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Antecedents & Consequences of Online Apparel Purchases Among the Youth

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Abstract. Today's consumer buying behavior is very volatile and keeps changing in the customer oriented market environment. There are a wide range of factors that the consumer behavior depends upon and differs when it comes to the product, features, packaging, price, generation, status, age of the customer etc. Today's youth ranging from 18-32 years of age follows the rhythm of the fashion and taste as per the changing times. They are more inclined towards having an enhanced online shopping experience.
A survey with 100 customers of online apparels in India indicated that factors such as quality, discounted options and social conformity majorly affect the purchasing behavior of the individual and their association with the product. For research purpose, the dependencies were measured by causal analysis conducted by Smart PLS 3. To summarize, this paper discusses about the drive to buy and the consequences among the youth pre and post personal consumption.
Key Words. Online Shopping, Consumer Buying Behavior in India, Apparel Purchases By Youth, Digital Marketing, Social Conformity Among Youth, Consumer Behavior Models

1. Introduction

Today's consumers in general have become smart and have evolved from the traditional way of the decision making process.

Today's buyers are altering the manner in which they buy; they explore websites online, go to the stores to check out the items physically, use their phones to acquire information, evaluate different alternatives among the products followed by the prices and, then, decide on the best buying option. Thus, a research always helps managers to put together the communication channels to communicate to their target audiences in the digital world, provide competitive and superior services to the consumers [1].

Also, clear research gaps have come to light in the order of the new consumers' behaviour in wake of the digital environment, with multifold screens and complex communication channels. Also, better research is needed at understanding as to how the social media in addition to other digital technologies has changed customers' interactions as well as experiences and the process that they generally follow while deciding and finalizing their purchase decisions [2].

Finalizing on critical factors when transforming buyers into loyal buyers looking on internet for products and/or services, tapping on new buyers and retaining all the existing buyers, is of immense significance to e-marketers and researchers [3].

As a result, in order to guarantee the effective success of this industry sector and the online businesses, it is indispensable and imperative to comprehend and appreciate the facts as to why the consumers are ready, or not, for buying products online in general; that is, to look into the reasons that have an effect on their buying intent over various websites on the internet [4].

Information quality is usually referred to as the assessment and the conclusion that consumers make with respect to the information gained, which can further be characterized by the amount of accuracy, also as to whether the particular information can be called to be competent enough to inform, and lastly the significance of the accessible information on the website [5].

In continuation with the same logic, Gao, Zhang, Wang, and Ba [6, 7] describe the quality of information as the amount of necessary details readily accessible relating to the features of a merchandise, a brand, or a particular selling company that will be helpful and constructive for the consumer, which in turn helps assess such items.

The amount of the information provided which is comprehensible, along with the layout and the design of the same — that is, the manner in which the provided information is offered to consumers are indispensable aspects of information quality. Providing requisite details about the various products as well as services ought to be a crucial competence of a website, and it's the image of the company which is out in the open while we display the information format [8, 9]). Hence, the content that the buyers see on the website is very trouble-free to read and comprehend, and the format also kept in such a way that it is simple and effortless to carry out the transactions. However, the information that is put up on the website must certainly be of high quality. While we talk about the context related to online purchases, information quality can be a factor reflecting product and service quality that allows the online buyer to have better judgment regarding the product or the service's aspects and features [10].

The purchase intent may foretell or direct an actual future conduct or behaviour; that is, it might predict the realization of a probable purchase [11] by the buyer. Hence, the purpose is majorly influenced by the amount of undertaking essential to affect the behaviour of the buyer, alongside with the easiness, the related costs, and the total amount of time involved [12].

A buying intent may or may not convert into a real buy, as many factors, such as alterations in the desires and motivations, requirements, purchase or utilization conditions, updated information, or preferred alternatives, might no longer be accessible, or may stop or change this procedure, altering the buyer's judgment. The purpose is a major precursor of buying that is highly influenced by the surroundings and the buyer. The prevalent environmental factors comprise of the shortage of time that the buyer has to buy and the monetary restrictions, both of which can restrain a buying intent from converting to an actual purchase. To sum up, the buying intention can be concluded as the character that a buyer shows to obtain the product and/or the service as well as the chances of having a successful transaction of purchase [13].

A number of authors defend the buying intention as a very strong and important precursor of the acceptance and thorough utilization of information technology or can be simply termed as Internet adoption, and furthermore as an antecedent of the online purchase [14]. Hence the intention to purchase online is simply focused upon how much the buyer is keen and intends to purchase a particular product or a service by the online medium; simply put in this case, it is the Internet [15, 16].

