EXPECTATIONS AND PERCEPTIONS TOWARDS ONLINE SHOPPING – A STUDY OF E-SHOPPERS

Bibin Xavier

Assistant Professor,Marian Institute of Management

Marian College, Kuttikkanam PO Peermade, Idukki, PIN 685531

bibinxavier54@gmail.com

Dr. P. Parameswari

Assistant Professor, Department of MBA,

Asan Memorial College of Arts & Science, Velachery,

Thambaram Road, Chennai - 600 100.

Parameshwari.gr8@gmail.com

Dr. Arti Chudamanrao Lokhande

Assistant Professor, Department of Commerce and Research Centre,

Loknete Vyankatrao Hiray Arts, Science and Commerce College, Panchavati, Nashik,

Maharashtra.

acl.sph@gmail.com

C. Selvakkumar

Assistant Professor, Department of Commerce with Computer Applications,

Pollachi College of Arts and Science, Poosaripatti-642 205

csk.selva91@gmail.com

Samuel Lalthanliana

Assistant Professor, Department of Commerce,

Govt. Hrangbana College, Chanmari, Aizawl, Mizoram.796012

royte24@gmail.com

The internet has become into a fundamental aspect of our society. With more and more individuals having access to the internet, online shopping has become increasingly popular. There is a huge window of opportunity for merchants to experiment with non-traditional retailing methods as a result of this. These days, every big retailer uses e-retailing to try to corner the market. A dramatic shift in consumers' buying habits has occurred during the past few years. Customers have high expectations for online retailers, and rightly so: they want everything to be as easy as possible for them. Furthermore, this has become a reality thanks to the rise of online shopping. Online shopping provides a more varied, hassle-free, and interesting shopping

experience in a country like India, where a large proportion of the working-age population contributes to a well-paid consumer base and where people rely on metro cities for finding commodities with good quality and wide selection. The objectives of the study are i) the expectation and perception of the customers towards the online shopping and to measure the gap between the expected and perceived service quality. The study is empirical and carried out in Namakkal district, Tamil Nadu. 250 sample respondents are selected using convenient sampling method. The customers buying products through online shopping have been purposively selected for the study. The data were collected using questionnaire and Google forms. The researcher concluded that the perception of the customers towards the online shopping is high and they are satisfied better in all the dimensions of the service quality.

Keywords: B2B, B2C, online retailers, Service dimensions and online shopping

Introduction

These days, online retailers may be just as successful as brick-and-mortar ones. This is plainly seen as a growing number of shops provide customer-friendly online shopping experiences. The expansion of e-commerce has opened up many possibilities for businesses that can meet the needs of customers in international markets. E-commerce, often known as "online shopping" or "e-shopping," is conducted when a buyer uses a computer and an Internet browser to make a purchase from an online retailer. There are several synonyms for an online store, including e-web-store, e-shop, e-store, Internet shop, web-shop, web-shop, online store, online store front, and virtual store. Shopping online is popular because it saves time, provides comprehensive product details and user reviews, and facilitates price comparison and product selection. There are certain drawbacks to internet shopping that people should be aware of, such as the increased likelihood of becoming a victim of fraud compared to in-person purchases. Online retailers also run the risk of fraudulent returns or chargebacks caused by credit card theft. Another potential issue is incomplete pricing information. A product's starting price may be easily compared among online retailers, but it may be more difficult to get an accurate picture of the final price. Shipping costs, for example, may not be clearly displayed until the very end of the purchasing process. This is especially noticeable with international orders, as the total price you see at checkout may not include costs like customs and brokerage that are due when you get your package. Of their private data is a major concern for many buyers. Many people are wary of giving over their contact details to internet retailers for fear of receiving unsolicited marketing materials. Many businesses have responded by saying they will not share customer information for marketing reasons, but the reality is that many online retailers already analyze customers' preferences in order to make recommendations on what to buy and what sites to visit next. In addition to online retailers, brick-and-mortar establishments are also data collectors. (Mohammad 2012)[10]. Customers have the option of not providing their address or phone number when asked for it at checkout. Larger retailers frequently add customers' addresses from customers' credit card records to catalogue mailing lists (often without their knowledge). When

making a cash purchase or a bank transfer, the retailer has no way of knowing this knowledge (money transfer, in which case there is also proof of payment). With the rise of e-commerce and the advent of the global marketplace, many companies began promoting and selling their wares online.

