

The role of gender in online shopping

¹Raja Sarkar, ²Dr. Sabyasachi Das

¹Ph.D. Scholar/ UGC Junior Research Fellow, ²Lecturer (IMBA)
Department of Business Administration
Utkal University, Bhubaneswar, India

Abstract: The development of Internet has resulted in enormous business prospects and opportunities and given new direction to traditional commercial activities. E-commerce emerged as the need of the hour. The business-to-consumer (B2C) is the most visible and prominent progeny of e-commerce. B2C is a commercial process that starts with companies and ends with end consumers. Online shopping is an emerging area in the field of E-Business and is surely going to be the future of shopping in the world. The benefits of online shopping are well known. The most common incentives for consumers to shop online are convenience, competitive pricing, greater access to information, complementarity of traditional stores and broader selections. Most of the companies are running their online portals to sell their products/services online. Though online shopping has made enormous progress outside India, its growth in the Indian market, which is a large and diverse consumer market, is still not in line with the global market. On-line shopping in India is significantly affected by various demographic factors like age, gender, marital status, family size and income. Substantial amount of research work has been carried out on all these areas. The impact of these factors on online shopping behavior is fascinating to say the least. But the most mysterious of them all is the impact of gender on the acceptance or rejection of online shopping. Do men and women behave differently during the online shopping process or do they exhibit same kinds of behavior during this process? This article will try to throw some light on the extremely valuable but often neglected role of gender in the online shopping behavior of consumers.

Key Words: E-retailing, e-tailing, Information Technology, online shopping, Gender

Introduction:

The world is quickly turning into a universal community because of the emergence of Internet and other Internet enabled services. India is not completely reflective of this great phenomenon. While developed and fast developing countries have understood the influence of Internet, India is still taking baby steps towards technological developments. The retail industry growth has been revolutionized by Internet and the rules of the game in retailing are fast altering. The impact of western culture on each and every aspect of our Indian Society is palpable. The lives of common people are making rapid progress not only in metros but also in the normal cities. The collapse of joint family system and growth in the number of families where both spouses are working is on the rise. The result- common men have less time to go to the market for purchasing every now and then.

Other reasons like growing traffic jams, late working hours, easy availability of online banking facility and above all the approach of internet at the door step of whosoever desires it. Online retailers have improved their service and consumers have found it convenient. There is revolution in payment mode as well. From payment before delivery it has moved to cash on delivery (COD). Even the delivery pattern has changed. From fixed delivery timings it has moved to convenient delivery timings at the choice of the customer.

Indian market is dominated by mostly unorganized players, but there is potential in the area of retail players as well. Entry of bigger players even in the rural areas is paved the way of growth in its sector. There has been rise in the increase of Indian middle class people due to rapid economic growth. Though the Internet using population in India is low in terms of percentage of total population but in absolute numbers it is huge. This gives enormous opportunities for various online shopping companies to tap this segment. The largest Internet user in India is the age group 18-45. Despite of this fact online retailing forms a small portion of the entire Indian retail markets. Market players have to be more positive, quick thinker and pioneering in their approach to make serious inroads into the populace. In the current market, bulk of online sales is in a range of items. This market in India needs to leap to the next level.

Objectives of the Study:

The objectives of present study are:

- (i) Impact of gender in online shopping;
- (ii) Variation of behaviour during online shopping process between men and women.

Literature Review:

Much of the literature on gender differences has focused on the fact that females not only place more emphasis on maintaining relationships, but that they also communicate with one another more often (Tannen, 1990; Brannon, 1999).

Jackson et al.(2001) noted that though young women and men use the internet equally often, they use it differently, and this may influence the motivations of buying online.

The left hemisphere of the brain specializes in verbal abilities and the right hemisphere in spatial perception (**Hansen, 1981**).

Recent clinical and experimental research indicated that the two hemispheres were more integrated in females and more specialized in males (**Everhart et al., 2001; Gorman et al., 1992; Saucier and Eliaou, 2001**). More functionally, lateralized male brain process information on a piecemeal basis, whereas more integrated female brain process information holistically. Hence, men are likely to value highly focused information along few key attributes while women are likely to value information rich sources.

The selectivity hypothesis suggested that gender differences emerged because men look for overall message themes or schemas, where women engage in detailed elaboration of message content (**Meyers-Levy, 1989; Meyers-Levy and Maheswaran, 1991; Meyers-Levy and Sternthal, 1991**).

Women hold more positive attitudes towards the traditional store and catalogue shopping than their male counterparts (**Alreck and Settle, 2002**).

Men and women were found to have different shopping orientations- men were more convenience-oriented and less motivated by social interaction, while women were just the opposite (**Swaminathan et al., 1999**).

Women did not find online shopping “as practical and convenient as their male counterparts” (**Rodgers and Harris**).

