

INCLINATION TOWARDS ONLINE SHOPPING - A CHANGING TREND AMONG THE CONSUMERS

ABSTRACT

Shopping was once perceived as an activity of going out, exploring various stores and shops across the town, shifting through a myriad of options and finally settling down to purchase a product with full satisfaction. Now that the technology is skillfully trying to make a person think smartly, without exerting much physical energy, we see that even shopping has been engulfed under grip of changing lifestyle. With online shopping spreading its wings gradually, the experience of 'touch and feel' concept is slowly fading among the consumers. Online shopping or electronic shopping is a part of electronic commerce which allows consumers to directly buy goods or services from a seller over the internet. A survey was conducted in the Jorhat town of Assam to know the online shopping scenario among the consumers with the objective to identify the category of population inclined for online shopping and the factors influencing the consumers for online shopping. For the present research work, 120 samples were selected randomly from four wards of municipality area and a multistage stratified random sampling method was adopted in order to select representative sample. The findings of the study revealed that the young generations are very active in the activities of online shopping and most of them are females. The results of the study have given detailed information regarding the change in shopping behaviour of the consumers.

Keywords: Consumer, online shopping, shopping behaviour, factors.

INTRODUCTION

In simple words, online shopping is defined as purchasing items from internet retailers as opposed to a shop or store, or the act of purchasing products or services over the internet. It is a form of electronic commerce which allows consumers to directly buy goods or services from a seller over the internet using a web browser. Online shopping gives consumers the access to the world market, enabling them to compare price across the region and various sites, find out whether price varies by order fragmentation, get awareness about alternative products (Jagonews24.com, 2015). A report by Comscore (2013) specified India as the world's third largest internet population. Consumers are turning to the internet as a shopping channel to a great extent. It generates the need to understand the consumer's online shopping behavior. It is also reported that consumer buying behavior in online shops is relatively different from what is exhibited in the traditional environment (Alba *et. al*, 1997). The growing use of internet in India provides a developing prospect for online shopping. Internet is changing the way consumers shop and buy goods and services, and has rapidly evolved into a global phenomenon. According to Mary Meeker (2019), India is home to the world's second largest internet user base,

accounting for 12 per cent of all internet users globally. Many companies have started using the internet with the aim of cutting marketing costs, thereby reducing the price of their products and services in order to stay ahead in highly competitive markets. Companies also use the internet to convey, communicate and disseminate information, to sell the product, to take feedback and also to conduct satisfaction surveys with customers.

The way in which many Indian consumers shop is fast-changing, and there is a shift from offline shopping (visiting a shop to purchase items) to online shopping (browsing through virtual catalogues and making purchases). Consumers are turning to the internet and online retailers to improve the way they shop, whether it is for the wider selection of goods available online, the deals and discounts offered or the ability to quickly compare prices. The year 1991 noted a new chapter in the history of the online world where e-commerce became a hot choice amongst the commercial use of the internet. At that time nobody would have even thought that the buying and selling online or say online trading will become a trend in the world and India will also share a good proportion of this success. Now consumer's mentality and shopping patterns are changing very fast. Earlier online shopping was a simple medium for shopping with fewer options. The users could just place an order and pay cash on delivery. But, with the changing face of online market, this field has been upgraded to a great extent and hence mesmerized many customers. Today, the online shopping has become a trend in India and the reason behind the adoption of this technique lies in the attractive online websites, user-friendly interface, bulky online stores with new fashion, easy payment methods and cash-on-delivery, no bound on quantity & quality, one can choose the items based on size, color, price, etc (Goyal, 2015). In the upcoming years, e-commerce is expected to boom in the Asian region. The number of digital buyers in Asia Pacific is projected to pass the one billion mark for the first time in 2018, which will account for 60 per cent of all internet users in the region. In line with the regional growth, India, an emerging Asian market, shows optimistic projections for the e-commerce industry. Current active e-commerce penetration in India stands only 28 per cent. With lots of room for improvement, India's retail e-commerce CAGR is projected to reach 23 per cent from 2016 to 2021 (SRD, 2019).

