Factors Influencing Online Buying Behavior of Customers in Saudi Arabia

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Abstract: Recent years witnessed the establishment of many Saudi online stores; the accessibility of such online stores oprovides online shopping facilities that will increase online shopping in KSA. Therefore, it becomes highly important t nostudy and understand the different factors that affect consumers' behavior towards online buying in Saudi Arabia based poserthe fact that e-commerce has been one of the strategic objectives that support fulfilling the Saudi Vision 2030. The pu of this study is to identify factors that could influence the buying behavior of customers in Saudi Arabia. The present paper has used the descriptive analysis to study the influence of various factors. Saudi online customers are the targeted population of the research. This study collected data using a convenience sampling method. The data was collected through a questionnaire on a sample of 212 respondents. The results of this paper show a positive attitude toward online buying among Saudi customers. The findings confirm that trustworthiness, price, convenience and customer satisfaction are determinants of online buying continuance and they could influence online buying behavior. The findings show that there is no significant difference in online buying behavior, according to social influence. Online Saudi companies should concentrate on setting effective marketing and sales strategies to get more customers into online buying. The findings contribute to the projected growth of e-commerce in Saudi Arabia in light of Saudi Vision 2030.

Keywords: E-commerce, Online buying, Customer behavior, Demographic factor, Trustworthy, Price, Social Influence, Convenience, Customers satisfaction.

العوامل المؤثرة على سلوك المستهلك عند التسوق عبر الإنترنت في السعودية

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الملخص: شهدت السنوات الأخيرة إنشاء العديد من المتاجر السعودية عبر الإنترنت؛ توفر إمكانية الوصول إلى هذه المتاجر عبر الإنترنت تسهيلات للتسوق من شأنها زيادة التسوق الإلكتروني في المملكة العربية السعودية لذا من المهم معرفة العوامل المختلفة التي تؤثر على سلوك المستهلكين تجاه الشراء الإلكتروني في المملكة العربية السعودية بناءً على حقيقة أن التجارة الإلكترونية واحدة من الأهداف الاستراتيجية التي تدعم تحقيق الرؤية السعودية 2030. الغرض من هذه الورقة العلمية هو دراسة العوامل التي قد تؤثر على سلوك الشراء عبر الانترنت للعملاء في المملكة العربية السعودية. استخدمت الورقة الحالية التحليل الوصفي لدراسة تأثير العوامل المختلفة. تم الاعتماد على البيانات الأولية لدراسة تأثير العوامل المختلفة. المتسوقون السعوديون عبر الإنترنت هم العينة المستهدفة للبحث. جمعت هذه الدراسة البيانات باستخدام طريقة أخذ عينة عرضية، تم جمع البيانات من خلال استبانة على عينة من 212 فرداً من المستخدمين للتسوق الإلكتروني في السعودية. تؤكد النتائج أن الموثوقية والسعر والملائمة ورضا العملاء هي العوامل المحددة لاستمرارية الشراء عبر الإنترنت وقد تؤثر على سلوك الشراء عبر الإنترنت. أظهرت النتائج أنه لا يوجد فرق كبير في سلوك الشراء عبر الإنترنت وفقًا للتأثير الاجتماعي. على الشركات السعودية أن تركز على وضع استراتيجيات تسويق ومبيعات فعالة لجذب المزيد من العملاء إلى عمليات

الشراء عبر الإنترنت. تساهم هذه النتائج في النمو المتوقع للتجارة الإلكترونية في المملكة العربية السعودية في ضوء الرؤية السعودية 2030.

الكلمات المفتاحية: التجارة الإلكترونية، الشراء عبر الإنترنت، سلوك العملاء، الثقة، السعر، التأثير الاجتماعي، الملائمة، رضا العملاء.

