Comparative analysis of the consequences of purchasing models transformation within the global digitalization of the economy

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Abstract. Nowadays consumers have become intelligent and changed the traditional way of the decision making process. Social networks have become more powerful: the consumer trusts reviews and peers’ opinions more advertising. The current study is focused on clarifying the changes in the model of consumer behavior when shopping online. The research methodology is based on one the Engel, Blackwell and Miniard (EBM) model of consumer behaviour in the view of global digitalization of the economy. The study used data from statistical, information and research agencies and other researchers carried out in India and Russia comparatively. The study presents the current trends of online purchasing and the key factors that affect the decision making process. It was discovered that in India young shoppers are more active online shoppers than the olders. They are mostly driven by affordable prices and discounts. Older shoppers’ alike, consider significant factors like convenience and product quality as vital reasons while shopping online. In Russia among the important parameters of choice, consumers noted a detailed product description available on the web site, the security of online payments, the presence of several payment methods and the fast delivery of goods. The independent reviews of other peers are the source of trust. Considering the global trends it was concluded that the strategic vector of trade development should be connected with omnichannel business models. Joint solutions in the field of payment, delivery and support of online purchases (including smart voice assist systems, chatbots and smart devices) only strengthen consumer loyalty to retailers.

Key Words. Online Shopping, Consumer Buying Behavior, Apparel Purchases By Youth, Digital Marketing, Social Conformity Among Youth, Consumer Behavior Models.

1. Introduction

Nowadays consumers in general have become intelligent and have changed the traditional way of the decision making process. They prefer being aware of the latest trends in the fashion, discuss it with their peers as a sign of social conformity; carry out thorough comparative research on their own using various offline and online channels and then come to the conclusion about whether they want to buy the products or not.

Bearing in mind the need for an in-depth knowledge of how the consumer behaves and the decisive variables of their buying intent, it must be imperative to make a note that ecommerce is gaining on
importance and is attracting recognition from academic researchers across the globe and all in practice market professionals, as development of marketing channels is expedited because of the internet [1-3].

Even though the dependency on the internet for shopping is increasing by leaps and bounds and is becoming more and more popular, yet e-commerce has developed into an action that is managed mainly and depended on the retail market. The entire prospects of e-commerce can only be efficiently achieved in B2C product industry if the consumers experience content, comfort and security while transacting online with familiar as well as unfamiliar retailers [4-6].

From their conducted research, Kim, Lee, and Kim [7] talked about the association between the intent of making use of internet in order to explore product/service details and actually procuring the product/service, and they established post their research that probing for more details may foretell the intention to purchase. The researchers have made a note that the information that is available with respect to a product on discounted sale on the particular website, in addition to the convenience of this available information, multiples the likelihood of concrete purchase. Hence from the above references, Chiu, Hsieh, and Kao [8] propose that superiority in the quality of information is highly interrelated to the way the customer behaves in general (e.g., making use of the website to make a purchase, this is followed by recommendation of the same to other people).

Digitalization of economy will not solve the problem of gaining consumers' trust. Consumers are getting more independent in their choice. Digital environment provides conditions for designing consumer experience [9, 10]. 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 [11, 12]. 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 [13].

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 [14].

The purpose of this study is to clarify the changes in the model of consumer behavior when shopping online. To achieve the goal, the authors conducted a comparative analysis of online purchases of young people in India, Russia and the United States, identified stable patterns that determine the perception and the attitude to online shopping, evaluated the prospects for the transformation of the consumer choice model.

2. Methods

The methodology that is followed for this research is inclined towards one particular model i.e. the Engel, Blackwell and Miniard (EBM) model of consumer behaviour [15]. It has been collaborated with learning from other theories and has been applied accordingly. The “Consumer Decision Model” (prevalently recognized as the “Engel-Blackwell-Miniard Model”) was at first developed by Engel, Kollat, and Blackwell in 1968 and a number of revisions and upgrades have been made in the model. It is very clearly seen that a lot of the fundamentals of the said model are very comparable to those that were presented by Howard And Sheth in the “Theory of Buyer Behaviour” in 1969, nevertheless the structure and the arrangement as well as the primary relationships among the other variables is somewhat different.