To the online shopper, everything that they could possibly want is available at the click of a mouse. A shopping expedition that might once have taken a few hours to complete is done and dusted within a matter of minutes and all from the comfort of their own home, or the workplace. Many factors, specificities and characteristics influence the individual in the decision-making process, shopping habits, purchasing behavior, the brands a consumer buys or the retailer being visited. A purchase decision is the result of each and every one of these factors. An individual and a consumer are led by various considerations and aspects which are may not relate to any other's preference. One aspect may be highly valued by a person at the same time that particular aspect may not be valued by another person. So it becomes important to learn about the common aspects that are preferred by most of the consumers so as to improve the marketing demand as well as product value. By identifying and understanding the factors responsible for inclination that move today's consumers to purchase online, brands have the

opportunity to develop strategy, a marketing message and advertising campaigns more efficient and more in line with the needs and ways of thinking of their target consumers, a real asset to better meet the needs of its customers and increase sales. This study attempts to develop such research to learn the changes in the shopping behavior which are identified with the following objectives:

1. To identify the category of population inclined for online shopping
2. To know the factors influencing the consumer for shopping online

METHODOLOGY

A qualitative study was undertaken with the aim to select the samples who are involved in online shopping in Jorhat district of Assam, located in the north eastern part of India. India is a federal union comprising twenty nine states and seven union territories, for a total of thirty six entities. North east India is the easternmost region of India which comprises eight states and Assam is one among them. Jabong (a popular online shopping site) co-founder Praveen Sinha (2014) opined that "North East India is doing really well in terms of acceptance; market potential is also very big. The taste for fashion is very refined and customers are trendy, experimental and are ready to try out fresh arrivals. While Myntra co-founder Ashutosh Lawania (2013) added that the youngsters of North East India are extremely fashion conscious and tech savvy and online shopping gives them a platform to access the best brands at affordable prices with the convenience of shopping from anywhere. Lawania also mentioned that there is a steady increase in the number of online shoppers from four districts (Dibrugarh, Jorhat, Sivsagar and Tinsukia) of Assam and further, it was claimed that Myntra.com receives around 350-400 orders per day from these districts. Out of the 28 districts of Assam, Jorhat district is one among the four leading cities of Assam associated with online shopping consumer. This makes it clear that Jorhat is one of the cities in the top most lists of online shoppers of Assam. And this becomes an important area of study. Moreover these types of studies were found to be very scanty in Assam. A multistage stratified random sampling with proportionate allocation method was used to construct the sample. The municipality area of selected town was divided into four zones by taking the Jorhat Court as the centre and from each zone, one ward was selected purposively by considering the urban area. Thus a total of 4 wards were selected. From each wards, individuals involved in online shopping were selected. Those wards with large number of populations received more samples, whereas wards with less population received small samples and from them 120 sample is selected randomly for the study without any limitations of age, education and income. A structured schedule was prepared and interview method was applied to gather information. To find out the reason of inclination for online shopping, a number of factors had been listed out after consulting various research papers, articles, books and magazines. Research articles and other publications were referred regarding the study area and after analyzing the scenario ten of the factors had been selected for the existing study. Under each factors a number of statements had been formulated to access the level of inclination for online

shopping. The statements were put into 3 point responses i.e., always, sometimes, never. The statistical measures used in this study were frequency, percentage, mean and standard deviation.

The formula used for calculation of mean is:

$$\text{Mean } (\bar{x}) = \frac{\sum fx}{N}$$

Where, $\sum f(x)$ = Total score

N = Total number of respondents.

The formula used for calculation of standard deviation is:

$$\text{S.D } \alpha = \sqrt{\frac{\sum (Xi - \bar{X})^2}{n}}$$

Where, Xi =Raw score

\bar{X} = Mean

n = Total respondents

RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The findings from the present study was presented and discussed in the following sub headings.

Category of population engaged in online shopping:

It has been revealed from table 1 that most of the respondent (74.17%) belonged to the age group in between 21-30 years. Mathur and Sharma (2014) also found that the age distribution of respondents opting for 42% of online shopping falls in 26-30 years of age group. Youngsters now days are very confident for online activities and they have ample amount of information and knowledge regarding internet issues, so they have very little fear about it and they like to take risk and have a tendency to adopt the new and emerging technologies and facilities that are in trend. According to a news report published (2nd January 2016) on Press Trust of India about India's e-commerce industry likely to touch \$38 billion mark in 2016 – ASSOCHAM revealed that 38 per cent of regular shoppers are in 18-25 years of age group, 52 per cent in 26-35 years of age group, 8 per cent in 36-45 years of age group and 2 per cent in the age group of 45-60. From the above discussion it has been understood that young generation is actively involved in online shopping.

It is observed from the data presented in Table 1 that more than half of the respondents (53.33%) were female and 46.67% were male engaged with online shopping.

