

From Offline to Online: Do Saudis Change Their Information Search Behaviour?

Dr. Khalid Alatawy

College of Administrative Sciences, Najran University, PO box 1988, 11001 Najran, Saudi Arabia

Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to study and review factors influencing consumers' search behaviour for online shopping in Saudi Arabia. The study reveals that most Saudi consumers use online channels as information sources compared to offline channels. Saudi consumers tend to use online information sources, which appear to be more important than offline channels to them due to the perceived easy availability of goods and services, convenience, information, available services, and time and cost efficiency. The grounded theory is used to gather and explore primary data. The non-probability sampling technique is applied to collect and analyse opinions from respondents representing the population of Saudi Arabia. The researcher used the semi-structured interview technique to understand consumer behaviour towards online shopping. The results of the study identified that the majority of Saudi consumers like using online channels as information sources, which influences them to use online shopping. Factors influencing Saudi consumers to use online channels, and consequently online shopping, include the perceived easy availability of goods and services, convenience, information, available services, and time and cost efficiency. Although most Saudi consumers prefer using online channels as information sources, security concerns make some consumers hesitant about online purchasing. The growth of online technology in the country has great potential, as it minimizes the costs of services and delivery of goods, and easily reaches geographical boundaries bringing consumers and retailers together. Factors like perceived ease of available services and goods, convenience, information, available services, and time and cost efficiency are vital elements in influencing Saudi consumers to use online purchasing. The study concluded that online usage and purchasing is comfortable, easy, and better than offline channels. Research implications: online retailers and the Saudi government should cooperate to enhance consumer awareness towards online shopping, and they should eradicate risks hindering consumers' use of online shopping. Originality/value: The study revealed that many Saudi nationals are interested in online shopping. However, security risks are a concern to some consumers. The Saudi government and online retailers can benefit from the findings of this study and create appropriate strategies to build customer awareness about online shopping.

Keywords: online channel; offline channel; information search behaviour; Saudi consumer

1.0 Introduction

1.1 Problem statement and objective

Unlike offline information sources like magazines, newspapers and TV, the online provides consumers with greater interactive communication as a unique characteristic of the medium (Hernandez, Jimenez & Martin, 2011; Moon, 2004). The examination of how consumers use online platforms as new information sources therefore becomes a remarkable topic for both marketers and researchers (Rowley, 2000; Alam et al., 2014). The growing dependence on the online to search for information is because of benefits such as: low transaction costs, the ability to pool volumes, convenient purchases of related services, and easier access to product and price information. Compared to the era of offline information sources, consumers can more accurately make purchase decisions due to the plentiful information sources on the online platform. Online channels have played a vital role in our daily life as people can communicate online to a person who is at a distant place, can send emails at anytime, can search information, purchase things online, and even can play games online. At present, online shopping has been broadly acknowledged as an approach to buying services and products (Al-Ghaith, Sanzogni & Sandhu, 2010; Al-Salamin & Al-Hammad, 2014). Eid (2011) identified that online shopping has been recognized to offer more satisfaction to modern consumers seeking speed and convenience. However, some consumers may feel uncomfortable purchasing online. For example, a lack of trust appears to be the main issue that hinders some consumers from purchasing online. Furthermore, consumers may need to feel and examine products, and to meet friends and obtain comments about products before buying. Such factors may negatively influence consumer decisions about online shopping.

One of the key reasons for a rapid diffusion of online shopping are perhaps the benefits that the internet offers. The online platform provides convenience to consumers to search information, evaluate, buy, and utilize products more effectively and efficiently than offline channels to satisfy their needs. The online platform can enhance consumer efficiency by enabling customers to get consumer-related information more rapidly, and save money, time and effort while collecting information (Brosdahl & Almousa, 2013; Anderson et al., 2014). Also, the online platform can enhance consumer effectiveness by offering a mixture of text, image, sound and visual tools to improve consumer learning, while assisting consumers to choose products that can effectively satisfy