The EBM consumer decision model has been formulated in mind a seven step decision making process:
- Need Identification / Recognition
- Thorough Information Search - Internally As Well As Externally
- Proper Assessment Of Alternatives
- Purchase
- Post Purchase
- Reflection
- Divestment.

Decisions made in the above 7 steps are majorly influenced because of two main factors.
1. At the first instance, the consumer comes in contact with the stimuli and processes it within him / her. This is in concurrence with the memories of the previous experiences with the same or similar product or the brand.
2. Apart from the stimulus that affects the internal variables, the external variables also come into the picture in the type of either influences by the environment or personal differences.

The major environmental influences can be identified as:
1. Social class
2. Culture
3. Family and Situation
4. Personal Influence

Also, the major influences that affect the individuals include:
1. Motivation and Involvement
2. Attitudes
3. Values
4. Consumer Resource
5. Personality
6. Knowledge
7. Lifestyle

The major reason for choosing the Consumer Decision Model as the base of this research is that there has been continuous research in this field and the models has evolved since the original publication of Engel, Kollat, and Blackwell (EKB) model in 1968. The evolutions have enhanced the descriptive power of the basic model in view of the advances made in various consumer behaviour theories and knowledge. One major evolution has been the insertion of factors such as consumption and divestment thus taking up modern definitions of the volatile consumer behaviour which takes into account of the stages of consumption within their scope.

The study also used data from statistical, information and research agencies and other researchers carried out in India and Russia [16-24], Ministry of Statistics and Program Implementation (MOSPI) [25], McKinsey&Company [26], BCG, Google, Facebook Media Publication, PwC, etc. [27-33].

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 Online purchases of the modern Indian consumer. The wealthy population in India today of young tech savvy consumers are spending a lot of their time and money online and this has hugely influenced the shopping trends. The popular products that are being bought online are books, financial services, consumer electronics, apparels, beauty care and travel. During 2018, as per reports, electronics was the largest contributor with a 48% share to online retail sales in India, which was closely followed by apparel industry at 29% (India Brand Equity Foundation). Value of the apparel market in India in 2020 is estimated to be around 5.8 trillion Indian rupees. This shows the tremendous amount of potential that apparel industry in India currently possess.

The internet boom and subsequently the online shopping is a relatively new concept for the Indian market when compared to the other places in the world but it is predicted that online sales will grow at a tremendous rate in the coming years. As per the statistics, India is already the third largest nation of internet users which is roughly accounted to 500 million, mainly because of its huge population. With mobile networks reaching to every nook and corner of the India and the rapid uptake of mobile commerce, it is predicted that the number of internet users will increase to 730 million in the next 2 years. The impact of online sales has been high on the retail sector and businesses are rapidly bringing in new ways and new channels in which they used to sell their products and services. The smart
retailers have quickly understood the need to go digital and have developed their own e-commerce stores but that has not stopped them from heavily investing in other e-market places. Over 50% of all regular transactions done by the online apparel consumers are heavily digitally influenced — i.e. they would generally have some kind of online contact either during the pre-purchase stages of purchases, or while making the actual purchase itself. 32% of the touch points are however through mixed pathways which significantly imply that they are having both online as well as offline touch points. This implies that as the role played by digital touch points increases along the pathway, a multifaceted mesh of exchanges across various online and offline (in-store) channels are coming into picture.

Today’s youth in India are the influential fragment in the market who indirectly commands their wishes and manufacturers need to comply to those in order to survive in this cut throat competition. Online buying is a very common and widely known phenomenon in India not only because of the increase in internet accessibility among the individuals but also because of the youth population which is about 35% of the total population as per the last survey by MOSPI (Ministry of Statistics and Program Implementation, GOI). As per studies, the segment that is using internet on mobiles is chiefly the youngsters, comprising of 31% as the urban users and 42% as the rural users who are below 25 years of age. The statistics further strengthens with 57% usage rate in urban areas and 65% usage rate in rural areas in the age group of 15-34 which is in line with our research (MOSPI). It is a very major segment which every marketer tries to woo to make their product successful in the market.