Lack of trust may exercise a very decisive role by lessening the buying intention in a manner that the buyer finds the need to guard himself or evade making a choice that may lead to an unwanted or unacceptable result. Hence, once when distrust comes into picture, it is likely that the buyer altogether ceases to look for products and services on the internet, or by the use of a particular website, and then decides altogether not to go ahead with the transaction; in such a scenario, the final purchase. As a result, by simply distrusting a website, the buyer intention drastically drops in no time, and we know that only when the feeling of distrust is lessened in the mind of the buyer, will he be willing to go ahead with the purchase or share further information to his known people over the Internet. Consequently, in the context where online purchase is involved, distrust simply put forward is an inhibitor of purchase decision making for a buyer. Risk that is perceived during the online purchase process concerns actions like the purchasing of a product, getting partial or deceptive information, or giving information that is personal to the website of the seller or the sponsoring company. Behaviours like these entail risk as the product or the service might not be precisely as shown or described on the particular website or even the information given by the seller of the goods and/or services might not be

exactly true, or the buyer's information that is personal might be stolen and put to use. When buyers browse through the websites and they recognize it to present superior-quality information, they appreciate that the particular site provides good quality design and appearance, and hence the buyers can effortlessly find what they are looking for; consequently, they recognize these particular websites as trustworthy. The usefulness and accurateness of the information point out how much that specific information would be functional for the buyer [17], and while the buyer recognizes and realizes that the indicated services provided by the website is unsafe or that the website deliverables are not acceptable, with imprecise or wrong information, it is likely that the buyer moves away from the website and is dissatisfied with the overall service [18], which may increase and/or reinforce the distrust.

As per Nicolaou and McKnight [19], by providing better information quality, as expected by the buyer, the discernment of risk is lessened. Information quality can refer to that the particular information is highly pertinent, definite, accurate, and whole. When the information of quality is of high standards and is easily available, the hesitation and risk connected with the purchasing of products online is hugely reduced [20].

2. Methods

The research methodology that is followed for this research paper is not limited to any particularly existing consumer behaviour model, but uses an amalgamation of different consumer behaviour theories that have evolved over the years. However, the research is inclined more towards one particular model i.e. the Engel, Blackwell and Miniard (EBM) model of consumer behaviour, where the core understanding of the model has been taken into consideration. It has been collaborated with learning from other theories and has been applied accordingly.

Process Followed:

1.   Conditional sampling method was chosen to get the responses in order to have only those respondents who were well versed with online shopping and usually do it on their own.

2.   100 respondents were tapped for getting the data for analysis purposes in between 24th October 2018 to 2nd November 2018.

3.   The medium of communication for the data accumulation for research purpose was primarily chosen to be emails and informal personal messages.

4.   The respondents were majorly (but not limited to) out of urban areas with about 80:20 ratio thus not limiting the scope of this study to just urban online apparel consumers.

5.   The targeted respondents were majorly (but not limited to) from the younger age group (18-32), thus targeting the millennial population, keeping in line with the limitation of the study.

For data collection purposes, the survey was conducted through a self filling online questionnaire which broadly comprised of 28 questions covering various aspects for understanding the online consumer purchasing journey and the consequences that the consumer experiences post the online purchase of apparels. The questions included a number of multiple choice questions, ranking based questions, Likert scale based questions and an open ended question.

This study attempts to amalgamate the individual internal and external driving factors that the buyers get affected by as the dependent variables that influence the consumer buying of apparels online with the outcomes as the independent variables.

The key purpose of this research is to broadly understand the consumer buying behaviour while they make their online purchase decisions of apparels and also to understand the consequences that the youth experiences because of online purchase of apparels. The data collected for this study can further be used to show the perception among the youth with respect to Brick and Mortar stores and what their takes are on the future of offline shopping, which is however not covered as the objective in this research paper.

For research purpose and thorough analysis, the dependencies are measured by causal analysis conducted in Smart PLS 3.

3. Results and Discussion

As per the proposed model in this research paper, following are the noteworthy antecedents, the decision making aids and the consequences of the online purchase of apparels among the youth:

Antecedents:
1.   Can compare products with other platforms and then make a decision for purchase.
2.   Can find the latest and most trendy products online at any point of time.
3.   Always get better sale and discount options while I shop online.
4.   There are a wide variety of brands to choose from while I shop online for apparels which is a major factor.
5.   Since I do not have to do any physical shopping and everything is just a finger tip away, comfort is what that really drives me to make purchases online.

