

A Study on Online vs. Offline Shopping Activities:

of Female Internet Users in
Selected Cities of Gujarat.

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INTRODUCTION

E-Marketing is defined as using Internet and other Interactive Technologies to create and mediate dialogue between the firm and identified customers. The consumer goods company or professional service organization develop an Internet based system to actively communicate and interact with its target customers and clients. E-Marketing is characterized as being dependent on technology to enable interactivity and thus differs from other marketing practices.

A key factor for Internet marketing is the involvement of the Internet users. The level of consumer involvement in a product category or service is a major determinant of online shopping and buying behavior. Different involvement levels of customers indicate clusters differences in responses related to it. Thus, the degree of customer involvement in an electronic marketing effort determines Consumer behavior. The response dimension is a function of the type of involvement generated and the situations confronted. There are three response factors viz., Search, Information Processing, and Purchase Process. However, a variety of variables are associated to precede and influence the user involvement. (Shwu Ingwu, 2006)

Internet has affected marketing in multiple ways. Some businesses have already found successful ways of advertising; marketing, and distributing its products and services. Due to the increased use of personal

computers and the reduction in prices, the online or e-services have become attractive to many more people since it could be applied to majorities of the products and services.

Internet has changed the way in which consumers search for information about products and services. Online shopping has offered new and varied opportunities to consumers, but it has also posed new threats. Therefore, to attract and retain customers; e-marketers need to have a clear knowledge on online shoppers' expectations & experiences. They need to pay heightened more attention to the needs of two major types of users. Online shoppers, who use Internet as a means of shopping or buying of product or services; and Information searchers, who use Internet solely as a source to collect information for products or services. Customers are frequently using different channels at different stages of shopping. They collect product information, such as price and style information using Internet, and may buy product from traditional retail stores. Those who buy products and services from the traditional retail stores can be called as offline shoppers.

The Internet is also becoming an increasingly popular medium for making possible information search, choice, and purchase. The degree to which shoppers are now turning to the Internet as a shopping channel underscores the need to better understand and predict consumers' online shopping behaviours.



SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The study focused exclusively on female Internet users having active e-mail ID, for the use of Internet to avail online services & for purchase of products belonging to selected Cities viz. Ahmedabad, Surat, Baroda, Rajkot in the State of Gujarat. It has attempted to those provide information and data on Internet related activities as well as results concerning online shopping activities of selected female online shoppers as well as non-online shoppers drawn from the selected cities of the State of Gujarat.



OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The objectives of the research study were as follows:

- ♦ To collect information from selected female online and offline shoppers' on selected background variables viz., age; income; education; occupation, and marital status to relate it with selected criteria of female online shoppers and offline shoppers Internet related activities.
- ♦ To collect primary data from selected female online and offline shoppers' on selected criteria viz. benefits of online and offline shopping as well as their motivations behind online and offline shopping, and perceived risk of online and offline shopping;
- ♦ To identify, analyze, interpret and report on selected criteria concerning online and offline shopping of tangible products and also availing of e-services using Internet by selected female Internet users in the state of Gujarat.



HYPOTHESES OF THE STUDY:

An attempt has been made by the researcher to formulate and test various statistical hypotheses derived from review of literature. An illustrative list of selected hypothesis has been given as follows.

- ♦ The Average Opinion of Selected Female Online Shoppers' on Selected Criteria Used to measure responses on Convenience Criterion as a Benefit of Online Shopping vis-a vis Selected Female Online Shoppers' demographic variables viz. Age; Income; Occupation and Education is equal.
- ♦ The Average Opinion of Selected Female Online Shoppers' on Selected Criteria Used to measure responses on Security Criterion as a Benefit of Online Shopping vis-a vis Selected Female Online Shoppers' demographic variables viz. Age; Income; Occupation and Education is equal.
- ♦ The Average Opinion of Selected Female Online Shoppers' on Selected Criteria Used to measure responses on User Experience Criterion as a Benefit of Online Shopping vis-a vis Selected Female Online Shoppers' demographic variables viz. Age; Income; Occupation and Education is equal.
- ♦ The Average Opinion of Selected Female Online Shoppers' on Selected Criteria Used to measure responses on Efficiency Criterion as a Benefit of Online Shopping vis-a vis Selected Female Online Shoppers' demographic variables viz. Age; Income; Occupation and Education is equal.
- ♦ The Average Opinion of Selected Female Online

Shoppers' on Selected Criteria Used to measure responses on Price Conscious Criterion as a Benefit of Online Shopping vis-a vis Selected Female Online Shoppers' demographic variables viz. Age; Income; Occupation and Education is equal.