Women does more shopping, the real reason is sobering. In virtually every society in the world, women have primary care-giving responsibilities for both children and the elderly (and often, just about everybody else in-between). In this primary care giving role, women find themselves buying on behalf of everyone else in their lives. Female shoppers are more likely to plan out their shopping strategies and make their purchases based on future needs. Hernandez et al. (2011) reported that in today’s world the number of women using internet for online shopping is increasing. While an article by Buyvoets expresses that “men tend to stick to their mission when shopping online” this is in contrast to women who “expand the undertaking by wandering among products and categories”. Thus, according to this research, women explore and men are more goals orientated when shopping online. For all these reasons females are found to be more active in online shopping than males.

The study also revealed that education plays a key role in shopping online. While considering the educational qualification, it was observed that 49.17 per cent and 44.16 per cent of the respondents were highly educated i.e. bachelors as well as masters and above respectively. It may be due to the fact that educated people are more confident in online shopping because they have all the ideas regarding various steps and procedures of online activities and they are more fluent for generating ideas and information through internet. Teo, 2001; Zhao et al. (2002); Dillon and Reif (2004) also considered that educated people make good innovators and early adopters of new technology. Less educated people tend to exhibit a higher degree of computer anxiety towards computer technology (Parasuram and Igbaria, 1989).

The finding also indicates that majority of the respondents (62.5%) were students, 16.66 per cent of the respondents were professionals and the lowest percentage of the respondents i.e. only 3.33 percent were housewife. The reason behind this can be considered as the students are preoccupied with their programming and development work spending most of their time in front of the computer, preferably the Internet. Another reason may be that they are more thorough and aware of online facilities, advertisements, offers and other features.

In case of monthly family income 46.67 per cent of the respondents belonged to families earning Rs. 50,001 and above. This shows that a large percentage of respondents from higher income group are involved in online shopping. Individuals with lower income tend to approach online shopping activity more cautiously and find this medium as a riskier place since their tolerance for financial losses are lower in comparison to consumers with higher income. However, once users have an experience their attitude is not affected by their income (Hernandez *et al.*, 2011).

Table 1: Category of population engaged in online shopping			
Sl. No.	Characteristics	Frequency Number (n=120)	Percentage (%)
1	Age		
	Below 20 years	9	7.5
	21-30 years	89	74.17

	31-40 years	17	14.16
	41-50 years	2	1.67
	51-60 years	2	1.67
	61 and above	1	0.83
2	Gender		
	Male	56	46.67
	Female	64	53.33
3	Education		
	Up to matriculation	2	1.67
	Intermediate	6	5
	Bachelors	59	49.17
	Masters and above	53	44.16
4	Occupation		
	Student	75	62.5
	Service	8	6.67
	Business	13	10.83
	Professionals	20	16.67
	Housewife	4	3.33
5	Monthly family income		
	Less than 10,000	5	4.17
	10,001-20,000	8	6.66
	20,001-30,000	6	5
	30,001-40,000	10	8.33
	40,001-50,000	35	29.17
	50,001 and above	56	46.67

Experience of using internet for online shopping

It is revealed (Fig.1) that a large number of the respondents (42.5%) were observed to be using internet for online shopping from 2-3 years followed by 33.33 per cent of the respondents using internet for online shopping from last 1-2 years and only 24.17 per cent of the respondents are using internet from less than 1 year for online shopping. Agarwal (2015) found that maximum people have an experience of 1-2 years of online shopping (43%). This supports the findings of the present study considering the time frame of the study conducted.

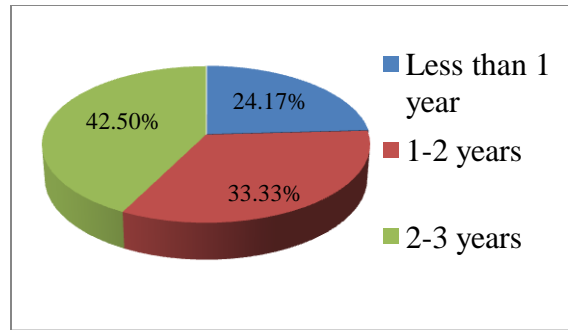


Fig. 1: Experience of using internet for online shopping

Before the emerge of online shopping, the consumers liked to go to the market, to a number of shops, checking the available products and asking all the information to the sellers and thus they had compared the products. The consumers got the opportunity to check the products properly before purchasing it. It consumed a lot of time in moving here and there and it becomes very difficult to survey the whole market within a specified time.