Women were reported to have a higher level of web apprehensiveness (**Susskind, 2004**). Being more skeptical about e-business than their male counterparts, women were emotionally less satisfied with online shopping and made fewer online purchases than men (**Rodgers and Harris, 2003**).

Women demonstrate a stronger need for tactile input in product evaluation than men (**Citrin et al., 2003**).

Alreck and Settle (2002) indicated that women have more positive attitudes toward shopping, whereas, men prefer shopping via internet.

Women tend to be more sensitive to related information online than men when making judgments (**Meyers-Levy and Sternthal, 1991**), causing subsequent purchase attitudes and intentions presented by men and women to differ. In other words, females make greater use of cues than males.

Cleveland et al. (2003) found that when making consumption decision, women seek more information than men.

Swaminathan et al. (1999) reported that male internet buyers were less motivated by social interaction than women internet buyers.

Compared with men, women tend to enjoy shopping (**Alreck and Settle, 2002**), and they can have more social interactions in the process of consumption.

Women stress emotional and psychological involvement in the buying process, whereas, men emphasize efficiency and convenience in obtaining buying outcomes (**Dittmar et al., 2004**).

Women tend to enjoy shopping (**Alreck and Settle, 2002**); shopping is undoubtedly as a fantastic journey for them.

Dittmar and Drury (2000) pointed out that shopping seems to play a psychologically and emotionally encompassing role for women than for men, whereas, men focus on the outcome to get the actual goods with the least effort.

Dittmar et al. (2004) addressed that women, have a stronger desire for emotional and social gratification in the internet buying environment than men.

Alexander (1947) proposed that women's interests are more fashionable than those of men.

Chyan and Chia (2006) discover that females are dominated over perfectionism and novel-fashion consciousness than males, suggesting that females are more fashion oriented.

Previous studies indicated that, female adolescents felt more anxiety and negative attitudes when using the internet (**Kadijevich, 2000; Tsai et al., 2001**).

Arnold and Reynolds (2003) indicated that younger females stress hedonic values more than younger males and have stronger hedonic shopping motivations.

Prior research suggests that women are less interested in the Internet than are men (Roper, 1998) and that, within the online population, women spend less time online than men do (Allen, 2001; Pastore, 2000c; Kehoe et al., 1998; Bartel-Sheehan, 1999) and view fewer pages (Allen, 2001). In addition, women have been found to be less likely than men to buy online (Allen, 2001; Pastore, 2000b; Bartel-Sheehan, 1999; Briones, 1998) and have also been found to spend less money, on average, online (Allen, 2001).

Women have been found to perceive greater risks in a wide variety of domains including financial, medical, and environmental (Brody, 1984; Gutteling and Wiegman, 1993; Gwartney-Gibbs and Lach, 1991; Steger and Witt, 1989; Stern et al., 1993).

Prior research has also demonstrated that when the probability of a negative outcome is held constant (e.g., objective probabilities are given), women are often found to be more risk averse than men (Byrnes et al., 1999; Hersch, 1997; Bajtelsmit et al., 1997).

Previous work suggests that females are more concerned than males with losing their privacy both in Internet contexts (Bartel-Sheehan, 1999; Kehoe et al., 1997) and non-Internet contexts (Westin, 1997).

Beyond self-descriptions, women have been found more likely to both disclose more personal information to others and change their own behavior as a reaction to cues from those they are interacting with (Brannon, 1999). It has also been found that women are more likely than men to get together or call one another just to chat or share personal experiences (Tannen, 1990).

Even in the context of online behavior, it has been observed that women view the chance to communicate with others to be among the greatest benefits of the Internet (Brunner and Bennett, 1997).

Women are more likely to respond to the suggestions and actions of others in their social network (Brannon, 1999).

Prior work has suggested that women communicate with their friends more often than men do and are also more likely to discuss personal experiences (Brannon, 1999; Tannen, 1990).

Discussion & Conclusion:

The literature review explored the impact of gender differences on online shopping approach considering the utilitarian and hedonic values concerning the internet. With regard to utilitarian values, the findings of different literature are consistent that males are more rational in their buying orientations, making it amply clear that, valuing rational benefits of internet buying acts as a facilitator for male online shoppers. As compared to female shoppers, male shoppers tend to be more motivated by rational factors (for example, convenience, lack of sociality and cost saving).

As far as the hedonic values of the internet are concern, the findings of literatures indicated that females shoppers stress hedonic values more than their male counterpart and have stronger hedonic shopping motivations.

This literature review explored shopping values and reached the conclusion that female shoppers are more motivated by emotional factors (for example, adventure, sociality and fashion), as compared to male shoppers.

Nowadays, with the rapid development of technology, both genders seem to have equivalent resources and equal access to the internet. However, the literatures supported the view that the gender differences in internet shopping really exist in this generation. For male shoppers, the three most vital parameters to go online were convenience, cost saving and lack of sociality, and regarding hedonic values adventure was the main value for male shoppers to go online, followed by fashion and value. On the contrary for female shoppers, the three most vital parameters to go online were fashion, adventure and sociality, and the primary utilitarian values for females to go for web-based purchasing were availability of information, convenience and choice.