Decision Making Aids:
1.   Consumer reviews and ratings is an important decision making factor that helps me in my purchase decision of online buying of apparels.
2.   Price is an important decision making factor that helps me in my purchase decision of online buying of apparels.
3.   The immediate availability of items is an important decision making factor that helps me in my purchase decision of online buying of apparels.
4.   The packaging aesthetics is an important decision making factor that helps me in my purchase decision of online buying of apparels.
5.   The brand name of the product I am buying is an important decision making factor that helps me in my purchase decision of online buying of apparels.
6.   The quality that I perceive from the look of the product is an important decision making factor that helps me in my purchase decision of online buying of apparels.
7.   The terms of return of the products is an important decision making factor that helps me in my purchase decision of online buying of apparels.

Consequences:
1.   I feel that I am very trendy and ahead of others when I buy my apparel products online.
2.   I get very curious about the upcoming trends in apparels.
3.   I feel very stylish and confident in the apparels that I buy online.
4.   Online shopping keeps my privacy intact as nobody is watching me while I make a purchase online.
5.   People appreciate me for the apparels that I buy online.
6.   I am very skeptical about the products that I buy online till they aren't delivered to me.
7.   I feel very empowered because of the deals and discounts that I receive online.
8.   The return policies of apparels purchased online are very easy and not a dreary task.
9.   I get a very wide variety of products to choose from thus making my purchase exciting and fun.

Post running causal analysis on Smart PLS 3 on the data gathered from 100 respondents, a few factors stood out to be very important ones for the online apparel buyers (Figure 1). These factors had better factor loadings as compared to others. These are highlighted below (Figure 2).
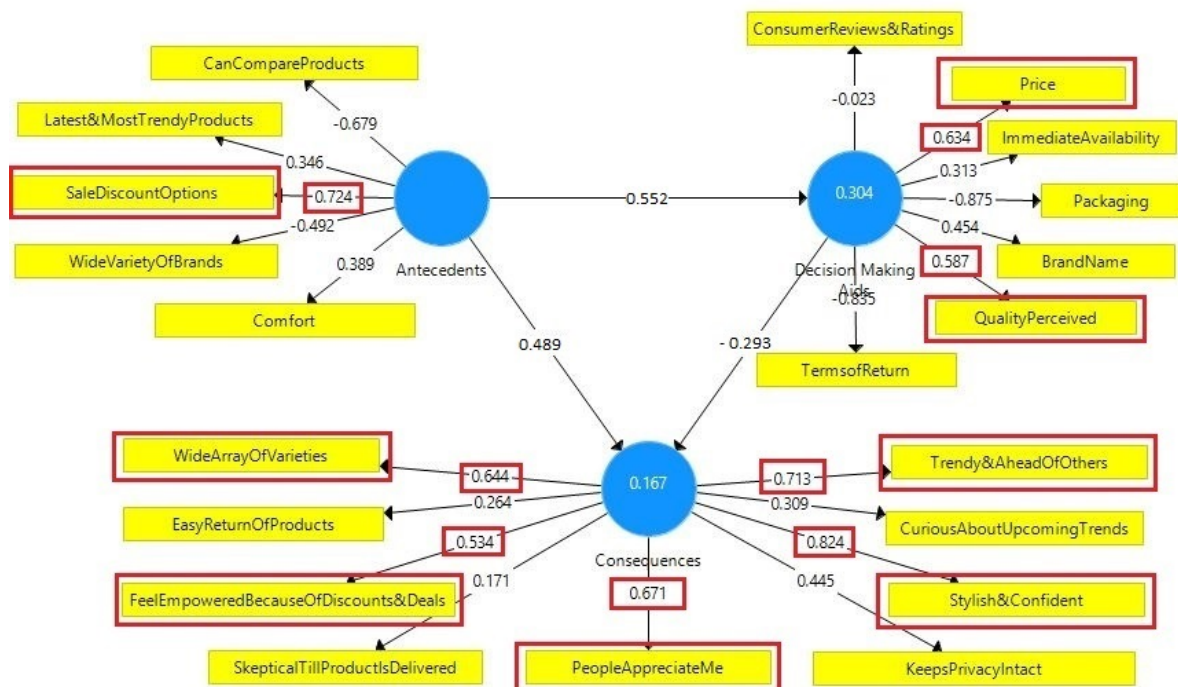
Table 1. Results of Smart PLS 3 Outcomes

Class	Factors	Factor Loadings
Antecedents	Sale & Discount Options	0.724
Decision Making Aids	Price	0.634
	Quality Perceived	0.587
Consequences	Stylish & Confident	0.824
	Trendy & Ahead Of Others	0.713
	Appreciation	0.671