The consumer buying behaviour is very volatile and keeps changing in the customer oriented market environment. There are a wide range of factors that the consumer behaviour depends upon and keeps differing 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 is constantly getting updated and follow the rhythm of the fashion and taste as per the changing times. With current 35% internet penetration rate in India in 2018 which is expected to be around 55% by 2020, to understand this volatile segment, today’s marketers spend 9.2% of their marketing budget for data analysis purposes and invest time on doing market research to understand the changing behaviour in youth (Gartner). The youth of today is more inclined towards online shopping than the conventional method of buying and about digital transactions worth $100bn are expected by 2020 (BCG-Google Media Publication). Shoppers in the age group of 18-32 seek more trends than the older shoppers. They are very strongly driven by deals & discounts. While discounts do play an important role for the older shoppers’ sake, significant factors like convenience and quality also are vital reasons while shopping online.

Today’s economy, models on which businesses work, revenue generation streams, buyer and consumer bases and last but not the least, the supply chains are getting transformed by the boom in electronic commerce; all thanks to Internet. It is a common instance to see new business models emerging in today’s economy with respect to every industry. Online customers are pampered with prompt delivery and trusted payment methods that has built the trust in their minds. The experience aspect is taking a centre stage here. The intangible aspects such as the amount of knowledge, the relationships made, the people and the systems involved and finally the brands are of utmost importance. Consumers’ overall awareness of the inherent and extrinsic components of apparels is a significant factor in the decision-making course of manufacturers on what should be the offering. This is fundamentally since consumers alter their purchasing behaviours depending upon their awareness of the quality of the apparel. The assessment of the superiority in quality of the merchandise is not only just restricted to the practical aspects of the product, but also takes into account the aesthetics. Aesthetics can broadly be understood as the study of human reactions to the look and feel which are basically the non-instrumental traits of an object.

The quality perceived by the consumers is a critical facet for the competitive gain and sustainability for most firms, particularly in specific industries like apparels. While it is very tricky and subjective for consumers to judge and define quality, they usually “feel” it while having an occurrence of buying goods or while paying for the services. All apparel players must incorporate digital in their end to end customer engagement journey. A wide variety of digital communication channels like the social media, videos, online searches and engagement over the third party sites are of utmost importance.
These wide arrays of channels must be leveraged efficiently to reach out to the consumers. The online apparel industry in general faces a lot of difficulties in fulfilling the wishes of the customers, as the customer preferences and priorities have changed radically in the earlier decade (the 1990s). While in the 1980s and getting into the 1990s, customers generally bought fashionable clothing lacking much deliberation of the worth of a specific brand, customers today are in general extra value-oriented, i.e. their demands are in general more than that they can pay for. They want more values in exchange for minimalistic price to pay.

The most significant driver for the shoppers from lower tiers is generally the variety offered to the consumers. People who shop from the lower tiers cities are different from others along many dimensions. These small town shoppers are not impulsive buyers and make more of planned purchases. The need for new clothes and buying clothes for special occasions like functions, based on weather etc. are the key triggers for them to purchase. They are comparatively less triggered because of the latest trends as compared to the metro cities. While buying products online in metro cities or Tier 1 cities, shoppers are hugely driven by discounts or deals offered the availability of wider variety of apparels while shopping online is the most significant driver when it comes to small town shoppers.

Furthermore, the absence of touch & feel of the product and availability of better offline prices (cheaper options offline) are majorly the noteworthy barriers for the online purchases amongst the greater part of the small town shoppers. The profile of the online apparel buyers would change in the coming years. There would be a drastic shift from the existing typical young buyers from the metro cities. A bigger number of women buyers along with older age groups would begin buying online thus leading to a lot balanced shopper profile (BOF, McKinsey&Company). With internet penetration into the rural areas because of infrastructure improvement of network, as well as delivery infrastructure improvement, the demographics would look very different from what it is today as the online shopping would increase in India’s lower tier cities. It is anticipated that the Tier 2, Tier 3 and Tier 4 cities would consist of over 50% of the online apparel shopper base by 2020.

This change in the profile of the online shoppers will necessitate the e-tailers to alter their offerings across a number of dimensions including variety, pricing and the discounts offered, delivery options and the return policies.