Introduction

In the last two decades, the internet has been developed rapidly in the light of digital economy that is driven by information technology. These developments of the internet, increased online users, high speed internet connection, and new technology have made the function of the web and the Internet better and have enabled organizations to boost and enhance images of their products and services through the Internet. Buying through the Internet became the primary theme for customers worldwide. Therefore, detailed product information and improved service attracted more buyers and changed their consuming behavior from the traditional method to the internet buying as buyers now are conducting extensive research online before buying a product. Hence, Internet makes buying much easier and faster. Online buying provides customers with a variety of products and services from various suppliers where they are able to make comparison in terms of prices and quality and choose the best offer to them. Electronic marketing is enhancing a one to one communication between the seller and the end buyer with round the clock customer service. Today, business internet marketing led to changes in the method leaders do business with a rapidly growing worldwide trend towards online buying. This study is aimed to study the factors that influence the online buying behavior of customers in Saudi Arabia.

Importance of the Research

Based on the fact that e-commerce has been one of the strategic objectives of the National Transformation Program that supports fulfilling the Saudi Vision 2030 by improving the IT sector, creating an attractive environment for local and international investors, supporting small and medium enterprises and productive families in reaching their customers and entering new markets. These developments, in turn, will result in creating new businesses. Besides, the growth of spending in E-commerce in Saudi Arabia will create a potential growth in the private sector, especially in the retail industry (CITC, 2017, 21). In turn, this development will attract more investors to do business in the E-commerce sector.

Problem Statement

Recent years witnessed the establishment of many Saudi online stores; the accessibility of such online stores provides online shopping facilities that will increase online shopping in KSA. As mentioned earlier, the Saudi regime has made a priority to promote a wide use of E-Commerce. E-commerce, online shopping data and available statistics illustrate a growing trend in E-commerce and online buying in KSA. Studying consumer behavior is one of the important marketing issues because it is the heart of marketing. Therefore, it becomes highly important to study and understand the different factors that affect

consumers' behavior towards online buying in Saudi Arabia. This study focused on what factors could influence Saudi consumers to use online buying. Online retailers need to pay significant attention to those factors.

Problems Questions

1- What are the main factors that influence customer's behavior towards online buying in Saudi Arabia?

2- What factors Saudi companies need to take into considerations when maintain their online channels?

Research Objectives

1- To study the different factors influencing customers behavior towards online buying in Saudi Arabia.

2- To perform the survey with people who shop online to distinguish the factors that encourage online shopping.

3- To make recommendations on using the main factors contributing to online buying.

Theoretical Framework

Literature Review

Several studies have been conducted earlier to measure the effectiveness of a website and its ability to form an attitude towards buying from that website and they have indicated several factors in this regard. Phang, Kankanhalli, Ramakrishnan, and Raman (2010) noted, in general, that demographic variables such as gender, age, income, and education have often been used and studied to segment the consumer population for better marketing strategies and that demographic variables offer valuable insights into who consumers are and what they need. From the study of Goldenberg et al. (2012) it was clear that attitudes towards a retail website has direct influences on the intention to purchase and attitudes towards the brand.

Al-Maghrabi et al. (2011) clarify the theory and determine factors that could demonstrate the level of continuance intention of online buying. The results of the study illustrated that subjective norms, perceived usefulness, and enjoyment are determinants of online buying continuance in Saudi Arabia. Almousa (2014) reports that the most significant risk factors negatively affecting consumers' adoption and usage of e-commerce in Saudi Arabia is perceived as privacy concerns, psychological risks, performance risk, and financial risks. Alkasassbeh (2014) study discuses different factors could influence customer behavior in online buying. The study used a questionnaire to collect the data through a simple random sample from users who deal with the online shopping in the city of Tabuk. The results indicate the presence of a statistically significant impact of factors (perceived usefulness, perceived risk, perceived ease of use, and product involvement) in influencing customers' attitudes toward online buying. On the other hand Akbar and Azeemi (2017) distributed a questionnaire in Riyadh city for their study "factors affecting

consumers' behavior toward E-Shop in KSA". The results show that only quality of a website has impacted on consumer behavior in KSA and there is no impact of perceived trust, promotion, and convenience on consumer behavior.

Jawa and Chaichi (2015) identify four factors that may affect consumer behavior in Saudi Arabia while shopping online which are website design quality, perceived trust, perceived convenience, and advertisements & promotions. The study was conducted in Al Dammam city in Saudi Arabia and the findings of the study showed that of all the factors only quality has an impact on consumer behavior in Saudi Arabia. Other factors, namely convenience, trust and promotion showed no significant relationship with consumer behavior in online shopping in Saudi Arabia.