- ♦ The Average Opinion of Selected Female Online Shoppers' on Selected Criteria Used to measure responses on Social Experience Criterion as a Benefit of Online Shopping vis-a vis Selected Female Online Shoppers' demographic variables viz. Age; Income; Occupation and Education is equal.
- ♦ The Average Opinion of Selected Female Online Shoppers' on Selected Criteria Used to measure responses on Emotions Criterion as a Benefit of Online Shopping vis-a vis Selected Female Online Shoppers' demographic variables viz. Age; Income; Occupation and Education is equal.
- ♦ The Average Opinion of Selected Female Online Shoppers' on Selected Criteria Used to measure responses on Identity Criterion as a Benefit of Online Shopping vis-a vis Selected Female Online Shoppers' demographic variables viz. Age; Income; Occupation and Education is equal.
- ♦ Average Opinion of Selected Female Internet Users as Online and Offline Shoppers on benefits of Online Shopping viz., Security; Inconvenience; Impersonality; Perceived Stress; Convenience; Personality; User Experience are equal.



RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Sources of Information and Data

The information for the study has been collected from both primary and secondary sources. Secondary data were mainly collected from various published sources viz., Business Newspapers, Business and General Magazines and Research Journals related to the area of the study.

Collection of Primary Data

The Primary data was collected from the total number of 680 female Internet users online and offline shoppers who were also having active e-mail ID in the year 2008. They had either purchased online a physical product and or had also availed an online service Internet at least once. The primary data was collected using field survey research supported with personal interviews of female Internet users-cum-online shoppers and offline shoppers in order to examine their overall opinion & experience towards online and offline shopping. The survey population was defined as female Internet users. Structured Non-Disguised Questionnaire was administered for the collection of primary data.

Out of the total numbers of 700 responses finally, total number of 650 responses were considered by the researcher for the purpose of Data Analysis and Interpretation. The Structured Non-Disguised Questionnaire consisted of 21 Questions designed to collect information and primary data from the female Internet users. It included of total number of 21 questions, excluding questions related to profiling of respondents concerning personal aspects of female Internet users selected background variables vis-à-vis their uses of Internet, average time spent on Internet each time, uses of Internet for, problems being faced by female Internet users

while using Internet; perceived importance of online shopping on selected criteria, preferred mode of payment in case of online shopping of products and a services, overall opinion of selected female online shoppers on selected items on online and offline shopping as well as their overall experiences concerning online and offline shopping.

Population for the Study (Area of Study)

The population of study was termed to the extent of the selected four major cities of the Gujarat State as mentioned earlier was decided considering aspects like adequacy; feasibility, and availability of data from amongst identified as online and non-online shoppers

Sample Size of the Study

The researcher estimated sample size on the basis of "India online 2008-Survey" which was conducted by Juxt-Consultant Online Research & Advisory Organization. These surveys were conducted in the year 2007 and 2008.

Table 1: Percentages of Samples Drawn by the Juxt Consultant Online Research

Sr.No.	Selected Cities of Gujarat State	Samples were taken by the Juxt Consultant Online Research	
		2007(In Per cent)	2008(In Per cent)
1	Ahmedabad	1.30	1.00
2	Baroda	0.70	0.50
3	Surat	0.30	0.50

Source: www.juxtconsultant.com

Table 2: Region-wise Break-Ups the Samples

From the above mentioned tables, It was found that 19.2 per cent of female respondents were selected from the North region; 17.8 percent from East- region; 37.5 per cent from

No.	Regions of India	Female Respondents (In Percentages)	Number of Respondents
1	North India	19.2	603
2	East India	17.8	560
3	South India	37.5	1177
4	West India	25.2	801

South region, and 25.6 per cent from west region of India. It indicates that 804 females were selected from the Western region of India. 700 females were drawn as sample from the State of Gujarat for this research study. In all number of 700 dully filled up questionnaires from the Female Internet Users were collected and edited, tabulated but out of the total number of received questionnaires, the researcher had finally considered 650 questionnaires for the purpose of Data analysis and Interpretation.

Total Number of Female Online Shoppers and Offline Shoppers who were contacted for the collections of primary data were 700 drawn as follows.

- ♦ 200 female Internet users from Ahmedabad;
- ♦ 175 female Internet users from Baroda;
- ♦ 175 female Internet users from Surat, and
- ♦ 150 female Internet users from Rajkot



KEY FINDINGS OF THE STUDY:

The purpose of this research study was to examine Internet usage activities and attitudes toward online and offline shopping by female Internet users and to also develop their profiles that would assist marketers in introducing and promoting consumer adoption for online shopping in selected cities of Gujarat in near future.