Frequency of online purchase

It is observed (Fig. 2) that the highest percentage (49.17%) of the respondents does online shopping often and 31.67 per cent of the respondents were found to be engaged with online shopping very often. Only 19.16 per cent of the respondents occasionally do online shopping. In this case occasional shopping indicated, shopping during the occasion such as during any functions or festivals. Shopping often indicated performing online shopping regularly i.e., more than thrice in a month and very often indicated frequency of purchase more than thrice in a week.

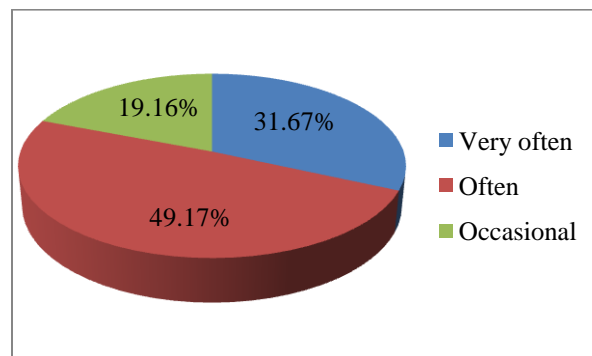


Fig. 2: Frequency of online purchase

Khitoliya (2014) also revealed that 47% of the total respondent frequently goes for online shopping followed by 30% who buy online seldom. Agarwal (2013) reported that 79% people have been frequently using online stores for shopping.

Products purchased by the consumers in online shopping

In the present study the products are categorized into fourteen categories. The distributions of the products preferred by the consumer to shop online are categorized and it has

been observed in the Fig. 3 that the highest number of respondents (80.83%) purchase clothing online. The second product preferred by the consumers for online shopping is books and purchased by 70.83% of the respondents. This is followed by electronic gadgets preferred by 68.33 per cent of the respondents. Very few (7.7%) of the respondents purchased toys from online stores.

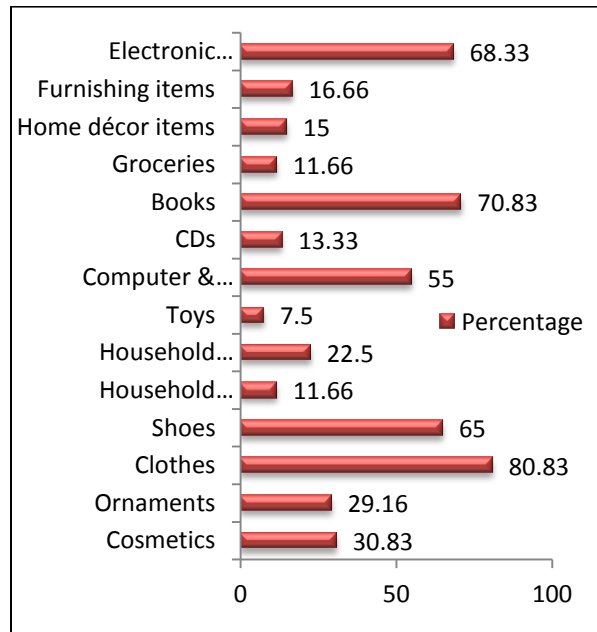


Fig. 3: Products purchased by the consumers in online shopping

The respondents had also mentioned that before the existence of online shopping, they purchased from the market, where they had included one important fact that for each category of product they had to visit a number of stores and move around the city. Initially for some of the specific products like electronic gadgets, books, and clothing they checked internet and they felt to make a try over it and after receiving the product they were satisfied which had led them to purchase further.

Preferences of online shopping sites

A total of twenty five online sites were listed and the percentages of the preferred websites were shown (Fig. 4). It is clear that a large majority of the respondents (96.66%) shop from Flipkart.com. Amazon.com is preferred by 81.66 per cent of the respondents and this was followed by snapdeal.com, myntra.com and jabong.com preferred by 73.33 per cent, 72.50 per cent and 59.16 per cent respectively. Some of the online shopping sites were found to be least used by consumers such as indiaplaza.com, seasonsway.com and assamsilkshopping.com (0.83 per cent, 0.83 per cent and 2.50 per cent respectively). Consumers have a tendency to show importance to the things for which they get reference from their friends and family members. So, this may be the fact that due to low popularity of the sites consumers don't prefer to shop from those sites. Kanchan *et al.* (2015) reported that the most popular website for online shopping was flipkart.com. This is in conformity of findings of the present study.