Alsharief (2017), in her study "Saudi consumer attitudes towards online shopping: An attempt towards building online shopping framework in KSA" developed a primary research framework to understand and evaluate consumers' attitudes towards online shopping in Saudi Arabia. The research framework focused on individual variables such as satisfaction and trust from the angle of affecting online shopping attitudes. In addition, it investigated trader variation (privacy and security and customer service) and the way these variables affect online shopping attitudes. Meanwhile, Alsharief and Al-Saadi (2017) has empirically tested this framework. The results of the study confirm that reliability and ease of use positively affect to the attitude of customers towards online buying. The results also showed a positive relationship between the research remaining independent variables and online buying attitude in Saudi Arabia. Hannon and Schumm (2017) focus on Saudi women and their attitudes toward online shopping in their study. The results show that education and income were significantly related to more frequent and extensive online shopping experiences.

Fundamentals of Buying Behavior

Buying behavior is the customers' buying pattern and motivations in purchasing. It is the decision processes and acts of individuals involved in buying and using products (Budica. I. & Budica, B., 2010, 68). It involves the use of products as well as the study of how they are purchased. Customer behavior is an integral part of human behavior and cannot be separated from it. However, understanding customer behavior is essential for companies' decision making. How customers make decisions about what they want and buy directly affect the profits of organizations. It is critical for them to understand how customers act and perform buying decisions when adopting marketing plans. Various customer behaviors present various features into demand function, which can have an important effect on companies' effectiveness. Therefore, buyers' reactions to a company marketing strategy have a significant effect on its success (Pappas, 2016, 93).

Explaining customer behavior can enable marketing specialists to predict, how customers will react with promotional material. In order for marketing efforts to succeed in achieving desired results,

leaders need to examine the needs, motivation, and factors that drive customers to make a purchase decision (Budica, I. & Budica, B., 2010, 70). Studying the customer behavior, perceptions and attitudes would participate to a better understanding of customer behavior and it will aid companies to prepare adequate strategies for marketing their products. Companies can promote customer value by conducting a better job of expecting and analyzing the customer needs than competitors do.

Research Methodology

Research Design

The present paper has used the descriptive statistics to study the influence of the various factors. Research data was collected from a primary source through a questionnaire and. It used a quantitative approach based on a survey study where data were collected and classified in digital form and then carried out statistical analysis to get the results.

Sampling

Saudi online customers are the targeted population of the research. This study collected data using a convenience sampling method. This technique is chosen as it is the most acceptable with the time limitations of this research (Cooper, & Schindler, 2014, 152). The research sample consisted of 212 Saudi customers who are involved in online buying.

Research Instrument

The study used a structured electronic questionnaire to obtain quantitative results and gather primary data. The questionnaire has been designed as an anonymous survey, so that the target respondents did not feel uncomfortable to fill it out and were likely to give honest answers. The questionnaire was divided into two sections. The first section was about the demographic information about the participants, including gender, age, income, education, and occupation. The second section included a question about customers' preference toward online buying and questions relating to the factors influencing the online buying behavior of customers; each factor contains two to four questions. The questionnaire followed 5- point Likert scales as it is a widely used approach to scaling responses in survey researches. The scale offers a range of response options from strongly agree to strongly disagree to a given statement (1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = undecided, 4 = agree and 5 = strongly agree) (Bertram, 2007, 1). Since technology has made conducting surveys even more popular, this study used the website Google Forms to design and distribute the questionnaire.

Data analysis and Discussion

Demographic Profile and Characteristics of Respondents

In this section, descriptive statistics are employed for analyzing the primary data of the respondents' demographic information. In descriptive analysis, the raw data are presented in terms of frequency and percentage. These data include demographic information, gender, age, educational level, monthly income, and occupation.