Organizations have evolved to the point where they now offer complete, end-to-end solutions to their clientele over the internet. One of the most rapidly expanding phenomena is the practice of purchasing online. In this sense, it may be seen as a "medium" for business transactions between merchants and clients. Management of the supply chain, online advertising, a constant store schedule (open 24 hours a day), a wide selection of goods, etc. are all aspects of the online shopping experience. Technology advancements in areas like mobile commerce, supply chain management, online transaction processing, electronic data interchange, inventory management systems, electronic funds transfer, etc., are the backbone of electronic commerce. Facilities like business-to-business (B2B) electronic data interchange, direct retail sale and marketing to customers, and the use of new product launches are all examples of what e-commerce may take use of. Electronic commerce takes the form of online shopping when a customer makes a purchase of a product or service using a computer connected to the internet. Online shopping has undergone revolutionary transformation as a result of customers' increasingly mobile and digital lifestyles and the growth of the internet as a whole. Those who purchase frequently online take advantage of sales since various items often have higher prices online. Everything has its benefits and drawbacks, but this has the additional advantages of being a huge time saver and a complete distraction from the masses. Most Indians prefer traditional stores where they can see, feel, and compare prices and selections before making a purchase. (Saad Akbar 2014)[7].As a result, there is a wide range of attitudes about internet buying in Indian culture. The authors of this report set out to investigate how consumers feel about purchasing online and to extrapolate data on the demand for this service.
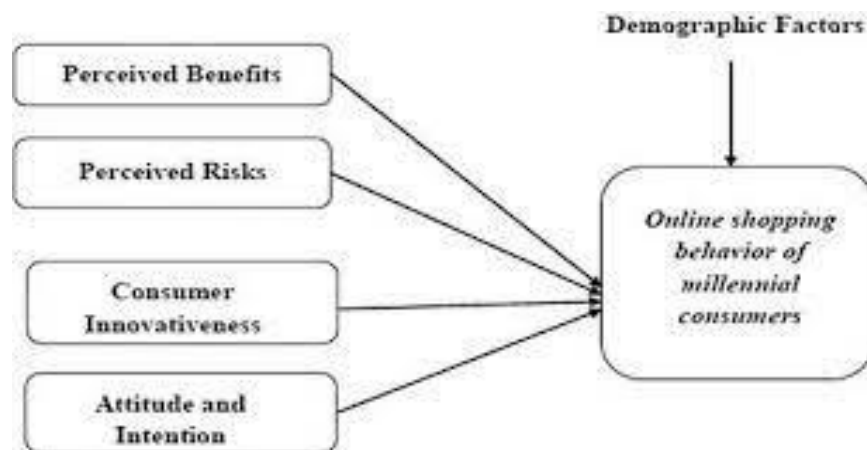
Theoretical underpinning

