A Longitudinal Investigation on Greek University Students’ Perceptions Towards Online Shopping

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ABSTRACT

The broad Internet utilization along with the systematic progress of Information and Communication Technologies have dramatically changed the way goods are bought and sold. Nowadays, even more Internet users prefer to shop online than visiting a brick-and-mortar store. Thus, understanding who are the ones consuming and why they choose to use or avoid the Internet as a distribution channel, as well as predicting the e-consumer behavior is a vital aspect in marketing and a necessary requirement for both e-commerce managers and consumer theorists. The scope of this paper is to examine through a longitudinal survey the perceptions of university students’ adopters and non-adopters of e-shopping in terms of demographic profile and perceived advantages and problems related to online purchases. Moreover, the reasons for using or avoiding online shopping as well as the types of preferred products and services are investigated. The research provides interesting insights on the e-consumer behavior to both academia and industry.

Keywords: E-Commerce, E-Consumer Behavior, Electronic Business, Longitudinal Study, Online Shopping, Perceptions Analysis

INTRODUCTION

Online shopping, also known as electronic shopping, online purchasing, Internet shopping or Internet buying, can be defined as the process of purchasing products or/and services over the Internet infrastructure (Mastercard Worldwide Insights, 2008). Alternatively, according to Kim (2004), it is defined as examining, searching for, browsing for or looking at a product to get more information with the possible intention of purchasing on the Internet. Nowadays, online shopping is one of the most widely used-non store formats and is broadly utilized from customers all over the world. The growth in the number of online shoppers is greater than the growth in Internet users, indicating that even more users are becoming comfortable to purchase online (Magee, 2003). Characteristically, the number of Internet shoppers has
globally increased up to 40% in 2006-2008 period (Nielsen AC, 2008), and from 53% to 58% in 2009-2011 in the European Union (Seybert, 2011). Furthermore, not only does the number of adopters grow, but also the volume of their purchases is proportionally increased (Monsuwe et al., 2004; Special Eurobarometer 298, 2008). As a result, it has been predicted that online shopping would amount to 8.8% of all retail business in 2012 (Centre for Retail Research, 2011). Furthermore, statistics by Forrester Research Inc. predicts that online retail revenue will grow from $191.7 billion in 2011 to $248.7 billion in 2014, representing an 8% compound annual growth rate (Schonfeld, 2010). Consequently, online shopping, a term that used to be unknown; has become one of the most tremendous and exciting trends in all types of businesses (Diacon & Donici, 2011).

Online shopping offers various advantages not only to customers, but also to enterprises. On the consumer’s side, the two most commonly cited reasons for online shopping have been convenience and price (Ahmad, et al., 2010; Chen & Chang, 2003). The capability of purchasing without leaving your place is of great interest to many consumers. Moreover, the use of Internet tools for price searching and comparison provides an additional advantage in consumers’ final decision, as they can purchase their desired products in the lowest available price (Haubl & Trifts, 2000). Additionally, it is characterized for its limitless feature; that is every customer can theoretically purchase anything from anywhere. In other words, it has further stimulated the process of cross-border shopping, allowing fast, less costly communication, as well as access to a wider variety of goods and services (SEC 283, 2009). On the enterprise’s side, it is significantly changing the way retailers present, advertise, sell, and communicate with existing and potential consumers. Furthermore, it offers them access to a global market that extends well beyond the traditional geographic markets serviced by their brick-and-mortar stores (Ahmad, et al., 2010).

Regarding Greece, online shopping has been emerged quite recently as a medium for transactions between consumers and firms. According to Focus BARI (2008), 23% of Greek Internet users have purchased products from online stores and their population size was estimated to 690,000 people. A more recent study presented that Greek e-shoppers increased from 23% in 2009 to 33% in 2011, whereas the country’s Internet users predicted up to 53% of the total population in 2011 (Seybert, 2011). Thus, in order to obtain a thorough point of view regarding Greek online shopping and the reason of its denial from quite a large group of Internet users, this consumer-oriented approach paper is aimed to present the perceptions of adopters and non-adopters of online shopping in terms of demographic profile, consumers’ expectations of online stores, as well as its particular advantages and problems; focusing on Greek university students. Furthermore, it intends to reveal possible differences between current and past; adopters’ and non-adopters’ perceptions. Consequently, the paper is based on a longitudinal investigation taken place in two phases, specifically in 2009 and 2012, as well as on a previous research carried out by Teo (2006). Research findings from this paper can be useful in order to understand university students’ online buying behavior. Additionally, by understanding the reasons why consumers buy or not buy online, online stores would be able to incorporate suitable marketing strategies; moderate consumers’ concerns and convince even more people being transferred from offline to online shopping, as well as persuade current adopters increase the volume of their e-purchases (Teo, 2006).

The paper is organized as follows. In the first section, the literature review regarding consumers’ online buying behavior and the factors that encouraging or hindering online shopping is presented. This is followed by the methodology and the results of the longitudinal investigation. The last section concludes with the implications of the study, its limitations and directions for future research.
Growth and Firm Size Distribution: An Empirical Study of Listed E-Commerce Companies in China
www.igi-global.com/article/growth-and-firm-size-distribution/156534?camid=4v1a