use of a snowball sample. 138 respondents were asked a question about their purchase behaviour for online shopping. 124 respondents were considered for the same. As the researcher was keen in understanding the consumer's post-pandemic behavior and strategies that the marketer can adopt to cope with such behavior, the research had not framed any hypothesis for the study.

Changes in Consumer Behaviour post-pandemic

According to a recent survey conducted by Linnworks six major e-commerce trends influence how consumers





Flowchart 1: Conceptual Framework

shop online. Even while these tendencies manifest at different stages of the client buying process, they all share a fundamental ingredient ease of use. Successful online stores are those that keep up with shifting consumer preferences and adapt their methods of doing business to provide customers with a seamless experience from start to finish.

Ease of use is highly valued.

Consumers highly value convenience; a recent survey by Linnworks found that 76% of respondents ranked it as either very important or important. Additionally, 78% of customers place a higher priority on convenience now than they did before COVID regulations were enacted.

The option to shop as a guest, then complete the purchase afterward, is one of the most appealing features of online shopping for consumers. When customers have fewer papers to fill out, they rate their overall shopping experience as more positive and easier (and the more likely they are to return) (Figure 1).

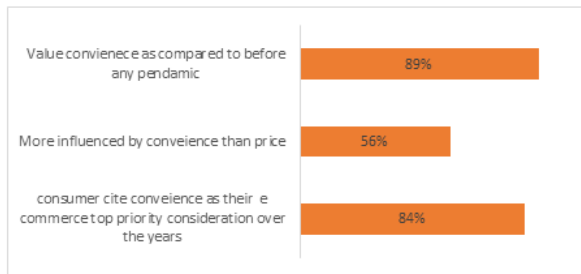


Figure 1: Consumer preference for convenience for online shopping

Universal device compatibility

Eighty-one percent of online shoppers want to be able to easily switch between devices. In fact, today's shoppers anticipate a seamless shopping experience across devices, beginning their journey on a desktop computer and concluding it on a mobile phone. Customers should be able to complete their purchases from any of their connected devices, syncing their information across all of them (Figure 2).

Possibility to Shop Across All Channels

As a result of consumers' ubiquity of technological tools, they are 'always-on' in the retail environment. Seventy percent of consumers now shop while doing multiple things at once. And they have come to count on seeing their preferred brands where they spend the most time. This maximizes convenience by preventing them from having to switch between platforms during the buying process, something they are likely to do if they are not already doing so. That means embracing an omnichannel

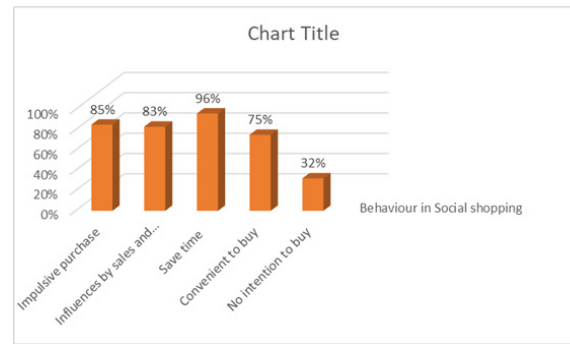


Figure 2: Consumer behaviour in social shopping strategy that allows you to sell on social media platforms like Facebook and Instagram and other marketplaces where your target customers spend their time.

A hassle-free method of payment

When merchants are thinking of ways to stay up with the expectations and behaviors of customers, it is absolutely necessary for them to centre their attention on every facet of the customer experience.

Throughout the entirety of the purchasing process, customers prioritize ease. As a component of this end-to-end shopping ease, customers look for online e-commerce businesses with simple payment gateways to set up and accept various popular payment options, such as "buy now, pay later."

89% of consumers are able to make quicker purchasing decisions as a direct result of the convenience of available payment methods. In addition, 84% of customers will purchase higher-priced things if they are presented with convenient and adaptable payment choices.

Prompt and dependable service

A staggering 95% of online shoppers say that speedy delivery of the product are crucial. To better fulfil the needs of its customer search and prefer those platforms that deliver the product on time. Online stores faces more scrutiny about delivery practices which involves extra cost

Understanding how to cater to the needs of today's internet shoppers

Understanding the complex and ever-changing consumer trends is essential for online retailers. Retailers can't start building the best customer journey they can without first ensuring they're able to meet and exceed their customers' expectations, which are shaped by the constantly shifting norms of online shopping (Figure 3).