The proliferation of the Internet has given rise to a brand new technological era. Consumers may now utilize the Internet for a wide range of activities, including but not limited to: conducting research, communicating with others, conducting financial transactions, and shopping. It is for these reasons that the Internet is quickly replacing traditional means of communication and facilitating the operation of business. As Internet penetration rises across the world, so does the potential for e-commerce, especially in nations with established distribution channels. As the internet continues to grow in prominence, more and more people, organizations, and even governments rely on its flexible tools to get things done quickly and precisely. It now acts as a go-between for companies and their clientele. We all know that Indian consumers have traditionally preferred to go for physical shopping, but as the trend has changed, it is time for a study of how and why more and more people are choosing to shop online instead of in traditional brick-and-mortar stores. This shift is especially true among educated young adults and city dwellers.
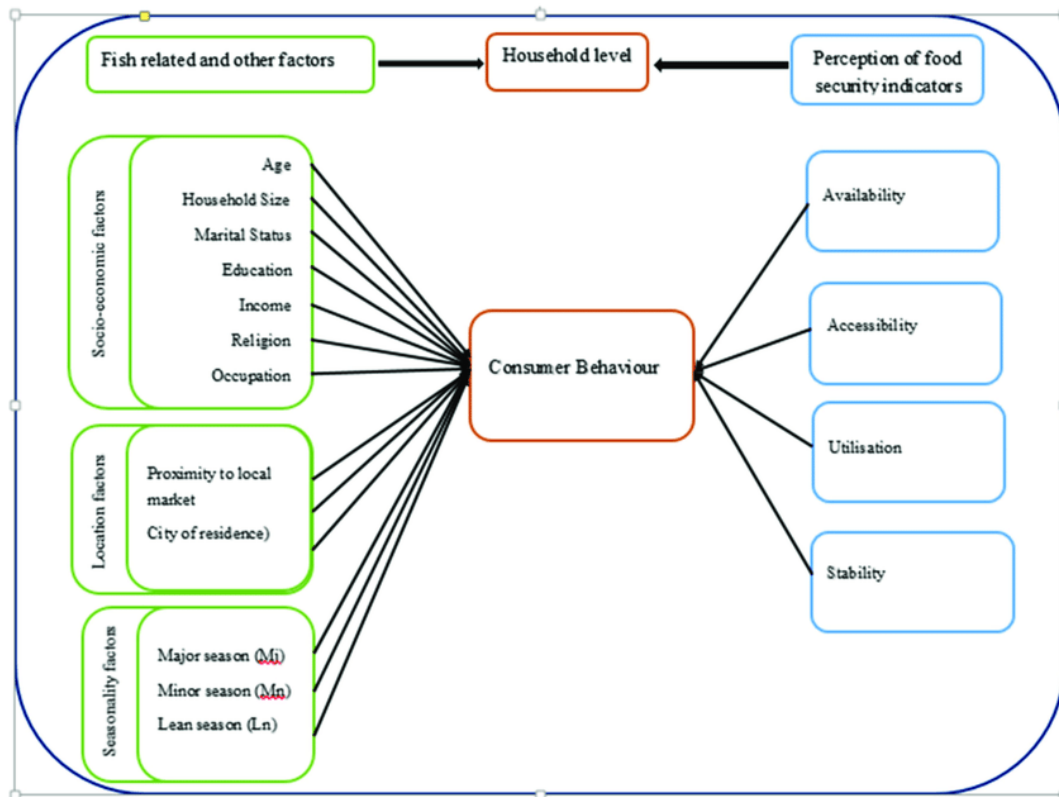
Literature Review

The field of research known as "Consumer Behaviour" examines the ways in which consumers choose, acquire, use, and discard goods, services, experiences, and ideas in an effort to meet their own and others' needs. To effectively market, businesses need to learn about specific types of consumers. Customer behaviour research takes on more significance in informing marketing strategies when the consumer is viewed as the market's ultimate decision

maker. Cova and Remy (2007)[2] proposed that consumers be viewed as producers who actively construct worlds for themselves. Various works of writing make reference to customers' evolving mental models as a result of exposure to marketing (Aaker et al., 2004)[1]. As a result of intense worldwide rivalry and the fast spread of new technologies, product differentiation is becoming increasingly difficult in today's corporate world. In this internet-era, consumer psychologists are particularly interested in consumers' abilities to recognize and recall familiar product brands. The survey found that 44% of Indian students and 72% of all young people regularly use the Internet. The widespread use of the Internet has influenced a shift in consumer behaviour. It has revolutionized the retail industry, driving the meteoric rise in the number of people who buy online. However, a great deal of nuance has been shown to exist in regards to online shopping as a result of differentiating customer traits and product offerings. Not only do factors like usability, practicality, and fun play a role in shaping consumers' views of and motivations for online shopping, but so do factors like the uniqueness of each consumer, the specifics of each shopping situation, the uniqueness of each product, the shopper's history with online shopping, and their confidence in the convenience and safety of the online marketplace. Therefore, it is crucial for e-marketing managers and consumer strategists to know who their consumers are and why they utilize or avoid the Internet as a distribution medium. There is a plethora of businesses facilitating internet shopping for customers. Many studies have shown that those who shop online are more well-informed than those who don't. Internet buying becomes savvier with increased computer knowledge. Because of their online savvy, they are better able to select and make purchases of goods and services. The internet has allowed people to find the best things at the best rates without ever having to settle for anything less than what they truly want. On the one hand, consumers may shop from the convenience of their own homes, peruse an almost infinite selection of goods, and save both time and money in the process. However, businesses are taking use of the internet's infinite storage capacity, flexible business hours, and global reach to reach a large customer base at a low cost. This has led to a more comprehensive engagement between businesses and their clientele than ever before. Online commerce has only been around for a short while.