Gender

Table (1) *The data of frequency and percentage summary of demographic information (Gender)*

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	94	44.3%
Female	118	55.7%
Total	212	100%

Age

Table (2) The frequency and percentage summary of demographic information (Age Level)

Age	Frequency	Percentage
Less than 18	9	4.2%
Between 18 - 25	46	21.7%
Between 26 - 35	83	39.2%
Between 36 - 45	33	15.6%
Above 45	41	19.3%
Total	212	100%

Educational level

Table (3) The frequency and percentage summary of demographic information (Educational Level)

Educational level	Frequency	Percentage
Below high school	2	9%.
High school	26	12.3%
Diploma	12	5.7%
Bachelor degree	121	57.1%
Post graduate	51	24.1%
Total	212	100%

Monthly Income

Table (4) The frequency and percentage summary of demographic information (Monthly Income)

Monthly income	Frequency	Percentage
Less than SR4,000	73	34.4%
Between SR4,000 - SR6,000	22	10.4%
Between SR6,001 - SR8,000	16	7.5%
Between SR8,001- SR10,000	24	11.3%
Between SR10,001- SR15,000	32	15.1%
Above SR15,000	45	21.2%
Total	212	100%

Occupation

Table (5) The frequency and percentage summary of demographic information (Occupation)

Occupation	Frequency	Percentage
Student	54	25.5%
Government employee	45	21.2%
Privet sector	61	28.8%
Self-employed	15	7.1%
Unemployed	37	17.5%
Total	212	100%

Factors Influencing Online Buying Behavior

The second section also includes the factors influencing the online buying behavior. Different factors are used to assess the respondents' behavior toward online buying. The descriptive statistics are used to describe the respondents' attitudes toward relevant factors. In order to analyze the factors that influencing customer's behavior in online buying, the statistics (mean and standard deviation) have to be calculated for each question in the survey.

All factors are tested on a 5-point scale ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree as follows:

Table (6) The questionnaire has been divided to a 5 Point Likert scale as follows:

Likert scale	Interval	Description
1	1.00 - 1.79	Strongly disagree
2	1.80 – 2.59	Disagree
3	2.60 – 3.39	Neutral
4	3.40 – 4.19	Agree
5	4.20 – 5.00	Strongly agree

Trustworthiness

This factor is concerned with customer trust towards online buying. To answer this factor, the means and standard deviations were extracted to identify the responses of survey sample members of the trust in online buying (Table 7).

Table (7) Descriptive statistics for the trustworthiness factor

Questions		Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	disagree	Strongly disagree	Mean	Std. deviation	Rank
1-Different methods of payment gateways are beneficial	N	79	88	39	5	1	4.13	.825	2
	%	37.3%	41.5%	18.4%	2.4%	.5%			
2-When I shop online, I check for trustworthiness of online stores	N	112	66	22	8	4	4.31	.906	1
	%	52.8%	31.1%	10.4%	3.8%	1.9%			
3-Security features used by the online stores to protect credit card details are acceptable	N	65	83	47	15	2	3.92	.945	3
	%	30.7%	39.2%	22.2%	7.1%	.9%			
4-Customer's personal information is protected by the online stores	N	40	78	53	34	7	3.53	1.059	4
	%	18.9%	36.8%	25%	16%	3.3%			
Weighted mean								3.97	
Std. deviation								.611	

Price

Table (8) Descriptive statistics for the price factor

Questions		Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	disagree	Strongly disagree	Mean	Std. deviation	Rank
1-Price is my primary concern for shopping online	N	61	84	48	17	2	3.87	.953	3
	%	28.8%	39.6%	22.6%	8%	.9%			
2-I would shop online if the price is reasonable for me	N	105	76	24	6	1	4.31	.819	1
	%	49.5%	35.8%	11.3%	2.8%	.5%			
3-When I shop online, products are available relatively at a lower price	N	53	92	47	17	3	3.84	.925	2

Questions		Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	disagree	Strongly disagree	Mean	Std. deviation	Rank
	%	25%	43.4%	22.2%	8%	1.4%			
Weighted mean							4.00		
Std. deviation							.686		

