



# DEVELOPING A CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK FOR ONLINE CONSUMER BUYING BEHAVIOR IN FASHION APPAREL INDUSTRY IN IRAN

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## ABSTRACT

*This study examines the key factors which affect consumer buying for online shopping of fashion apparels in Iran. For this purpose, various literature reviews from different research scholars were studied. The research gap was identified and the study proposed a conceptual model to identify online consumer buying behavior. The study identified seven major factors which affect online consumer buying behavior. The identified factors are Motivation, Quality of service, Convenience, Website, Technology Preparedness, Security and Privacy which will serve as a basis to empirically explore the factors affecting the online consumer purchasing process and for the purposes of testing the suggested model by the interested researchers in the relevant area of research.*

**KEYWORDS:** Consumer buying behavior, Convenience, Motivation, Online buying, Privacy, Quality of Service, Security, Technology Preparedness, Website

## INTRODUCTION

In recent years, online shopping is becoming more predominant by offering several benefits to the consumers (Nambisan and Watt, 2011). Online shopping is becoming progressively more popular (Pahnila and Warsta, 2010) and is attracting a great attention due to its potential for both customers and e-vendors which stimulate the widespread research aim in online shopping arena. Despite the fact that interactive nature of online shopping offers many opportunities, online practitioners need to develop a broad understanding of consumer in online environment. Although several researchers have attempted to resolve this issue, only few studies have examined the factors influencing the online shopping experience exclusively (Novak et al., 2000).

Several studies says that, experience is the strongest generator of self-efficacy and thus generating positive experience has acquired greater prominence due to its potentiality in influencing customer loyalty (Rose et al., 2012). Online consumer experiences refer to the psychological and emotional states that

consumers go through while shopping in online platform (Alba and Hutchinson 2000; Nambisan and Watt, 2011). Clear understanding of online shoppers is vital for online stores to make effective business strategies involving technology, marketing, and Web site design (Rose et al., 2011). Especially, understanding customer experience adds the ability to predict their future behaviour because prior shopping experience plays a major role in stimulating online buying intentions of the consumers (Ling et al., 2010).

Iran has had a long and successful history of manufacturing textiles. The Gulf state was one of the world's premier exporters of textiles and silks to Europe, Asia and the rest of the world. The Iranian Textile Industry is mostly known for its carpet industry which includes the production of machine made and hand-made carpets and blankets. However, the local production of textile products like fibre, yarn and fabrics etc. remains insufficient to fulfill the growing needs of textile and garment industry. The lifting of international trade restrictions has resulted in regional trading boom in the textile industry of Iran. Hence, the



country is planning to set up a new apparel industrial town with the aim of limiting exports, and boosting domestic production. The main agenda is to make the price of Iranian clothing more competitive. This establishment can prove to be highly beneficial for the country as it will lead to increase in quality and will help in reducing the production costs. The Iranian Textile and apparel industry has about 9,818 active units, constituting 11% of all the industrial entities in the country. These units have created more than 2,90,000 direct jobs accounting for 13% of all the industrial jobs in Iran. When the domestic production increases, it boosts the economy of the country. As e-commerce has also gained prominence, people in Iran buy apparels online.

Further, the growing interest in exploring what factors affect consumer's decisions to make purchases online was stimulated by the tremendous growth in online sales (Duan, Gu and Whinston, 2008). In addition, as the success of retail store depends on delivering an effective customer experience (Rose et al., 2011), it is important to provide effective experiential measures to the customer in online platform. Consequently, the aim of this paper is to develop a general model of the online customer experience based on existing literatures. This study would assist comprehensive understanding of consumer needs in online shopping. Furthermore, analyzing previous studies and recognizing the areas that needs enhancement could contribute to the betterment of e-business practitioners.

## REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Mosteller, Donthu and Eroglu, (2014) spots the importance of online experience by suggesting that further investigation is needed to examine the effect of key factors on online shopping experience. The growing stream of literature devoted to e-services denotes the importance of the medium. For instance, Parasuraman et al., (1991), developed the e-SERVQUAL scale comprised of four key sub-scales: efficiency, reliability, fulfilment, and privacy. Kaynama and Black (2000), have explored seven features pertaining to Web site quality: content, access, navigation, design, response, background, and personalization. Another study outlines performance, access, security, sensation, and information as five aspects used by consumers to assess the quality of an online retailer. Tong (2010), have added certain other dimensions such as ease of use, aesthetic design, processing speed, and security.

