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A Study on Customer Perception towards E-Commerce with Reference to E-Tailing in Trichy District

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Abstract

This study investigates customer perceptions towards e-commerce, with a focus on e-tailing platforms such as Amazon, Flipkart, Meesho, and Myntra in Trichy City. The primary objectives of the research are to examine customers' preferences in product categories, identify the most popular e-retailer among consumers, analyse the factors influencing consumer behaviour, and assess the overall shopping experience with these e-retailing platforms. Data was collected through surveys conducted with online shoppers in Trichy, exploring variables such as product preferences, platform usability, and the impact of discounts, customer service, and delivery. The findings provide valuable insights into how local consumer preferences and behaviours shape the success of e-retailers in smaller urban markets like Trichy, and offer recommendations for improving customer experience.

Keywords E-tailing, Customer Perception, Product Preferences, Consumer Behaviour,

I.INTRODUCTION

E-commerce is the practice of doing business or commercial transactions via the Internet and web. Michael Aldrich created e-tailing, a crucial aspect of electronic commerce, in the United Kingdom in 1979. Thomson Holidays in 1981 was the first business-to-business transaction ever documented. In 1984, Gateshead SIS/Tesco was the first company to be recorded as a consumer.

One subset of e-commerce is e-tailing. The development of the telephone at the close of the previous century marks the beginning of e-commerce history. Many people consider EDI (Electronic Data Interchange) to be the origin of e-commerce.

The purchasing and selling of goods referred to as commerce. Buyers and sellers should actively participate in the business process. The idea of commerce originated in India with the barter system, which involved exchanging items for other goods.

Later on, it continued to evolve in tandem with the economy. Innovative business practices continued to emerge. The focus of trade shifted to money. Today's consumers are increasingly choosing to shop online, even before they had to stand in checkout lines.

E-tailing encompasses more than just businesses that engage in e-commerce. The immersive, emotional experience that physical stores can deliver is not available through e-commerce. The ability to smell, feel, and try on things before buying them—sensory experiences that frequently influence a consumer's decision to buy—is not provided by e-commerce.

E-tailing, as defined by Turban, is the practice of doing retailing online through the use of the internet. In particular, Doolin, Dillon, Thompson, and Corner emphasized that e-tailing entails the sale of goods and services and serves individual clients. E-commerce, which encompasses all "commerce" done online, includes e-tailing as a subset. It describes the portion of e-commerce that involves the selling of goods rather than services, such as airline or train tickets.

Online shopping is a type of electronic commerce that enables customers to use a web browser or a mobile app to directly purchase goods or services from a vendor over the Internet. Using a shopping search engine, which shows the availability and price of the same goods at many e-retailers, or by going straight to the retailer's website, customers can find a product of interest.

The term "business-to-consumer" (B2C) online shopping refers to the physical analogy of purchasing goods or services at a typical "brick-and-mortar" store or shopping mall. The procedure is known as business-to-business (B2B) when

an online store is established to allow companies to purchase from other companies.

Effective e-tailing hinges on robust branding. Websites must be user-friendly, visually appealing, and frequently updated to keep pace with shifting consumer preferences. Products and services should differentiate themselves from competitors and offer tangible value to customers. Additionally, pricing must remain competitive to prevent customers from choosing other businesses solely based on cost.

Review of Literature

1. **Bentlanlu M (2024)** This study is influenced by the potential advantages that e-tailing has for the clothing retail Companies. The study adopted a quantitative research approach, with a close-ended questionnaire used as a primary data collection tool. Data were collected following ethical protocols of informed consent, anonymity and confidentiality. A total of questionnaires were administered to individuals who worked for three conveniently selected clothing retail companies and questionnaires were used for the data analysis. The reliability of the questionnaire was acceptable according to Cronbach's alpha scale for the study to proceed. Charts, frequency tables, and non-parametric statistics were applied on the data to produce meaningful results. This study managed to determine the factors that affect the adoption of e-tailing by the clothing.

2. **Benjamin, Anushka (2023)** this study explored the importance of e-tailers in the South African economy, the challenges faced by South African online shoppers, and the successful strategies used by owners of successful e-tailing websites. This study adopted an interpretive philosophy to generate qualitative data. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews with 15 e-tailing website owners. The CSFs found in this study can help newcomers understand what it takes for an online store to perform well. The study revealed that knowledge and finance are the most fundamental CSFs that contribute to an e-tailer's success. Overall, the study identified the main problems faced by e-tailers and proposed ways to deal with the identified problems to enhance effective growth and development. This information can be used as a guide for both current and future e-tailing.

3. **Thotti K K, Aluti (2022)** The organization's focus on price-cut and advanced deals has displayed an immense negligence on profound marketing strategy and quality maintenance of retailed products. A prospective outlook centering increase in vendors to cater an expanding marketplace has merely promised constructive revenue at potential deficit in actual return-of-

investment (ROI). Direct competition without a sturdy market standing would be highly detrimental to existing players in the Indian e-tailing industry. Recommendations particular recognized a centralized approach to market rivalry by exploitation of core competencies and competitive advantage. A feint to the spiraling price war sees Flipkart's shifted focus to both superficial product handling, market targeting and customer servicing.

