An Empirical Study of Impulse Buying Behavior in Online Bookstores

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ABSTRACT

Online shopping is gradually becoming popular in the developing countries like India. The online bookstores have emerged as a new destination which attracts millions of shoppers every day. The impulse buying in the offline stores has been a major area of interest for the researchers. But with the boom in online shopping, there is a scope to study the different aspects of impulse buying in online stores. This paper presents the study of various aspects of online impulse buying viz. hedonic shopping, website quality, trust, situational factors and variety seeking in Indian context. With the data collected from the online survey method the different antecedents of impulse buying have been analysed and reported on the basis of their significance. The hedonic shopping was found to be the major factor influencing impulse buying in online bookstores. This study also discusses about the managerial issues, suggestions and implications for the future researchers. The understanding of the behavior of the online shoppers in terms of their impulsive behavior would be helpful for the marketers and academicians.

Keywords: Consumer Behavior, Impulse Buying, Indian Consumer, Online Bookstores, Online Retailing, Online Shopping

INTRODUCTION

The research area of impulse buying has attracted the attention of marketing researchers in the offline retail stores as well as online stores (Beatty & Ferrell, 1998; Zhang et al., 2007). Piyush et al. (2010) found that all kind of products could be purchased impulsively and all consumers engage in impulse buying at various occasions. The different contemporary marketing innovations such as twenty four hours stores, television and internet shopping promote impulse buying. The growth of online retailing and the increasing consumer orientation of many societies offer greater opportunities for impulse purchases (Kacen & Lee, 2002). The online stores are capitalizing on this behavior by developing an interactive media and providing

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consumers a scope to buy at any time round the clock (LaRose, 2001).

Impulsive buying behavior is an important phenomenon in the context of retail business and marketing (Verplanken & Sato, 2011). User Interface Engineering, a leader in website design has stated that more than one third of the purchases in the various online commerce websites are due to the phenomenon of impulse. There are various external stimuli present in the online stores which engage the customers and promote online impulse buying (Madhavaram & Laverie, 2004). The environmental stimuli of the online stores affect the consumer emotional reactions which further influence the urge to buy impulsively (Parboteeah et al., 2009).

Consumers are motivated by convenience and are likely to shop online for specific types of products and services, e.g., books and magazines and travel (Rohm & Swaminathan, 2004). According to Associated Chambers of Commerce and Industry of India (Assocham) survey 2012, the online retail market in India may grow to Rs 70 billion (over $1.30 billion) by 2015 from Rs 20 billion. The Nielsen report 2011 stated that Indians are most likely to buy books (41 per cent) followed by travel ticket/reservations (40 per cent), and electronic equipment such as TV and camera (36 per cent) online.

The online bookstores and other formats of retailing have been fostered by the development and penetration of Internet and World Wide Web. The success of Amazon in 1995 has motivated different players to make a foray into the online market. In 1997, an established bookstore Barnes & Noble opened its online bookstore to join the battle against Amazon. After the success of Amazon and Barnes and Noble; Books-A-million also entered in the online bookselling arena with the launch of e-commerce website in 1998. Now it is almost a common trend for the various booksellers to have presence in online as well as brick and mortar avatar.

In the case of India, the online retail giant Flipkart has a wide and powerful presence in the virtual market which has started with the bookselling business. It has also become the first Indian online retail company to achieve the worth of 1 billion dollar. In the present scenario there are scores of bookselling websites such as Infibeam, Bookadda, Homeshop18, India-plaza and Landmarkonnet which have given a tough competition to the Flipkart established business. The huge competition poses a need to understand the book retailing business and the customer’s behavior in the online book selling websites. In order to be successful, the online retailers especially the booksellers must understand the consumer’s characteristics and needs. It is therefore important for the retailers to comprehend the online impulse purchase behavior and the different factors that could possibly influence the buyers involving in it. Online bookselling is one of the most competitive areas when it comes to online retailing. With the increasing growth of the Internet, the online book stores have to adjust their respective strategies to maintain presence online and compete. This paper therefore focuses on the different aspects of online book purchases and the intricacies involved.

NEED FOR THE STUDY

The online shopping in India is going through a phase of huge growth as well as competition. The impulse buying has become an ubiquitous phenomenon in the various online stores which poses a great scope to understand the consumer decision making in the context of online shopping. There are numbers of research works available in the online shopping context but the online impulse buying has received little or limited attention from various marketing academicians.

The research gap is reflected in terms of the dearth of literature which poses the scope to investigate the upcoming phenomenon of online impulse buying. The overall purpose of this research paper is to gather deeper understanding of the various aspects which are significantly related to the impulse buying of the Indian online...
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