Bijal Zaveri Amin & Prahant Amin (2013) stated that online shopping is becoming a well-accepted

way to purchase a variety of products and services. For online shoppers, an online interactive hypertext environment enables them to search and control information; alteration in the traditional mass media environment in which the sender of messages largely controls what will be seen and heard as well as shift of control in favor of the receiver for customization of information, and quick comparative analysis among competing products/services. The attempt has been made by the researcher to include conceptual framework of online consumer buying behavior by including various aspects of literature review viz, Attitude, orientation and motivation towards online shopping. An attempt would be made in this paper to put forward results and findings based on critical review of available literature in form of earlier research studies relating to trends, growth, developments and future potentials of e-commerce and evolving behavioral patterns of online shopping activities considering its diffusion and issues especially concerning to gender, security etc. with its implications on e-marketplaces, society and businesses in near future. Finally, this study discovered a significantly impact of Consumer online buying behavior and important managerial implications and recommendations are also presented.

Wen-Shan Lin et al. (2010) in their article "A framework of online shopping support for information recommendations" stated that the growth of e-commerce has caused problems with personalized recommendations. Although several attempts have made to improve or automate the retrieval and filtering of such information, no generic framework links the semantic context of online shopping with shoppers' purchases in order to improve the efficiency of online shopping support. Through the application of knowledge-modeling, this paper selects a college population to empirically investigate and establish the relationship between e-marketing terms and shoppers' buying behavior. General online shopping and the online book purchases are selected to validate the generic framework. Two hypotheses are tested: (1) e-marketing terms are important in influencing shoppers' decisions; and (2) shoppers behave differently with respect to different types of buys. Experimental results indicate that shoppers perceive the importance of e-marketing terms differently whilst shopping online. Six types of shoppers' are classified: (1) general-purpose, (2) security-concerned, (3) value, (4) fashionable, (5) time-sensitive, and (6) service-oriented. Results and future research opportunities are discussed. This paper serves as a basis for improving online information search for shopping purposes.



## MOTIVATION

Several studies have examined the facet of motivation with respect to online shopping environments (Novak et al., 2000). For instance, motivation is a most constructive aspect that supports the investigation of customer engagement (Mehta, sharma and swamy, 2013). In particular, Hill, Beatty and Walsh (2013) have found that shopping motivations consist of three various dimensions such as wish to obtain a product, desire to satisfy needs, and goal of accomplishing certain ends. A recent study found that motivation was stressing at the point of to having an experience like fun or socializing with others that ultimately helps in discovering why people goes for online shopping.

As customer experience is associated with pleasure, arousal, and achieving a specific end while shopping, it is more often compared with the terms “hedonic” and “utilitarian” in several studies. According to Handa and Gupta (2014), hedonic classifications are related to intrinsically motivated intentions, while utilitarian classifications are related to extrinsic motivational aspects. As such, pleasurable motivations bring individuals to the interface by influencing their experiences and keep them involved in the interaction emotionally.

## QUALITY OF SERVICE

The service quality is the ultimate measure resulted from comparing the expectations and performance. Parasuraman et al., (1991) has developed the SERQUAL scale that gives a wholesome view over service quality comprising five dimensions such as tangibility, empathy, reliability, responsiveness, and assurance. Service quality plays a significant role in boosting up the customer experience. Due to the rapid increase in the progress, consumers become more occupied by the e-marketplace.

Since the growth of the online shopping would depend on improvement in service quality, it is important to evaluate and promote consumer preferences by offering things for which the customer shopping experience is similar to traditional store outlets (Tsao and Tseng, 2011). Though online shopping is enjoyed more by young consumers, the occurrence of rapid growth in this industry is also persuaded by older shoppers because of its efficiency in servicing technologies.

## WEBSITE

Websites that go well together with the Indian culture were exposed to be more positively perceived by the customers (Hartono et al., 2014). Moreover it

influences the purchase intention and attitude toward the site. Reliability, customer service, privacy and security are identified as the most common dimensions of website design. Numerous studies has studied that website quality as a positive influencer of consumer online purchase intention. Website design plays a major role in attracting the large customer base. In addition, previous findings have proven that consumers who are familiar with websites will build a high intention to purchase online. Consumers will always tend to visit user-friendly websites and in contrast, if they feel that a website is hard to use and to follow, they will show a lower intention to purchase in online (Thamizhvanan and Xavier, 2013)

## TECHNOLOGY PREPAREDNESS OR ACCESSIBILITY

In online shopping context, accessibility plays a vital role since consumers prefer the medium that demonstrates an accessible user interface (Overmars & Poels, 2015). In recent years, people often consider buying things from online if they feel hard in fighting crowds or finding that their product is no longer available in retail stores because of the ease of accessibility in online shopping (Khare and Rakesh, 2015). Here, consumers have more advantageous benefits in terms of searching through filtering product category, price, color, size, etc.