Wide Array Of Varieties	0.644
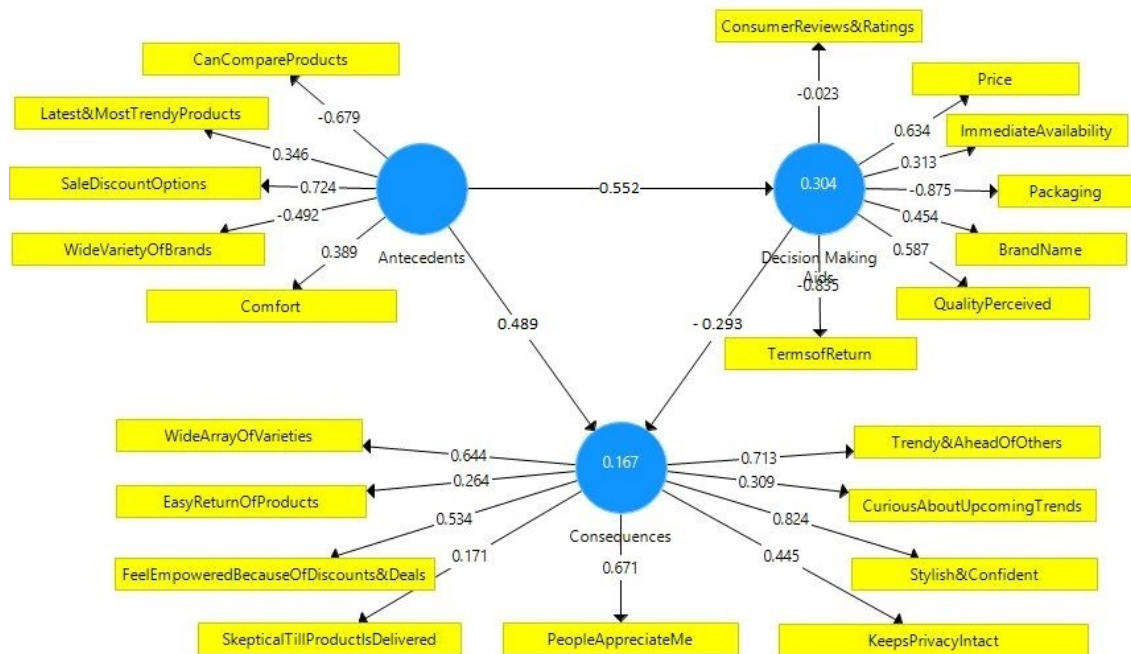
Figure 1. Smart PLS 3 Analysis Output

Figure 2. Smart PLS 3 Analysis Output – Highlighted

4. Conclusions

The analysis and followed by the results of the online survey with 100 customers of online apparels indicate that factors such as information quality, price clarity and differentiation, discounted options, user interface quality, privacy and security perceptions affect the information satisfaction and the

comparative benefit, that, in turn, significantly affect the actual purchase behaviour of the individual and their association with the product.

Based on the responses, it can be proposed that youth of today, who are as of today, the major online customers of apparels, they are very well educated about the latest trends in fashion are yet highly price sensitive and search the products extensively across all platforms in accordance to the same. They are not specifically loyal to any particular website or a brand and thoroughly do their research about better deals before making any purchase. Their behaviour is being very volatile and is something that the e-marketers can work upon to gain traction towards their products.

Social conformity among the youth of today is also a major driver for any kind of purchase activity that takes place online. The youth of today is highly influenced by the external environmental factors where they feel the need to be appreciated by their peers and hence make their purchase decisions accordingly. Also, self consciousness and value generation is important for the youth of today. They like to stay ahead of others in terms of fashion and love to feel stylish and confident in the apparels that they buy. Also, getting to choose between a wide varieties of options provided by these online apparel platforms is something that is well appreciated and resonated by this consumer group.

To summarize, this study helps to understand the antecedents and consequences that a youth has while purchasing apparels online. It in turn will be constructive for the marketer to formulate the marketing strategies in order to capture the present and potential youth segment for apparels under study.

Limitations:

1.   The research survey respondents thou from vivid ethnic backgrounds and locations were limited to 100 in numbers. This study can be conducted keeping a bigger target audience to fetch results that can be generalized for the entire millennial age group.

2.   The study is limited to the age group of 18-32 years of age and hence the results cannot be generalized for the entire set of population. Different age groups would behave differently to the online offerings by e-marketers.

3.   The respondents were majorly out of urban areas (80:20) ratio, and hence to have better and deeper understanding of the youth from the rural areas, more number of respondents must be tapped.

4.   The study is conducted with Indian citizens only and hence generalization of ideas for the youth from different parts of the globe cannot be done using this study. However this study can be used as a base for further research as customers around the world may not behave the same, but they behave similarly.

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