their needs. Furthermore, an online channel is likely to replace offline communications and distribution channels, and evolve as a channel with more potential. To date, no study has examined the impact of online adoption on Saudis changing their information search behaviour. Hernandez, Jimenez and Martin (2011) recognized the influence of the online search on consumer behaviour through every step of consumer decision-making: problem identification, information search, evaluation, purchase, and finally, post-purchase behaviours. Rambo, Liu and Nakata (2009) examined the factors that motivate both marketers and consumers to become involved in online shopping. Hoda, Ahmad and Melibari (2014) studied factors that promote online shopping and presented many consumer related variables like perception of online shopping, lifestyle, purchase habits, and demographic characteristics. Al-Ghaith, Sanzogni and Sandhu (2010) identified factors that influence consumer purchasing intentions through online mediums, such as online usage skills, perceived quality of services, changing attitude toward online usage, involvement, and perceived risk. Past studies partially examined factors that influence consumer-buying behaviour through online mediums or concentrated on the marketer's perspective. Thus, studies that present a detailed analytical approach to understand the factors that influence consumers to adopt online mediums instead of offline channels are scarce (Yuangdong, 2005; Ray, Ow & Sung, 2011).

Saudi Arabia is a country with impressive, rapid economic growth (Abdul-Muhmin, 2010; Ramady, 2010). It is vital to examine the situation from an academic research context to question what reasons influence the conditions of online shopping in Saudi Arabia (Simsim, 2011). This study may fill the gaps between the choice of offline shopping and online shopping. This research reflects the factors and problems of offline and online shopping. The study will examine why consumers adopt online shopping instead of offline shopping, and examine the main reasons for offline and online shopping. This research helps consumers to obtain ideas about online shopping. In Saudi Arabia, a lower number of people use online shopping compared to other countries. The study offers clarification to consumers about alternatives that should be adopted by consumers to obtain greater benefits.

The objective of our study is to build a comprehensive framework to examine factors that influence consumers to choose either online or offline channels for their information search. This study widely compares offline and online shopping. In particular, the objectives are:

- 1) To evaluate the significant difference between offline and online consumer groups in terms of technology use, attitude, availability, and demographics of the consumer.
- 2) To assess the factors influencing consumers to abandon offline shopping for online shopping and vice versa.
- 3) To examine factors influencing consumers to shop solely offline and solely online.
- 4) To evaluate whether consumers' qualifications affect offline shopping and online purchasing.

1.2 Theoretical background

The process of making decisions is the same whether the consumer is online or offline. However, major differences include marketing, communication and the shopping environment. Based on the traditional consumer decision model, a consumer purchase decision normally begins with need awareness, information search, then alternative evaluation, decision to purchase, and post-purchasing behaviour (Seock & Norton, 2007; Grange & Benbasat, 2014). Based on online communication, when consumers see online promotions or banner ads, such advertisements may attract their attention and motivate their interest for specific products. Prior to deciding to buy, consumers will require additional information to assist them in their purchase decision. Rambo, Liu and Nakata (2009) identified that if consumers do not have adequate information, they will search through online mediums such as search engines, websites, online catalogues and others. At the evaluation stage, the online medium provides a platform to compare different options (Li & Liu, 2014; Heinrichs et al., 2016). In the purchasing stage, information quality, sales service, and product assortment assist consumers in deciding what products they need to choose (Al-Maghrabi, Dennis & Halliday, 2011). Lastly, the post-purchase behaviour stage becomes important as sometimes consumers may have a concern or problem about the product, or they may want to return or change the product they have purchased (Brosdahl & Almousa, 2013).

External factors of trust and risks affect all the above five stages (Al-Ghaith, Sanzogni & Sandhu, 2010). Abdul-Muhmin (2010) opined that the search process is an important aspect of a consumer's online shopping behaviour. Consumers face risks during the information search and product evaluation since information in websites might contain certain mistakes. They also take risks as they are unable to examine the products before buying (Özgülven, 2011). Moreover, risk is involved in the payment process as customers may be required to provide personal information and their credit card number. Security risks are also seen at the post-purchase stage since customers' personal information might be misused (Haas & Kenning, 2014).

2.0 Literature Review

Consumers typically make decisions regarding a consumption related information search. Sometimes, such decisions are difficult since there are several alternatives or there is limited time. In particular, taking into

consideration the latest, super-diffusion of online channels, consumers must make decisions regarding whether they will search information via online mediums or offline channels (Lloyd et al., 2010), whether they will search information online, then purchase through offline channels, or whether they will search information via offline channels and then purchase online (Brosdahl & Almousa, 2013; Rajagopalan et al., 2010). Consumers apply a decision-making process to select an option which best fulfils their needs depending on their budget. Typically, the process is made up of five steps such as problem identification, information search, then alternative evaluation, followed by purchase, and lastly post-purchase evaluation. Our study focuses on one step: the information search, which appears to be a vital step in which online channels can provide more consumer effectiveness and efficiency than offline channels. An information search looks for options of product choice.