Mobile is the most important gadget for Internet access for over 73% of urban users and for over 87% of rural users. It is expected that this trend would likely continue as the smart phone dispersion drives internet penetration.

Mobile has also developed into the principal device for apparel e-commerce purchases. About 85% of online apparel shoppers have a preference to browse and buy on their smart phones (Live-mint India). This is further motivated by the ease and supplementary discounts provided on using apps. It is noted that even within mobile, the various mobile apps are the preferred way of making purchases with ~80% of users choosing to use them above mobile websites. However mobile websites are being used in higher numbers in various small towns where buyers are usually are working with low capability handsets.

Digital footprint, which we refer to the buyers of fashion with any kind of internet access, has more than doubled in the past couple of years. It would definitely continue to develop and grow swiftly as internet penetration increases because of the upscale in demand and supply of the same. Digital influence is basically the fashion buyers who make use of Internet while making their purchase course irrespective of the fact that they are actually buying online or not. These buyers may be surfing online for catching up with latest trends, doing their primary research, looking out for price comparisons or even posting reviews and recommendations after making a purchase. It is expected that by 2020, almost half of the fashion buyers would be heavily digitally influenced (BCG-Facebook Media Publication) Tapping these heavily digitally influenced target audience is the mammoth task that every e-marketer must focus upon to sustain profitably in the cut throat competition in the online space.

The government has invested a lot in building up the internet infrastructure. It is very difficult for an organized retailer to reach out to rural parts of India; whereas today’s online retailers are finding a lot of buyers in places where organized retail would not to be reaching anytime soon. Companies
internationally are making efforts to explore numerous ways of leveraging digital channels to reach out to the consumers. For example, Nike has encouraged and formed a digital community keeping the theme around running to amplify engagement across its consumer touch points and purchase journey. Another major example is Net-a-Porter, which first incorporated the ‘magazine style’ editorial offering of content over its website. Lastly, an international leader like H&M united with Kik to come forward with a chat bot which understands and learns preferences and provides suggestions and assistance like an online store aide, thus recommending different products to the users as a value-added buying experience.

While quite a few companies around the world doing this fruitfully, there is a noteworthy potential and possibility for the major Indian players in the apparel industry to distinguish themselves via novel ways of thorough digital consumer engagement.

3.2 Online purchases of the modern Russian consumer. According to the results of 2018, in Russia, 90 million people aged 16 years and older use the Internet, which makes up 75.4% of the total population. 14% of Russians go to the Internet on tablets, 59% on smartphones. At the same time, 32 million Russians use the Internet only on mobile devices (smartphones or tablets).

The penetration of the Internet among Russian youth 16-29 years old (99%) and middle-aged people 30-54 years old (88%) is close to the limit values. Among Russians over 55, 36% use the Internet. 4 out of 5 Internet users are involved in the online economy.

Russia shows one of the highest growth rates of online commerce. 87% of Russians make purchases through the Internet, 71% of Russians make purchases through the Internet at least once a month, 79% of Russians make purchases from mobile devices.

In Russia in 2018, total online sales amounted to 1,150 billion rubles (about $ 17.9 billion), which is 4% of total retail sales. For comparison, the share of online sales in total retail sales in India was 4%, in the USA - 10%, in the UK - 18%, in China - 35%.

Young people are the most active online buyer, 80% of Internet users aged 23-31 make online purchases at least once a month.

Online shopping benefits in comparison to offline shopping, as consumers do not believe that retailers are making enough effort to solve their problems: elimination of long queues (57%), long wait for support (42%), ill-informed and incompetent employees (38%), lack of necessary goods (55%). Consumers have become more demanding. The main incentive for making online purchases in 35% of buyers is the convenience of searching and comparing goods and prices for them, 24% - saving money; 18% - saving time; at 14% - completeness of information, opportunity to make the right choice, at 9% - opportunity to find new, rare, interesting goods.

At the same time, most online buyers have a positive attitude to discounts on goods. 40% plan their purchases taking into account sales, 53% pay attention to discounts when choosing a product. There has been a downward trend in the share of bargain hunters as the age of the online shopper increases. The level of financial welfare does not affect the attitude to discounts.