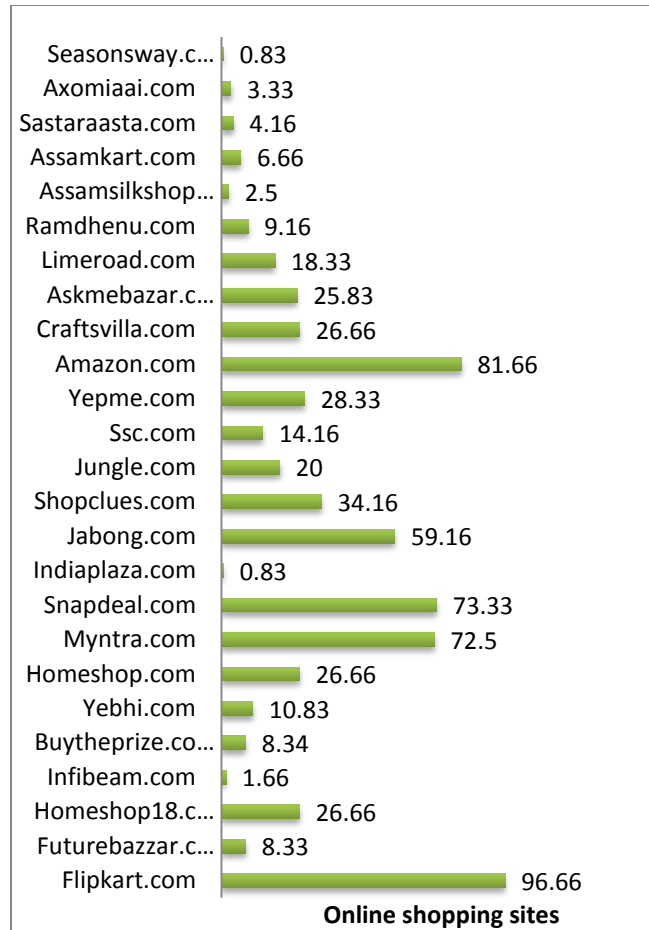


Fig. 4: Preferences of online shopping sites

For online purchasing the consumers are mostly influenced by the surrounding i.e. from friends and the family members. The respondents were informed about the sites by their friends and family members and they have gathered preliminary information such it is advantageous than the other sites, relevancy and its usability. They check the sites for various needs and then the reviews help them more to learn about the site appropriately.

Reason for inclination: Factors influencing consumer for online shopping

After assessing all the ten factors the findings of the study revealed that 99.17 per cent of the respondents always consider cash on delivery as one of the most important reason to choose online shopping and the highest number of respondents had informed that due to the cash on delivery they became interested for it. A consumer is well aware of the fact that cash on delivery is hassle free and it eliminates the identity theft. It is very simple, and there is no fear of losing money. Interestingly 89.79 per cent of the respondents always concentrate on the website design/ feature, it may be due to the reason that well designed and user friendly websites attract more buyers and encourage them to make a purchase decision and more likely to return for repeat purchases, so the website design/feature has a strong influence while shopping online. Knowledge on internet was ranked third among the ten factors and 90 per cent of the respondents

always consider that knowledge on internet plays an important role in pushing consumers towards shopping online. It is not only the influential factor for the online shoppers but also an influential factor for all the people who tends to go for surfing internet. A proper knowledge on internet helps the user to get the information correctly and also it helps the user in various ways regarding asking question, checking reviews, checking details of a product etc.

Table. 2. List of factors influencing consumer for online shopping

Factors	Always	Sometimes	Never	Wt. score	Rank
Convenience	84.69	10	5.31	279.38	VI
Safety and security	69.17	22.83	8	261.17	X
Time	79.56	12.66	7.76	271.80	VIII
Website design/ feature	89.79	7.82	2.39	287.40	II
Lifestyle	81.45	12.5	6.05	275.40	VII
Knowledge on internet	90	7.08	2.92	287.08	III
Trust	73.89	18.89	7.22	266.67	IX
Price	86.16	10.50	3.34	282.82	V
Cash on delivery	99.17	0	0.83	298.33	I
Offers and discounts	88.83	8.83	2.34	286.50	IV