4. Arendse, kayla Kim (2021) The study intends to use four case studies to allow the researcher to acquire an in-depth perspective on each selected company's business environment. The study employs a Systems Theory to investigate the nature and key interactions of the organisations. The literature points to a relationship between these business elements and critical success factors. The research adopts an interpretive approach to generate qualitative data. The data emanates from semi-structured interviews with three individuals connected to each of four organisations. The CSFs found in the study can help apprise potential market entrants of the factors requisite for an e-tailing business to prosper. The findings of the study revealed the most contributing to e-tailer success. Overall, the study established and contributes the main challenges.

Objectives of the Study

1. To know the customer's knowledge on E-commerce in today's world.
2. To find the buying behaviour of the customer on FMCG-Fast Moving Consumer Goods Products.
3. To analyse the influencing factors of e-tailing in customers.
4. To ascertain the problems and difficulties faced by the people who use e-tailing.

Customer's Knowledge

1. Understanding Customer Needs

Customer knowledge starts with understanding the unique needs and preferences of consumers. It's essential for businesses to identify what their customers truly value in a product or service. This understanding can be gathered through direct customer feedback, surveys, and analyzing purchasing behavior. Knowing these needs helps companies tailor their products and marketing strategies to suit the target audience, fostering stronger customer loyalty.

2. The Role of Customer Data

Customer data plays a pivotal role in enhancing a company's knowledge about its consumers. This data can come from various sources such as sales records, website analytics, social media engagement, and customer service interactions. By analyzing this data, businesses can predict trends, personalize offers, and enhance the customer experience. However, it's important for companies to ensure the ethical use of this data, respecting privacy and regulations.

3. Customer Segmentation

Segmentation divides the customer base into groups with similar characteristics or behaviours. This enables businesses to develop more targeted strategies for different segments, offering customized products, communication, and services. Effective segmentation helps brands understand the nuances of customer preferences, increasing the likelihood of customer satisfaction and repeat business.

4. Customer Feedback and Insights

Listening to customers is one of the most powerful ways to improve customer knowledge. Regularly collecting feedback—whether through surveys, reviews, or focus groups—allows businesses to gain insights into customer satisfaction, pain points, and areas for improvement. Businesses that act on this feedback can innovate and make adjustments that better serve their customers, building long-term trust and loyalty.

Buying behaviour On Customer In Fmcg

1. Convenience and Accessibility

Convenience plays a crucial role in shaping customer behavior within the FMCG market. Shoppers prefer products that are easily accessible and require minimal effort to purchase. Whether it's shopping at a nearby store or using an online platform with quick delivery options, the convenience factor heavily influences consumer decisions. For everyday essentials like food, toiletries, and drinks, the easier the product.

2. Price Sensitivity

Price sensitivity is a key aspect of consumer behaviour in the FMCG industry. Given that most FMCG products are inexpensive and bought regularly, customers tend to be very aware of pricing and look for products that offer the best value. Discounts, special offers, and price comparisons play an important role in influencing their purchasing decisions. Many customers will switch to cheaper brands if they perceive the quality to be the same.

3.Brand Loyalty

Brand loyalty reflects a consumer's preference for a particular brand, often built on positive past experiences or trust. In the FMCG sector, customers are likely to stick with a brand they've used frequently, such as for household products, snacks, or personal care items, even if they offer lower prices. Brand loyalty is fueled by consistent product quality, customer satisfaction, and emotional connections. Loyal customers not only make repeat purchases but also recommend the brand to others, helping businesses maintain.

4.Impulse and Emotional Buying

Impulse buying is a common occurrence in the FMCG market, where consumers make spontaneous purchases based on emotional triggers or attractive promotions. Products like chocolates, snacks, and toiletries are often bought on a whim, particularly when shoppers are drawn to eye-catching offers, appealing packaging, or time-limited sales. Emotional appeals, such as special discounts or seasonal promotions, encourage quick buying decisions.

Factors Influencing Of E-Tailing In Customers

1. Product Reviews and Recommendations

Customer reviews and recommendations play a vital role in online shopping behavior. Before making a purchase, consumers often rely on reviews to evaluate a product's quality, performance, and reliability. Positive reviews help build trust in the product, while negative reviews can make potential buyers hesitant. Additionally, e-commerce platforms use algorithms to suggest products based on users' past browsing and purchase history. These personalized recommendations not only guide customers but also encourage repeat purchases. As a result, product reviews and recommendations provide a sense of social proof, making customers feel more confident in their decisions.

2. Variety and Availability

The wide range of products available online is a key factor that attracts consumers to e-tailing. E-commerce platforms often offer a larger selection than traditional stores, allowing customers to explore a variety of products across different categories. Online shopping also provides access to niche or hard-to-find items that may not be available in local stores. Additionally, real-time stock updates allow shoppers to instantly check the availability of products, reducing the frustration of unavailable items. This vast variety and accessibility make online shopping an appealing choice for consumers looking for a diverse selection.

