

The Role of Emotional Factors in Shaping Online Shopping Behavior: A Comprehensive Analysis of Consumer Engagement and Decision-Making

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ABSTRACT

Purchasing behavior of people has made a radical transformation after the Covid -19 outbreak. This shift is not only driven by the advancement in technology but also by multifaceted relationship between consumer emotion and decision-making process. Numerous research conducted in this area to understand the impact of emotional factors in online purchase decision making. This paper mainly focuses on the influence of emotional and psychological factors in shaping the connection between customer interaction and digital retail platforms. By conducting a comprehensive analysis, the impact of emotional factors like trust, security, social influence, hedonic motivational factors etc. in making online shopping decisions are made.

Keywords: Purchasing behavior, Covid-19, online shopping, decision-making process, emotional factors, psychological factors

1. INTRODUCTION

In marketing, emotions are global (Bagozzi et al.,1999). Emotional responses are activated because of product consumption and experience by customers. These emotions have a vital effect in making purchase decisions [2]. Based on several studies, it has been analyzed that emotional factor play an important role in customer satisfaction, customer engagement, and customer loyalty in e-commerce.

Consumer emotions like trust, security, perceived price, quality of delivery and customer service, environmental considerations, hedonic motivation, Fear of Missing out (FOMO), emotional intelligence, social influence etc. highlight crucial role in this online shopping decision making process. Positive emotions like trust, security, joy and excitement can increase customer loyalty and repeat purchase. On the other hand, certain negative emotions like trust and security concerns may inversely affect the customers from online purchasing.

The paper mainly focuses on a comprehensive analysis of emotional factors influencing online shopping behavior of consumers based on various psychological, consumer behavioral theories.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The idea of emotional design in digital interfaces was considered by Don Norman (1988). To understand the growth of e-commerce and to help global marketing, a study was conducted which considered various dimensions of customer satisfaction [36]. This literature review mainly focuses on the studies that show the effect of emotional factors in online shopping. In the case of online shopping, some of the most studied emotional factors include Trust, Security, Perceived price, Quality of delivery and Customer Service, Environmental considerations, Hedonic motivation, Fear of Missing out, Emotional Intelligence, Social Influence.

I. Trust

One of the key emotional factors that guides the online shopping decision of customers is trust (Verhagen et al., 2006; 2004; McKnight et al; 2002; Lim et al, 2001; Jarvenpaa et al., 2000). The nature of trust is very broad and complex. Three classes of trust are identified by research in e-commerce. They are trusting belief, trusting attitude and trusting intention [5]. Here trusting beliefs are the attributes like honesty, integrity, goodwill, of e-retailers [6,7]. As an attitude, trust can be either positive or negative sentiments towards online sellers [8]. Online trust intention towards websites is abstracted by Eastlick and Lotz (2011) [64] as readiness of customers to believe in their retailer that they will act in an honest, reliable manner and preserving their personnel information and attending their issue in proper manner.

Trust in online shopping can be influenced by providing user friendly website design [49], reputation of the retailer and customer reviews, privacy policies and secure payment methods [50], straight forward customer service and return policy [51]. Trust and perceived risk are inversely related, that is as trust increases, the perceived risk decreases [52]. However the trust- purchase intention in online shopping can be regulated by demographic and psychological factors including age, gender, education level, annual income [76,77].

Consumer trust can vary based on demographic and psychographic factors. For instance, research by Liu et al. (2019) highlights that younger consumers and tech-savvy individuals are more likely to trust online retailers, as they are more familiar with e-commerce environments. Conversely, older consumers may have greater concerns about privacy and security, requiring stronger trust-building mechanisms.

Online shopping after Covid 19 is a very significant research topic which made a drastic shift from offline to online shopping. The psychological factors [41] that cause this shifting can be classified as external factors which externally influence the change, and internal factors which are internally involved. Trust is considered as one of the internal factors [41]

3. SECURITY

Privacy and security are two antecedents that build the trust of online consumers (Bart et al. 2005; Urban et al. 2009). If these emotional factors are addressed properly in online shopping, online purchasing intention of customers can increase [10]. These factors mainly focus on the protection and perceived safety of financial, personnel and transactional information while doing online purchasing. One of the most highlighted concerns regarding security is that it may lead to shopping cart abandonment in online shopping [54].