Online shopping, often known as e-commerce or Internet retail, has exploded in popularity since the mid-1990s. It's a different approach to trade goods and services. It lessens a company's outlay on things like marketing, personnel, stock, getting new products to market faster, and improving existing ones. When a business owner sets up an online store, customers and sellers alike will have access to the store's virtual doors. The proprietor of an online store often gives clients all the knowledge they need to successfully complete a purchase. This includes descriptions of products, prices, estimated delivery times, a search bar, an E-mail address for customer support, and several additional options for getting in touch. This manner, the online store's services will be on par with those offered in a brick-and-mortar establishment with a human salesperson on hand to answer questions. Rajeswari's (2015)[5]stated that the respondents' level of online literacy is steadily increasing over time. Now that they've built up

their self-assurance, they're even willing to spend more on luxury items online. The perceived risks of customers must be reduced for businesses to enter or grow in the online market. This includes making shopping portals more user-friendly, offering secure payment options in accordance with norms, guaranteeing fast and high-quality delivery to win and keep customers' trust, and improving presentation and categorization to compensate for the lack of a tactile experience. It's important that people who shop online be given the information they need to feel confident in their purchases. In addition, an online customer's comments might help pinpoint areas of improvement in service. Blogs and online forums may help with this because they can be used for both advertising and marketing purposes, as well as to gather customer feedback. (Liu 2008)[11]

Importance of the study

Because of the meteoric rise in internet usage and the steady development of IT and e-commerce, the traditional methods of trading products have been completely upended. Customers nowadays are savvy, educated individuals who weigh their options carefully before settling on a final option. There was a significant amount of variation in online shopping as a result of differences in consumer mindsets and the types of goods and services on offer. With such a large population between the ages of 18 and 40, (Cove 2007) [2]. India is poised to undergo a significant digital revolution in the coming years. Since this is the case, a study of people's attitudes regarding Internet buying is timely.

Problem Statement

Customer service is an easy task to assign in a less competitive market. However, this isn't the case while buying online, when consumers have a plethora of options for web interfaces to choose from depending on factors like price, speed of delivery, quantity limitations, and more. Therefore, it is fair to say that all E- Commerce administrators find client maintenance to be a challenging task. As a result, brand loyalty from customers is vital to continuing to attract new ones. . Keeney (1999)[12]. Customer satisfaction with online purchases may be based on a number of factors, including the accuracy of product descriptions, the speed with which orders are processed, the reasonableness of prices, the reliability of delivery estimates, and the ease with which customers can return or exchange unwanted items.

Research Objectives

The study has the following objectives

1. The expectation and perception of the customers towards the online shopping
2. To measure the gap between the expected and perceived service quality

Research Methodology

The study is empirical and carried out in Namakkal district, Tamil Nadu. 250 sample respondents are selected using convenient sampling method. The customers buying products

through online shopping have been purposively selected for the study. The data were collected using questionnaire and Google forms.

Findings and Result

The expected and perceived service of the customers towards the online shopping and the service quality gap (difference between expected and perceived service quality) are measured as below.