Among the important parameters of choice, consumers noted a detailed description of the product on the site with photos (43%), as well as independent reviews of other users (39%). Also important for customers is the security of online payments (49%), the ability to purchase products from different categories on one site (47%), the presence of several payment methods (47%) and the delivery of goods (43%). 41% of respondents noted high product quality as an important criterion when choosing an online retailer. Express delivery is popular with online shoppers, but most are not prepared to pay extra for it.

An important condition for the consumer for a positive shopping experience in an offline store is a combination of both traditional (human) attributes and technological capabilities. Over 52% of Russian consumers believe that the availability of quick and easy payment methods and sales consultants who are well versed in the assortment of goods are the main conditions for creating an experience of successful shopping in a store.
If we talk about certain categories of goods, then in 2018, clothing and shoes, food and meal delivery, as well as books, household appliances and electronics were popular online orders. Next are goods for children, household goods, travel packages and tickets.

The average purchase receipt for sales on the Internet in Russia amounted to 5.1 thousand rubles. The Russians spent on the purchase of electronics (tablets, smartphones) an average of 8.4 thousand rubles. When purchasing wardrobe items (clothing, shoes, accessories), the average check was 4.3 thousand rubles.

The average purchase receipt for online purchase of perfumes and cosmetics was 4.8 thousand rubles, food - 4.2 thousand rubles, goods for repair and home (DIY) - 10.8 thousand rubles, auto parts - 3.7 thousand rubles, books - 1.2 thousand rubles, medicines 3.3 thousand rubles.

The portrait of a typical online buyer in the clothing and footwear category - a woman 18-35 years old, with an income not lower than average. 30% of online shoppers in this category are brand lovers who make online purchases primarily from one or more of their favorite brands. 35% of online shoppers in this category do not pay attention to brands. And though traditionally in Russia clothes and footwear from genuine leather and fur are loved, traditions of ethical consumption have also been developed among the Russian buyers. 25% of online shoppers choose clothes and shoes made without the use of genuine leather and fur.

Online purchases are not only in Russia but also abroad. The number of purchasers only in Russian online stores or only in foreign online stores is stable, 20% and 15%, respectively. The proportion of online shoppers who shop both is growing (from 12% in 2017 to 28% in 2019). Perfumes and cosmetics, clothes and shoes, household appliances and electronics have become popular categories of goods for online shopping abroad. Online shoppers over 36 years of age with a lower income are more likely to shop in Russia.

Online purchases are made not only in online stores. 44% of online shoppers at least once didn’t buy in an online store. Social commerce is gaining popularity. 55% of the total number of Russian Internet users make purchases through social Internet channels in 2018. The average purchase receipt in the C2C sector is 1.5 thousand rubles. The reasons for refusing purchases on social channels are related to a lack of trust in the quality of the goods (29%), high prices (8%), insufficient assortment (8%), inconvenience of purchases (7%), few goods (5%), and the product does not match the description (5%), complexity and duration of delivery (5%). Most often they buy on social networks (32% of transactions), on ad services (27% of transactions), on sharing economy sites (23% of transactions), in instant messengers (11% of transactions).

Social networks have great power: the consumer trusts reviews and peers’ opinions more than the descriptions offered by the companies themselves. Content on social networks affects online and offline purchases, especially in the “fashion” category. 52% of shoppers believe that social media influenced their decision to buy clothes or footwear.

3.3 Anticipated trends of online purchasing in the world. Consumer expectations of online shopping in the near future are associated with innovations that simplify the buying process, opportunities to buy new categories of goods online, new positive experiences.

The experience of shopping in some particular categories of goods leads to the extension of the practice of online shopping in other categories. About 54% of Russian consumers are willing to buy food on the Internet, which is 12% more than in 2018. Most barriers to purchase are related to the inability to see and touch the products before they are purchased, doubts about the quality of the goods, fears of damage during transportation and the high cost of delivery. To remove barriers, it is important to provide consumers with the proper quality of the goods and additional guarantees of safety at the stage of transportation and storage.