Social Influence

Table (9) Descriptive statistics for the social influence factor

Questions		Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Mean	Std. deviation	Rank
1-I would be influenced by social networking sites to shop online	N	23	79	63	35	12	3.31	1.052	3
	%	10.8%	37.3%	29.7%	16.5%	5.7%			
2-My family is the most influential people that influence my buying behavior	N	20	52	71	53	16	3.05	1.079	1
	%	9.4%	24.5%	33.5%	25%	7.6%			
3-I care about people opinions when I buy things	N	23	68	56	43	22	3.13	1.167	2
	%	10.8%	32.1%	26.4%	20.3%	10.4%			
Weighted mean							3.16		
Std. deviation							.791		

Convenience

Table (10) Descriptive statistics for the convenience factor

Questions		Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Mean	Std. deviation	Rank
1-I can buy products anytime 24 hours a day while shopping online	N	104	67	21	11	9	4.15	1.072	1
	%	49%	31.6%	9.9%	5.2%	4.3%			
2-There are more discounts, deals, and offers while shopping online	N	76	93	30	6	7	4.05	.950	2
	%	35.8%	43.9%	14.2%	2.8%	3.3%			
Weighted mean							4.10		
Std. deviation							.810		

Customer Satisfaction

Table (11) Descriptive statistics for the customer satisfaction factor

Questions		Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Mean	Std. deviation	Rank
1-I will buy products again from the same shop if I am satisfied with it	N	112	74	18	6	2	4.36	.828	1
	%	52.8	34.9%	8.5%	2.8%	.9%			
2-I am overall satisfied with the experience of shopping online.	N	48	104	47	10	3	3.87	.866	2
	%	22.6%	49.1%	22.2%	4.7%	1.4%			
Weighted mean							4.11		
Std. deviation							.708		

Results

1- Trust in online buying is a factor influencing Saudi online buying behavior positively as Saudi people trust online buying.

2- Price has a significant positive influence on online buying behavior of Saudi customers.

3- Social influence has no strong impact on the behavior of Saudi customers.

4- Saudi shoppers agree that online shopping is very convenient rather than a real shop.

5- The customer satisfaction factor has a high influence on the online buying behavior of Saudi customers.

Discussion

This section discusses the results of the factors that influence Saudi online shoppers' behavior. This study contributed to an overall understanding of factors which influence customers' behavior in Saudi online shopping context.

As appeared in the analysis of trust factor, many of Saudi customers said that there are secured in security level while their access online buying. Saudi people do feel that the reputation of online retailers is highly important in having an impact on their online shopping. They check for the trustworthiness of online stores. They agree that Security features used by the online stores to protect credit card details and personal information are acceptable. Secure and various payment methods through the site or on receipt increased their trust in the stores. While consumers may be benefitted from online purchases, but concerns about privacy and security are challenging issues demanding the attention of online retailers. Trust in the online buying factor is important; when shoppers perceive this factor, they are more likely to shop online. Hence, the more trust they have in online shopping, the more they will use this facility, and

conversely the opposite applies to those who lack trust in online shopping. With recurring purchases, the risk most likely declines, while the factor of trust increases (Hasslinger et al., 2007, 30).

In the regards of the price factor, Saudi customers are willing to purchase online if they get the product or service at a low price than the traditional store and they will shop if the price is reasonable for them. Hence, Saudi customers actually prefer to buy online because of the better offers (prices) and promotions. They believe that the Internet shop operation can save some overhead expenses, for instance, inventory's cost, space rental, and utility costs. Thus, Saudi shoppers would always find that the prices of online goods are lower than the prices of offline shops' goods.

In addition, Saudi customers were neutral regarding the social influence on their purchasing behavior in terms of social networks and opinions of their families and people. This is due to the increased awareness of the new generation of society where they become more realized of the impact of those social media advertising that may not be true and just to market a product or service.

In the discussion of the convenience factor, the study has shown that in most cases buying from Internet is preferred for its convenience and simplicity. Saudi people believe that there are more discounts, deals, and offers while shopping online. They prefer to buy online because of the 24-hours operation, availability and because of the time that could be saved when they buy online.