Table 1
Expected service quality

Service dimensions		Very less	Less	Moderate	High	Very high	Score
Responsiveness	N	24	45	115	52	14	737
	W	24	90	345	208	70	
Quality	N	28	34	106	58	24	766
	W	28	68	318	232	120	
Price	N	16	43	119	55	17	764
	W	16	86	357	220	85	
Security	N	28	35	117	54	16	745
	W	28	70	351	216	80	
Customer service	N	46	45	115	42	2	659
	W	46	90	345	168	10	
Convenience	N	12	42	111	67	18	787
	W	12	84	333	268	90	
Payment option	N	34	38	106	58	14	730
	W	34	76	318	232	70	

N- Number of respondents; W - Weightage

The online shopping has various features and provides value added services to its customers. The respondents are asked to mention their level of expectation towards various services. The result indicates that very less expectation from ore number of respondents (46) is about the payment options and very high expectation from 67 towards the convenience. The rank based on the weightage shows that expected service quality (787) is very high, expected quality (766) is ranked second. Less price (764) is also expected more. Safety and security (745) is also considered most by the respondents.

Table 2
Perceived service quality

Service dimensions		Very less	Less	Moderate	High	Very high	Score
Responsiveness	N	26	22	90	62	50	838

	W	26	44	270	248	250	
Quality	N	16	20	90	99	25	847
	W	16	40	270	396	125	
Price	N	12	27	95	84	32	847
	W	12	54	285	336	160	
Security	N	8	26	89	93	34	869
	W	8	52	267	372	170	
Payment option	N	15	37	108	72	18	791
	W	15	74	324	288	90	
Convenience	N	10	22	92	71	55	889
	W	10	44	276	284	275	
Customer service	N	15	31	126	63	15	782
	W	15	62	378	252	75	

N- Number of respondents; W - Weightage

The perceived service quality determines the satisfaction of the customers. The respondents' opinion towards the dimensions of the service quality shows that the convenience (889) is the most perceived service than other dimensions. Most number of respondents feel their perceived service is very high for convenience (55). Secondly responsiveness (50) is with more number of respondents. The total score for the security (869) is second in ranking. The perceived service quality of quality and price (847 each) are also higher. Customer service (782) is the lowest among the various dimensions.

Table 3
Service quality gap

Features	Perceived		Expected		Gap	Correlation	t
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD			
Responsiveness	3.35	1.197	2.95	0.999	0.40	0.361*	5.103*
Quality	3.39	0.993	3.06	1.096	0.33	0.428*	4.571*
Price	3.39	1.001	3.06	0.959	0.33	0.375*	4.787*
Security	3.48	0.962	2.98	1.031	0.50	0.455*	7.524*
Payment option	3.16	0.970	2.64	0.994	0.52	0.325*	7.315*
Convenience	3.56	1.052	3.15	0.947	0.41	0.264*	5.304*
Customer service	3.13	0.918	2.92	1.072	0.21	0.414*	3.031*

* Significant at 1% level

The above table shows that the mean values of perceived and expected service quality and expected service quality. The excess of perceived service quality over the expected service quality indicates their level of satisfaction. The relationship between the perceived and expected score among the respondents shows positive relationship. The correlation values are significant at 1% level. The service gaps have been identified positive for all the dimensions. The perceived

service quality is more than expected service quality for all the dimensions. The gaps are positive between 0.21 and 0.52. The difference between the perceived and expected service quality are significant at 1% level. The t values are greater than 1.96. Hence, it is concluded that the perception of the customers towards the online shopping is high and they are satisfied better in all the dimensions of the service quality.

Conclusion

More and more people are opting to do their shopping online these days. Data from the survey shows that the vast majority of consumers had tried buying online before. Consumers feel that online buying is preferable to traditional shopping, yet many still hold the misconceptions that it is too expensive and takes too long to receive the goods and services they ordered. The majority of customers have experienced issues including product returns due to quality issues or mistakes, poorly designed websites, and inefficient support staff. Consumers report that their biggest concerns about online buying are on payment security and the inability to physically inspect products. It is concluded that the perception of the customers towards the online shopping is high and they are satisfied better in all the dimensions of the service quality.

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