3. Customer Service and Return Policies

Strong customer service and flexible return policies are essential to the success of e-tailers. Customers value the ability to easily reach out for support through live chat, email, or phone, ensuring that any issues are addressed quickly. Moreover, a hassle-free return or exchange policy provides an added layer of confidence for buyers, as it reduces the perceived risk associated with online shopping. If consumers know they can return products that don't meet expectations, they are more likely to make a purchase. E-tailers with clear, customer-friendly policies not only gain trust but also increase the likelihood of repeat business.

4. User Experience and Website Design

The design and overall user experience (UX) of an e-commerce website play a crucial role in influencing a customer's decision to purchase. A well-structured, intuitive website that is easy to navigate enhances the shopping process, making it seamless and enjoyable for users. Key factors like fast-loading pages, clear categorization of products, and detailed descriptions contribute to a positive browsing experience. A positive experience can lead to customers sharing their experience with others, increasing brand visibility and encouraging repeat visits.

5. Social Media Influence and Advertising

Social media has become a powerful tool in influencing consumer behavior within the e-tailing industry. E-tailers utilize platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, and TikTok to display products, create engaging content, and run targeted advertisements that resonate with specific audiences. Influencers and brand ambassadors often play a significant role in promoting products by providing genuine recommendations, which can influence consumer purchasing decisions.

The Problems and Difficulties Faced by the People

1. Security and Privacy Concerns

One of the major issues consumers face when using e-tailing platforms is concerns over security and privacy. Many shoppers are apprehensive about entering their personal information, especially financial data like credit card details. Cybersecurity threats, including hacking, identity theft, and fraudulent transactions, make users cautious about online shopping. E-tailers must invest in secure payment gateways, encryption technologies, and transparent privacy policies to build trust and reassure customers about the safety of their personal data.

2. Product Quality and Authenticity Issues

Since e-tailing involves buying products without physically seeing or touching them, there is a common fear about the quality and authenticity of products. Shoppers may worry that items won't match their expectations in terms of appearance, functionality, or durability. Without the ability to inspect products firsthand, customers may receive items that are damaged, subpar, or different from the online description or images. Clear product descriptions, quality assurance guarantees, and user reviews help mitigate this problem, but it still remains a challenge for many e-shoppers.

3. Delivery and Shipping Delays

Delivery time is another common issue in e-tailing. Consumers often experience frustration when their orders are delayed, or when products arrive later than promised. Shipping issues, such as late deliveries, lost packages, or damaged goods, can lead to dissatisfaction and mistrust of e-tailers. While many online retailers offer fast shipping, these delays can occur due to logistics problems or high demand during peak shopping seasons. E-tailers need to offer transparent delivery timelines and efficient customer service to resolve issues promptly.

4. Lack of Personal Interaction and Support

A key difficulty with e-tailing is the lack of face-to-face interaction, which can make resolving problems or asking questions more challenging. While many e-commerce sites provide customer support through online chats, emails, or phone calls, the absence of in-person assistance can leave some customers feeling unsupported. Customers may struggle with unclear return policies, difficulty in contacting support representatives, or having issues that cannot be resolved immediately.

5. Complicated Return and Refund Processes

A major frustration for e-tailing consumers is the complexity of return and refund policies. While many e-tailers offer return options, the process can often be confusing, time-consuming, and inconvenient. Some consumers are unhappy with the conditions set by online stores for returns, such as limited return windows, restocking fees, or the requirement to pay for return shipping. The fear of dealing with complicated returns can discourage customers from making online purchases.

Scope of the Study

- The study is limited to consumers residing in Trichy city, focusing on their perceptions and experiences with e-commerce platforms such as Amazon, Flipkart, Meesho, and Myntra.
- It will specifically explore consumer preferences, trust levels, satisfaction, and factors influencing their online shopping decisions, including product variety, pricing, user experience, and delivery efficiency.
- The research will gather data from individuals who have actively used these platforms for purchasing products, ensuring a direct connection to the consumer experience.

Significance of the Study

- The findings can assist e-commerce platforms in refining their strategies, including customer retention, user experience, and local marketing tactics, tailored to the specific needs of Trichy consumers.
- It provides valuable insights into consumer preferences, including factors like product variety, pricing, delivery time, and customer service that influence their shopping decisions.
- The study adds to the academic understanding of e-commerce trends and perceptions, specifically in smaller cities, contributing to the broader body of research in digital marketing and online shopping.

II.CONCLUSION

The empirical study shows that at the customers' first online shopping, (1) reference group influence of choosing and using website positively affects their perceived ease of use, attitude toward using, behavioural intention to buy and actual online purchase; reference group influence of choosing product positively affects their behavioural intention to buy; reference group influence of value expressing positively affects their perceived ease of use, perceived usefulness, attitude toward using and behavioural intention to buy. As E-tailing continues to evolve, it is poised to further enhance the retail experience by incorporating advanced technologies and fostering a more inclusive marketplace. The positive perception and growing acceptance of e-commerce underscore its potential to drive economic growth and societal change in the years to come.

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