While shopping in online, consumers expects and prefers the site that has no accessibility violations. As many online retailers provide accessible technologies like voice recognition software, screen reader, magnifier, etc. physically challenged people finds it easy to shop online (Khare, Khare and Singh, 2012). Increased standards of accessibility makes the customer online shopping experiences the best they can be.

According to Li and Zhang's (2002) taxonomy that was developed based on their analysis, there are ten impacts of relevant factors on online consumer behaviours. These ten factors were categorized into five independent variables (external environment, demographics, personal characteristics, vendor/service/product characteristics, and web site quality) and five dependent variables (attitude toward online shopping, intention to shop online, decision making, online purchasing, and consumer satisfaction). The five independent variables are identified as antecedents, which directly determine attitudes towards online shopping. In the antecedents, the vendor/service/product characteristics and web site quality are directly impact on consumer satisfaction.



Consumer satisfaction is separated and occurs among at all possible stages depending on the consumer's involvement during the Internet shopping process, and this two ways relationship could influence each reciprocally. Fishbein's attitudinal model has been widely used in the marketing context (Lilien et al 1992) and this paradigm provides researchers with a useful lens for examining the factors explaining consumer purchasing intention and adoption. According to this model, behavior is predominantly determined by intention. Other factors like attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control are also shown to be related to an appropriate set of salient behavioral, normative, and control beliefs about the behavior. However, Fishbein's model stops at the adoption level and does not capture other important factors that explain and predict consumer continuance behavior (repurchase).

## RESEARCH GAP

Research typically focuses on the requirement to go beyond the usability in overall system design and evaluation. However, the roles of other types of online customer experiences have not received sufficient attention in academic literature. This knowledge gap presents an important research opportunity which emphasizes experience-based differentiation as a major online strategy for sustainable competitive advantage. The above reviewed literatures focused on service quality, technology, motivation, convenience, etc which were important for online shopping. Major components such as privacy and security were not adhered to as these two risks were being faced by the customers owing to cyber crimes and frauds.

The required literature should focus on important factors such as security and privacy. Only few researches have analyzed the relative importance of various shopping experience components. This study would provide several contributions that brings new knowledge and extends existing knowledge, by developing a clear understanding of what contributes online shopping buying behavior and experience. Based on the existing literature, individual factors influencing online shopping buying behavior and their impact on intention to repurchase has been ascertained. The above mentioned reviews did not study about security pertaining to browsing the website and related to online payments. Sometimes there is a lack of legal

remedy which signals the customers to aware of security risk. Along with security, privacy is one of the biggest risks faced by the customers as it is the biggest obstacle to shopping on the internet. In particular, seven main types of consumer factors such as motivation, quality of service, convenience, website, Technology Preparedness, security and privacy has been identified.