These findings would indicate that, there are some variations between the shopping orientations of males and females. The results suggest that factors such as convenience, cost saving and lack of sociality are the main reasons impacting male shoppers for internet shopping, and the primary factors affecting female shoppers for web-based shopping are fashion, adventure and sociality.

These results suggest that, online sellers may work on producing some topics related to hedonic factors when targeting female shoppers, and they can stress the functional benefits when targeting male shoppers. These findings enable internet sellers to conduct effective demographic segmentation regarding genders.

References:

- [1] Gardner GT, Gould LC. Public perceptions of the risks and benefits of technology. *Risk Anal* 1989;9:225 – 42.
- [2] Gilligan C. In a different voice: psychological theory and women's development. Cambridge (MA): Harvard Univ. Press, 1982.
- [3] Gutteling JM, Wiegman O. Gender-specific reactions to environmental hazards in the Netherlands. *Sex Roles* 1993;28:433–47. Gwartney-Gibbs PA, Lach DH. Sex differences in attitudes toward nuclear war. *J Peace Res* 1991;28:161–76.
- [4] Hawes JM, Lumpkin JR. Perceived risk and the selection of a retail patronage mode. *J Acad Mark Sci* 1986;14(4):37 –42.
- [5] Hersch J. Smoking, seat belts, and other risky consumer decisions: differences by gender and race. *Manag Decis Econ* 1997;11:241– 56.

- [6] Jasper CR, Ouellette SJ. Consumers' perception of risk and the purchase of apparel from catalogs. *J Direct Mark* 1994;8(2):23–36.
- [7] Kaplan LB, Syzbillo GJ, Jacoby J. Components of perceived risk in product purchase. *J Appl Psychol* 1974;59:287–91.
- [8] Levy S. How the Internet is changing America. *Levy: E-Life* 1999;38–42 (September).
- [9] Lopes LL. Algebra and process in modeling risky choice. In: Busemeyer JR, Hastie R, Medin DL, editors. *Decision making from a cognitive perspective. The psychology of learning and motivation*, vol. 32. New York: Academic Press, 1995. p. 177–220.
- [10] Lyons NP. Two perspectives: on self, relationships, and morality. *Harv Educ Rev* 1983;53:125–45.
- [11] Mackie M. The domestication of self: gender comparisons of self-imagery and self-esteem. *Soc Psychol Q* 1983;46:343–50.
- [12] Miyazaki AD, Fernandez A. Consumer perceptions of privacy and security risks for online shopping. Working paper. University of Miami, 2000.
- [13] Ogilvie DM, Clark MD. The best and worst of it: age and sex differences in self-discrepancy research. In: Lipka RP, Brinthaup TM, editors. *Self-perspectives across the life span*. Albany (NY): State University of New York Press, 1992. p. 186–222.
- [14] Everhart DE, Shucard JL, Quatrin T, Shucard DW. Sex-related differences in event-related potentials, face recognition, and facial affect processing in prepubertal children. *Neuropsychology* 2001;15:329–41.
- [15] Fornell C, Larcker DF. Evaluating structural equation models with unobservable variables and measurement error. *J Mark Res* 1981;18:39–50 February.
- [16] Ghani JA, Deshpande SP. Task characteristics and the experience of optimal flow in human–computer interaction. *J Psychol* 1994;128(4):381–91.
- [17] Gorman C, Nash MJ, Ehrenreich B. Sizing up the sexes. *Time* 1992;139:42–9.
- [18] Griffith DA. An examination of the influences of store layout in online retailing. *J Bus Res* 2005;58(10):1391–6.
- [19] Hansen F. Hemispherical lateralization: implications for understanding consumer behavior. *J Consum Res* 1981;1:23–36.
- [20] Hoffman DL, Novak TP. New metrics for new media: towards the development of web measurement standard. Project 2000. Vanderbilt University; 1996.
- [21] Holbrook MB, Hirschman EC. The experiential aspects of consumption: consumer fantasies, feelings, and fun. *J Consum Res* 1982;9:132–40.
- [22] Hu L, Bentler PM. Cutoff criteria for fit indexes in covariance structure analysis: conventional criteria versus new alternatives. *Struct Equ Modeling* 1999;6(1):1–55.
- [23] Huizingh E. The content and design of websites: an empirical study. *Inf Manag* 2000;37:123–34.
- [24] Hunt RR, Einstein GO. Relational and item-specific information in memory. *J Verbal Learn Verbal Behav* 1981;20:497–514.
- [25] Ipsos PharmTrends. An OTC drug poised to break new ground again; 2002. May.
- [26] Johnson KL, Mistic MM. Benchmarking: a tool for web site evaluation and improvement. *Internet Res* 1999;9(5):383–92.