♦ 65 per cent of female Internet users' availed services using the Internet. Above 20 per cent of them purchased products by using the Internet. In Rajkot city people purchased only 5 per cent of products via internet.

♦ The primary use of Internet for Information Search; Sending and Receiving e-mail, and for Entertainment Activities; for Business purpose; Educational Activities; Financial Services; Travel Services; Collecting Information on different aspects such as Astrology; Weather; Politics, and Entertainment activities.

♦ The result of the study indicates that the use of Internet for purchasing the services was higher than the purchase of products over the Internet.

♦ More than 50 per cent of female respondents' availed services using Internet except 35 per cent in Rajkot city.

♦ Female respondents prefer more search for the products over the Internet. Experience products whose physical inspection and real life shopping experience are described as experienced products. Selected respondents indicated less preference for experience products in selected cities of Gujarat.

♦ Online shopping preference was comparatively higher than offline shopping for the products viz., Books and Personal Computers etc.. It was found that the search respondents prefer experience shopping for the products like

Clothing; Shoes; Electronic Appliances and Jewellery.

♦ Most popular services that female respondents buy via Internet were Railways Tickets; Transfer of funds between accounts; to check account balance; Banking Services over the Internet.

♦ Female respondents were more interested in collecting detailed information about products and services during pre purchase stage of products and services and to visit frequently asked Question sections over the Internet. They always use Internet to get benefits on products and services during the purchasing stage; to show interest in company's sale promotion offer.

♦ These findings provided a general indication that the purchasing from the Internet, services shoppers are still highly dependent on human interactions. Female respondents' preferred offline channel instead of online channel. The heightened perceived risk and product variability perceptions

that found to be associated with offline services still persist on the Internet.

♦ The data analysis indicated that female offline shoppers indicated more agreement on following dimensions viz., Social experiential; Efficiency; Emotions and Convenience. Female respondents' indicated functional benefits of online shopping such as Economy; Convenience, and Efficiency acts as a facilitator for women's online shopping, whereas Social Experiential concerns are a very important barrier.

♦ The results of the study indicated that female online shoppers respondents showed agreement on benefits associated with online shopping on following dimensions viz., Convenience; Security; and indicated less agreement on following dimensions, Price Consciousness; Social Experiential; Emotions and Perceived Risk which were the aspects disadvantages associated with online shopping.

♦ On the basis of the findings of the study shoppers can be categorized on the basis on their Internet usage activities' and their preference toward online shopping and offline shopping. In case of Ahmedabad city two groups were identified Adventure seekers and Technocrat users; In case of Baroda city groups two different categories were identified viz. Fun seekers and Shopping Adopters; in case of Surat city groups viz., Suspicious Learners and Shopping Avoiders and in case of Rajkot Fearful Shoppers and Technology Muddlers.



OVERALL IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY:

Online and Offline environments cause different shopping perceptions even when the same products are available for purchase. This study has presented empirical findings of Online shopping versus offline shopping by female respondents in of selected cities of Gujarat State comparing the online and offline shoppers.

♦ A variety of marketing opportunities exist among the

different segments. Profiling market segments is of little use unless they vary in their attractiveness to marketing practitioners.

♦ Shopping Adopters and Adventuresome Explorers are buying online now and could well be the opinion leaders needed to convert and train others, particularly Suspicious Learners and Fearful shoppers, to be more comfortable with online shopping.

♦ Technocrat Users were less likely than these to be online shopping advocates, as their online activity was driven by professional needs rather than personal ones.

♦ Technology Muddlers had computer training hurdles so substantial as to make them unattainable online retailers in the near term, and Fun Seekers have values consistent with online searching activities rather than online shopping.

♦ Marketer must demonstrate to offline shoppers that interactive shopping is convenient, safe and simple to use. In the selected cities of Gujarat, expensive goods like Home Electronic Appliances; Jewellery; Furniture; Clothing, and Shoes are not ready for Internet selling. The monetary risks involved in buying Consumer durable products. These products also require more than visual inspection. This reflects some of the Electronic retailers should focus on computer related products which allow trial sampling or those that are high on information content. Examples of these include Computer Software, CDs, Online newspapers, Online Videos; Music; Online financial, and Stock information.

♦ The search costs for product information through the Internet are low, buyers can easily compare similar such products across different Internet Websites companies with a click of the mouse. The results revealed that the respondents' high level of search activities does not necessarily lead to similar purchase levels. Thus, online retailers should develop an effective website that has attributes that not only attract shoppers to visit it but also encourages them to follow through with purchases from the Internet websites.

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