## NEED FOR THE STUDY

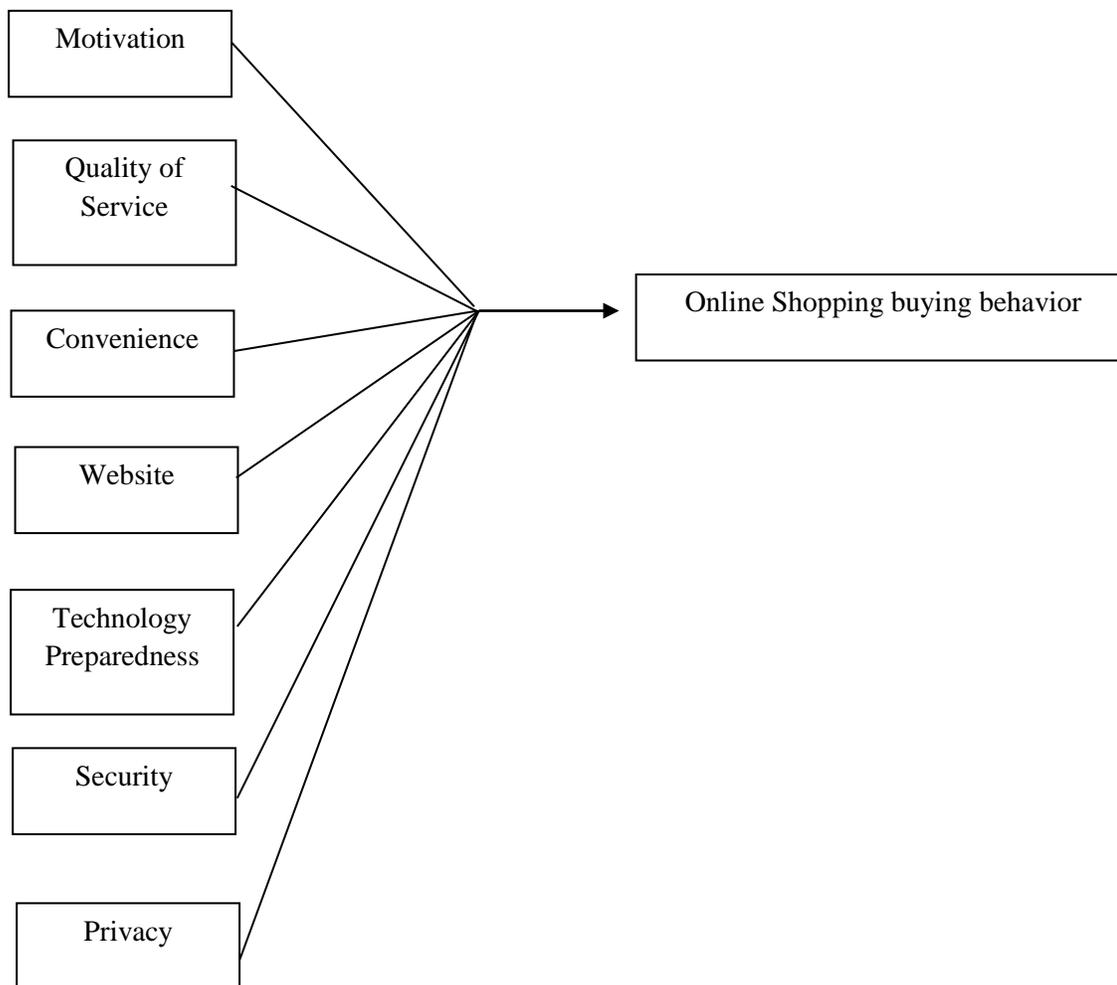
The Internet offers a new way to do business and gives fresh shopping experience to customers. There are many rules and conventions need to be improved to fit the online environment. For instance, the security must be ensured that the transactions on the Internet are safe; the privacy must be protected by the web sites; and the trust transference programs are needed to help engender customer trust in the internet shopping environment. Both security and privacy are the biggest obstacles to shopping on the internet. Even some websites have secured certified by professional organisation, but still have some customers lost their money through internet every year. Online trust is the basic and essential element for building a relationship with customers. A study shows that online trust is lower level than the face-to-face interactions in the physical store (Cassell and Bickmore, 2000). This identified gap calls for attention and hence, it becomes important to study the factors that influence the online shopping behavior amongst customers. As e-commerce is used in various countries on a large scale, it becomes significant to develop a conceptual framework to determine and strengthen the factors that influence the online shopping behavior amongst customers.

## OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To study the factors that influences the online buying behavior in fashion apparel industry in Iran.
2. To review studies conducted in the past on online buying behavior and to determine the gaps
3. To develop a conceptual model in order to effectively assess the online buying behavior in fashion apparel industry in Iran.



### PROPOSED CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK



### RESEARCH IMPLICATION AND FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

The proposed conceptual model in this study suggests a number of research avenues. As this study associates online shopping with experiential aspects, there are numerous opportunities for theoretical and empirical research in this area. The links proposed in the model offers several ways for a detailed assessment of specific relationships and their outcomes.

The first step towards theory building involves furnishing customer engagement. There is a need to keep the customers involved emotionally by acknowledging fun and pleasure. While the suggested measure of security and privacy may be appropriate, more detailed research is needed in this venue as cyber crimes have increased over the years. The proposed model suggests convenience and quality of service are

the most important variables that influence the customer online shopping experience.

Service quality influences the level of online shopping experience. However, future studies could examine the applicability of website dimension in tuning online shopping experience through an empirical research. Finally, it is suggested that accessibility is the factor that triggers the customer online shopping experience to a great extent. The proper analysis of this aspect can enhance the understanding of how online shopping experience is affected by the online shopping environment. Much creative research can be formulated on the nature and impact of this suggested model. From a technical perspective, research on online shopping is booming setting a whole new set of research avenues. Specifically, empirical research on the experiential



aspects of online shopping needs much attention due to the physical and practical constrictions.

## CONCLUSION

The objective of this research was to explore the components of consumer experience while shopping online. An extensive review of literature across major fields on online shopping has been conducted to identify the varied aspects and concepts of shopping experiences. An integrative conceptual framework of online shopping experience has been proposed based on the review of literature. This framework adds knowledge and understanding of consumers while shopping online. In particular, it provides the marketing researchers a unique opportunity to permeate the regulation with new paradigms and techniques.

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