The findings revealed that 88.83 per cent of the respondents always think that offers and discounts have a positive impact on consumers to move for online shopping and it was ranked fourth. Offers and discounts acts like a catalyst in online shopping. It attracts consumers easily by offering or selling at a reduced price. It means a reduction from the full or standard amount of a price or value. Most of the consumers purchase only when the online site offers various discounts. Because people prefer buying things on sale, discounts serve as a ploy to attract more people to the online store. Price as a factor for online shopping ranked fifth. Majority of the respondents (86.16%) always consider price as an important factor for inclination towards online shopping. Most of the online stores offer prices that are much lower than the price in the physical stores. The advanced innovation of search engine allows consumer to easily check and compare prices with just a few mouse clicks. Even one can compare prices in physical stores as well, but it will take more time. It requires to go there or more traditional shops in order to compare the price. But in online shopping, one hour or less is enough to compare and buy the products with cheaper and best price.

Convenience is the major advantage of online shopping compared to the traditional store and 84.69 per cent of the respondents always consider it as a reason to move interest towards online shopping. Many unwanted situations can be skipped by shopping online. The process of purchase can be completed with a few mouse clicks. It allows switching stores and product within a few minutes. For this people go for shopping via internet and thus it

influences consumers to shop online. Lifestyle as an influencing factor for online shopping ranked seventh and the findings of the study revealed that 81.45 per cent of the respondents always consider it as a valuable reason for making the consumers move for online shopping. Net-oriented people are interested in and make use of internet applications. The lifestyle of an individual includes all of its activities, interests, values and opinions. The more experience online consumers have with the internet, the more money they are likely to spend shopping online.

Time is an important factor for shopping and it was ranked eight among the factors influencing consumer for online shopping and 79.56 per cent of the respondents were found to be responding always for this as an influencing factor. Browse or search an online catalogue can save time and patience. People can save time and can reduce effort by shopping online. According to Rohm and Swaminathan's (2004), one possible explanation that online shopping saves time during the purchasing of goods and it can eliminate the travelling time required to go to the traditional store. Trust was considered as an important factor for influencing consumer for online shopping by 73.89 per cent of the respondents and ranked ninth among the factors listed above. Trust is an expectation about individuals' behaviour within the society where they are living or by which they are ruled. Present of trust will increase the consumers' belief that the e-retailers will not engage in opportunistic behaviour. It has been demonstrated in the extant literature that trust beliefs positively influence customer online purchase intention. According to the McCole and Palmer (2001), online purchasing necessitates online customer trust. The findings of the study catches the eye when it has been observed that 69.17 per cent of the respondents considers always for it as an important factor that influences consumer for online shopping. Safety and security was considered as the least influential factor. While since there is no direct contact with the seller, so sometimes people feels difficulties regarding asking queries as it may take time. So they don't feel that security as a factor influencing consumer for online shopping. Cassell and Bickmore (2000) opined that online trust is at lower level than the face-to-face interactions in the physical store.

Conclusion

Online shopping is very popular and is in trend in young generation. When a purchase has to be made online, a consumer is affected by various factors. The study revealed that "cash on delivery", "website design/ feature", "knowledge on internet", "offers and discounts", "price", "convenience", "lifestyle" etc are the important influencing factors to move consumers for online shopping. Customer believed that online shopping is better option than manual shopping. The study has revealed that since the reach of internet is expanding and it covers almost the entire country, the reach of online sellers are also expanding and Jorhat though situated in the north eastern zone of India yet the craze for online shopping is very much present in the region and with the changes in time as per the findings, it can be understood that online shopping is surpassing traditional shopping idea even in remote and far flung areas of the country. As the young generation is found to be actively involved in online shopping so this kind of study will help the marketers to design their marketing strategies and progress in the business.

Managerial implication

Based on the results and findings, the study identifies the following implications. First, retail companies should give priority to the factors towards which consumers are more inclined and also they can think of improving their marketing strategy so as to achieve more and more consumers.

Second, the retailers should give importance towards the priority of consumers for online shopping sites, they can find out the reason for selection of specific sites, whether their website design or features are user friendly, or their display of products are better than the other sites. The retailers can also analyze the reason for consumer's preference of purchase for specific products through online.

Third, the retailers can provide and redesign their sites so that it can accommodate consumers of all age groups, because in this study it was seen that only young generation was involved. So, the retailers can assess the reason of other age groups for not actively involved in online shopping activity.

Limitation of the study

The study was limited to the urban area of Jorhat only. Only those individuals were considered for the study who were on the habit of buying online. The study was limited to the online products only.

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