How then can online merchants adapt to the sudden shifts in the market brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic

Using a variety of channels to sell

Meeting customers where they already spend time online is essential for retailers hoping to thrive in the digital

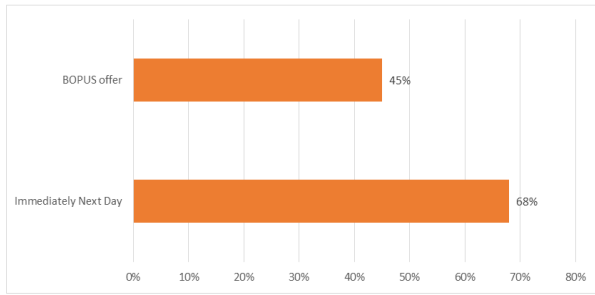


Figure 3: Delivery Factor Affecting Online Purchase marketplace. The modern business environment necessitates using a variety of online marketplaces. These global ecommerce statistics by Statista show that by 2020, the vast majority of online purchases were made through online marketplaces. While selling on multiple platforms is essential, keeping track of stock and revenue can be a hassle.

Connecting, managing, and automating commercial operations is made possible with the help of software like Linnworks Multichannel Listing. This system's ability to meet customers where they shop is a major perk, allowing businesses to maximize customer satisfaction and earnings.

Enhance the speed of transport

As fast-shipping e-commerce giants like Amazon have proliferated, shoppers have come to expect similar options from all of their favorite online stores. Customers want products quickly and at low cost. They are also willing to give preference to stores that can meet their needs in this regard.

Offering the quickest shipping times to customers will be crucial in 2021 and beyond. ShipBob is a global logistics platform that uses automated logistics and decentralized warehouses to make this a reality. By consistently satisfying customers' needs for quick shipping, a retailer can earn their Trust and grow their business with the help of fulfillment solution.

Provide an easy method of return

After a purchase is made, the customer's journey continues. After a customer makes a purchase, they should have as few obstacles as possible when interacting with the company.

Providing a quick and easy return policy is a crucial part of this. Customers can print return labels and keep tabs on their packages with the help of a centralised control panel. With such an all-encompassing system, returned items can be processed and restocked with minimal disruption to the business as a whole.

Make the shopping process unique to each customer.

Customers want quick, easy access to product recommendations that address their unique requirements or address an issue they're facing.

Marketers can achieve this goal by tailoring products and services to individual customers based on their search, viewing, and buying behavior. Customer needs and problems that need solving can be gleaned from demographic data such as location and email. This can be made into an automated, scalable process with the help of a cross-channel marketing platform.

The collected information must then be analyzed and used to provide the shopper with the most individualized and problem-free online shopping experience possible.

Enhance the convenience of mobile purchases

A third of all digital eCommerce revenue was generated from mobile devices in 2020, per Statista. That's equal to \$65.3 billion (USD) in total. These kinds of recent trends in online behavior are impossible to ignore.

Retailers must ensure that the quality of their mobile channels (including websites and apps) is on par with that of the desktop version. The convenience of mobile shopping should come from its simplicity. All the way through the buying process, there should be smooth interactions and helpful little extras.

Review ratings should be conveniently placed.

Customers want to know that they are getting a high-quality product without having to do extensive research. In fact, online reviews are so influential that 59% of consumers can't decide whether or not to buy a product without first reading the reviews. (Age is also an important factor, with younger age groups expecting more reviews than older age groups.)

Online reviews of as many products as possible should be prominently displayed by retailers. Reduce the number of times a customer has to go looking for something. Customers are more likely to make a purchase from a competitor if they can easily find and read reviews before making a purchase on that site.

Allow for a range of payment schedules and methods.

Customers are less likely to complete a purchase if the final steps of that journey are difficult or inconvenient. In fact, nine out of ten customers surveyed by Linnworks said they anticipate having a variety of payment options available at checkout.

Retailers can better satisfy this expectation by providing "buy now, pay later" and guest checkout options, which streamline the payment process for customers.

CONCLUSION

The expansion of information and communication technology (ICT) infrastructure, online payment systems, and Internet access are all positive developments. All market elements contribute to the rise of internet buying among consumers. Unlike in-store purchasing decisions, which are largely unaffected by internet connectivity or website aesthetics (Constantinides, Citation2004),

security, customer experience, age, learning curve, etc., previous research has demonstrated that these factors significantly impact online shopping behavior. By researching the particular characteristics of online purchasing and the consumer behavior of online shoppers, technological entrepreneurs and policymakers can better adjust their strategies to the needs of the market. This study gives factual proof of the actual behavior of online shoppers.

Most people prefer to purchase clothing, accessories, and tickets online since it is more convenient than visiting a store, they can have the items delivered to their house, and a greater variety of products are available. When making online purchases, they are most influenced by pricing and past experiences and prefer to pay cash on delivery. Customers generally learn about products and services through Facebook adverts shared by their friends and family, who are then followed by other potential customers who place a high level of faith in the recommendations of their peers. However, security and the inability to try on items are the most common complaints of online consumers.

LIMITATION

The study was limited to demographic factors, who were aware of online shopping and had been using it pre and post-pandemic period. It has ignored the spending capacity of the consumer and the type of product purchased in online shopping. The study is limited to urban consumers

and has failed to cover rural consumers. Since the researcher had considered limited sample, it may not be applicable for a larger population and cannot be considered that this outcome may be same for any other pandemic situation in mere future.

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