In 2018, the number of respondents who started using smart voice assist systems for home shopping online increased by 17%. Currently, approximately 40% of online shoppers aged 23-36 use smart voice assistants when shopping online, 13% and 11% of these respondents shop with these
devices at least once a month and weekly, respectively. Men are more likely than women to use voice assistants when shopping online.

57% of buyers want purchases with the help of voice assistants. 50% want to buy via a smart watch. Products that people willingly buy with voice assistants are health and beauty products, food, books, films.

The source of successful consumer experience is the ability of staff to emotional co-participation (emotional quotient (EQ)). Previously, such a need was observed when making large purchases, characterized by high risk and requiring high consumer involvement. The ability to recognize the consumer in a stressful situation and competently respond to them provides high customer loyalty. Consumers need not only a solution to the problem, as such, but also a personal attitude - help, personalization, the ability to adapt to the client, empathy. The negative offline shopping experience is often associated precisely with the lack of these characteristics. At the same time, many online companies are increasingly using artificial intelligence to communicate with their customers. Voice assistants and chatbots, according to consumers, still lose out to personal human communication. However, young people have greater faith in technology and expect chatbots to supplant human communication.

The global trend towards sustainable development has a huge impact on Russian buyers. The digital environment reinforces this trend. Most shoppers use online channels to get information about eco-friendly products. Approximately 40% of respondents search for information about specific products, read and watch reviews on the topic, and join communities whose members support responsible consumption. Companies that are guided by the principles of sustainable development are able not only to build up customer loyalty, but also to establish a premium margin to the price, as consumers are willing to pay such a premium for creating a positive experience.

4. Conclusions
Internet commerce will continue to grow further. This is a global trend. Despite the growth of e-commerce, consumers have not yet given up on offline stores. The choice is determined by factors of the consumer himself, factors of the characteristics of the product itself, factors of the purchase situation, factors associated with the store itself. The strategic vector of trade development should be connected with omnichannel business models. The synthesis of offline and online features will make shopping more convenient. In the future, online retail will expand its offline presence by developing a network of postamates and points of purchase for faster delivery of goods. Offline stores will personalize their offers through mobile devices and exclusive services for a successful consumer experience, contactless payment and other technological innovations are considered by consumers as a standard of service.

The prospects for the development of online trading are associated with the development of the experience of both the consumer himself and the improvement of the technology of the retailers themselves. 67% of young buyers are likely to choose a brand that offers a futuristic experience.

The introduction of innovations in retail is facilitated by collaboration with partners to enhance the value provided to consumers. Joint solutions in the field of payment, delivery and support of online purchases only strengthen consumer loyalty to retailers and other ecosystem participants. Partnership systems can also attract additional external resources.

Digital communication channels not only provide the expansion of the information field of products and brands, but also the ability to track the digital footprint of consumers. Customization of goods and services is based on customer understanding, Big Data technology and artificial intelligence. Customization allows the sellers to increase customer satisfaction and simplify the process of making a purchasing decision, as well as optimize contact points for the promotion of goods and services.

The findings of the analysis indicate that:
The consumer makes decisions about online purchases motivated by the convenience and purchases bargain. The level of financial welfare affects the frequency and size of online purchases, but not the desired benefits.

There may be many antecedents that lead to the online purchase of apparels among the youth, sales and discount options are the most powerful factors and the main reason for online purchases compared to other antecedents.

While online purchase of apparels is a trend that is rapidly gaining popularity among young people due to the presence of a large number of antecedents, perceived price and quality are still the main decision-making tools that customers are guided by when making any purchase decisions.

It is extremely important to note that the consequences that young people face after online purchase of apparels encourage them to continue to purchase and re-purchase goods of a similar brand, website and seller. Hence, the main consequences that modern youth face are that they feel stylish, confident and fashionable in the clothes that they buy on the Internet. Social conformity is another factor that is widely felt by young people when they like it, when their peers value the choice of fashion that they make when shopping online. In addition, a wide range of products in one place makes them prone to online shopping. They feel empowered through the deals and discounts they receive when shopping online, and they do not have to bargain, which is the main behavioral experience that today's youth enjoy.

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