Based on the studies, various measures to enhance security in online shopping are providing clear communication of website security measures to consumers [55], providing third party trust seals [56], prompt customer service to security related issues [57]. The greater the safety and protection measures the e-commerce platform provides, the higher the confidence of the customer will be and ultimately this will have a huge impact on online purchasing decisions of consumers. Based on a study done in South Africa after the COVID 19 pandemic to analyze the importance of perceived information quality, privacy concerns, perceived security, product variety, and product delivery in customer satisfaction it has been proved that the customers are more influenced by these factors which in turn build customer loyalty [37,38,39]

II. Perceived price, Quality of Customer Service and delivery time

Perceived price (Gupta & Kim, 2007; C. Kim et al., 2012), Quality of Customer Service (Abdul-Muhmin, 2010; Brown & Jayakody, 2008) and delivery time (Abdul-Muhmin, 2010) are three important inter related factors [85,86,87] influencing online shopping decision. The importance of customer service quality is high in online shopping due to the absence of physical interaction which in turn increases the loyalty as well as repeating purchase intention [58]. The perception of price will be increased if the website provides options to compare the prices across various stores [59]. Customers rely that the quality of a product depends on the product price [60]. Customers feel it is risky to shop low-cost product online [40].

Product delivery is also a crucial determinant in online shopping. It is a driving force to customer satisfaction [61]. Findings revealed that last mile delivery facilitates the relation between online shopping perception and customer satisfaction [61]. Delay in delivery creates negative disconfirmation which may negatively affect the repurchasing intention of customers [62].

4. ENVIRONMENTAL CONSIDERATIONS

Sustainability became the key idea for balancing economic growth with protecting the environment [63]. The evolution of e-commerce has shifted the purchasing pattern of customers from offline to online [15]. However, this shift has brought one important question that the rise of e-commerce affecting the environment positively or negatively? Based on the research, e-commerce makes both positive and negative impact to the environment [16]. With the help of systematic review validated with the help of psych behavioral theories like Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) and Reasoned Action (TRA), social awareness, environmental concerns health are the motivating factors for green purchasing intentions [48].

The positive environmental effects of e-commerce are:

1. Lower Carbon Emissions [17]
2. Energy Efficiency [18]
3. Reduction in Transportation Emissions [19]
4. Paperless Transactions [20]
5. Efficient Resource Utilization

The following are the negative sides of e-commerce with respect to environmental consideration:

1. Last-Mile Delivery Emission [21]
2. Air Freight and Expedited Delivery
3. High Packaging Waste
4. Returns and Redelivery

It has been identified that environment consideration has a positive influence in making online purchasing decision (Global Web Index, [Citation2018](#)).

5. HEDONIC MOTIVATION

Many studies done on both online and offline shopping had identified two categories of shopping motivations [Babin et al., 1994; Hirschman & Holbrook, 1982; Kumar & Yadav, 2021; Singh, 2015; To et al., 2007]

- i. Utilitarian
- ii. Hedonic

Here utilitarian directly and hedonic indirectly affects the online shopping intentions of customers [27]

Jin and Kim [26] identified that the function and purpose of shopping is portrayed in utilitarian motivation. This category of motivators focuses more on succeeding consumption needs [27]. Here the customers are doing shopping for pleasure not fulfilling their task [28]. Hedonic motivation includes factors like adventure, sociability, status, satisfaction, gratification [29], Hedonic and utilitarian motivational studies also include how e-WOM and social values influence online shopping. E-WOM strengthens the association between hedonic/utilitarian motivation and online shopping intention [43]

6. FEAR OF MISSING OUT (FOMO)

FOMO is a widely found fact nowadays. It is a type of emotional state. It usually happens when one does not participate in the activities of their friends [32] that means if we feel that we are missing out that our friends are doing [33]. Some factors have the efficiency to boost the FOMO. For example, feelings like anticipated elation (excitement) or anticipated envy (jealous) about other's experiences. Some other factors like realistic thoughts that soothe or reassure you, will have the power to decrease FOMO [31].

Marketers utilize FOMO as their advantage. FOMO has huge impact on shaping online shopping purchasing intention. The association between shopping anxiety and fear of missing out (FIMO) in steering purchase intention [44]

7. EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE (EI)

Studies are being carried out to understand the effect of EI in molding consumer's online shopping behavior such as their shopping satisfaction level, e-loyalty towards the website as well as continuous intention to purchase online [34]. Based on cognition-affection-conation framework, it has been identified that EI has a crucial role in customer

satisfaction- loyalty and repetition of platform usage[42] and these findings highlight the significance of EI in shaping consumer experiences and loyalty in e-commerce. Findings propose that people with high EI are experts in controlling and understanding their emotions while doing online shopping and make thoughtful and careful decisions regarding online purchases [63].

8. SOCIAL INFLUENCE

Covid -19 pandemic had made a dramatic change in the user's perspective in various areas like work, education, personal relationship, social interaction [47]. Social influence from friends and family were also identified in many studies during Covid Pandemic [45]. Study based on Social proof, Peer recommendations made by friends and family, Social media engagement proved that close circles are the most important social influence, which was followed by social media viewership and e-WOM[46].

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