Moreover, the majority of Saudi customers are satisfied with online website services. They are satisfied with their experience of online buying and they will buy products again from the same shop if they are satisfied with it. This is due to the technical developments witnessed by the KSA in the infrastructure as the availability of high Internet speeds and spread of networked devices as well as the availability of laws and regulations that are governing the e-commerce in KSA. Satisfaction can seriously affect online buying behavior. Accessing desired information of best quality at online stores keeps consumers motivated to buy online.

Accordingly, the overall results prove that the respondents have perceived online shopping in a positive manner. This clearly shows the large growth of online shopping in Saudi Arabia in light of Saudi Vision 2030.

Recommendations

The results of this paper will help both the government and online vendors for better understanding online buyers. The research also helps leaders to adopt and develop a better online shopping infrastructure with the technological competitive advantage for both online vendors and consumers. Online Saudi companies should concentrate on setting effective marketing and sales strategies to get more customers into online buying. Companies also should find more methods to reach to their targeted customers and promote their branding. This can be performed effectively through email, web marketing and search engine marketing.

This study has come forward to recommend several recommendations for the online retail industry. Among such recommendations: e-retailers must develop their privacy policies to make their consumers feel confidence, trust, and satisfied. Security of online payment transaction plays an important role in online shopping. Trust on the online retailers can be created by posting ratings from the rating agencies and consumer reviews on their website. Hence, efforts needs to be performed on improving the security of online buying transactions such as securing financial and personal information hence customers be more secured about violations of their privacy. Moreover, e-commerce rules and regulations should be legislated to grantee that companies respect the privacy of their consumers as well as to grantee the rights of all the involved parties. Adopting transparent e-commerce regulations can maximize the degree of trust associated with online buying.

Additionally, customers must be provided with good quality customer service, though quick responses to their queries and requirements as well as offering them various modes of payments. E-retailers should also ensure trust among the consumers by establishing privacy and trustworthy policies. Exclusive online promotions such as lower prices or the availability of wider collections can be also considered in order to attract the attention of people and draw them towards experiencing online buying. Marketers should provide various facilities online to create positive attitudes among Saudi customers. They have to encourage them to shop through their website by providing required information, more choice, deals, and discounts for purchasing online. This positive attitude will act as a motivation to prefer online shopping. Therefore, e-retailers have to provide their consumers with different promotions and price comparison tools.

Online businesses in Saudi Arabia will have to focus on acquiring new customers through advertisement, publicity and discount packages. These customers will have to be retained and satisfied as both lead to higher levels of customer loyalty. Furthermore, campaigns can be carried out about how to buy online and about how to enhance the internet and the features of its associated services. This would contribute to more positive attitudes toward online buying in Saudi Arabia.

Conclusion

Results justify the growth of online buying in Saudi Arabia in light of Saudi Vision 2030. Trust in the online shopping factor is important. When shoppers perceive this factor, they are more likely to shop online. Saudi customers are willing to purchase online if they get the product or service at a low price than the traditional store and they will shop if the price is reasonable for them. Also, the social influence factor has no strong influence on the behavior of Saudi customers. Saudi customers agree that online shopping is very convenient rather than a real shop. Moreover, customer satisfaction factor has a high influence on the online buying behavior of Saudi customers as the majority of the respondents are satisfied with online website services.

These findings will be critical in providing the knowledge of influencing factors to investors in the region by improving their plans and setting their marketing strategies. Also, by analyzing online buying behavior; staying competitive in the market; increasing business value; and indirectly getting benefit out of online shoppers' improvement by having a greater variety of products to pick, from better price offerings, and shoppers may buy things whenever they are available since the online shop will be open 24 hours every day. These are clearly important features to both online retailers and buyers. Online retailers may increase their sales, expand their customer bases through the Internet channel, and make their customers feel more satisfied with having an alternative way of buying products.

In summary, Saudi customers tend to buy online when they perceive the following factors: trust in the online buying, reasonable prices of goods and services, quickness and convenience of the online buying and satisfaction of the online buying experience. However, Saudi customers were neutral about the influence of social factors on their shopping experience. Therefore, family, relatives, friends, and social media did not significantly influence the Saudi buying behavior in online buying.

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