Existing consumer behaviour theories concentrate on the individual consumer's cultural factors, social factors and psychological factors, as important factors that affect consumer behaviour (Lu & Su, 2009; Rahim & Scheepers, 2011). Moreover, a contingent consumer decision-making model reveals that consumers who have limited capability for information processing, change and adapt their decision strategies to cope with the particular decision-making problems they encounter (Rambo, Liu & Nakata, 2009; Mahmud Mohammadian, 2014). Our study examines consumer behaviour through online channels by building on consumer decision-making theories in a traditional/offline environment, and the effect of the distinctive characteristics of the online channel on consumer behaviour. Regarding studies on an online consumer information search, Saleh (2015) assessed the influence of consumers' characteristics (e.g. internet usage skills) that play an important role in the internet era, and how consumers' knowledge impacts their adoption of online channels. He suggested that factors which influence the usage of IT, such as online consumer information services, show that consumer characteristics, like familiarity with computers, impact upon an online consumer information search. Heinrichs et al. (2016) investigated the effect of consumer understanding, search objectives and menu types of online advertisements, on an online consumer information search. The authors categorized consumer search objectives into continuous search and pre-purchase search. They opined that a consumer information search for healthcare purposes cannot only be explained by the pre-purchase search; they create an alternative search purpose, which is the continuous search. Eid (2011) identified that consumer satisfaction with a website is determined by update frequency, information design, quantity, transmission speed and user-friendliness of the search structure. The author shows that website characteristics influence a consumer information search through online channels.

Al-Maghrabi et al. (2011) believed that factors influencing a consumer information search through online channels can be classified into three categories: website characteristics, information search objectives, and consumer characteristics. These factors influence consumers' decisions concerning whether they will utilize online channels or offline channels for their information search. Consumer characteristics can be summed up into five factors such as demographic characteristics, knowledge level, lifestyle, online usage skills, and attitude towards online channels. The information search objective is classified as a pre-purchase search and continuous search. In addition, website characteristics are summed up into five factors such as information access, design, quantity, transmission speed, update frequency and user-friendliness of the search structure (Mansoor & Jalal, 2011). Concerning online consumer purchases, Al-Mowalad and Putit (2012) have categorized products into experience products and search products, based on the source of information of consumer product evaluation. According to Al-Mowalad and Putit (2012), consumers mainly use external information to analyse the search product. Also, they identified that consumers mainly use their own experience to analyse the experience products. They contended that search products are more suitable for distribution through offline channels than experience products. Furthermore, they argued that tangible products are more suitable than intangible products, and that shopping products are more suitable than convenience products for retailing via online channels, taking into consideration the distribution cost. According to Al-Maghrabi and Dennis (2011), the benefits of online transactions, such as convenience and time saving, improve consumer purchase intentions via online channels. Conversely, risks related to online transactions, such as payment and delivery risks, discourage consumers from purchasing via online channels. Song and Shin (2015) considered consumer purchases via online channels as a kind of innovation. They identified that online transaction characteristic variables, such as compatibility, complexity and relative benefits, influence consumers' adoption of online shopping.

Makki and Chang (2015) identified that factors that influence the purchase of consumer products through online channels include the benefits of online transactions, risks of online transactions, and product type. These factors influence consumers' decisions concerning whether they will utilize online channels or offline channels to purchase products. The benefits of online transactions include time saving, price advantage, convenience, assortment, and superior product quality. Regarding the risk of online transactions, Hoda, Ahmad and Melibari (2014) classified purchase method risk (impulse buying, difficulty of comparison, including other purchase risks); payment related risk (transaction and credit card information related risk); service related risk (contract, refunds, delivery related risk); and product related risk (assortment, quality, product, functional risk).

An online channel offers the best environment for a synchronized information search and product purchase. This is a vital characteristic that differentiates online channels from offline channels. Consumers

search information and are affected by website characteristics, information search objectives, and consumer characteristics, and they can make purchases through online channels. Conversely, the purchase can be carried out through offline platforms, even after customers have searched for information via online channels. In other words, Brosdahl and Almousa (2013) explained that the likelihood that consumers will purchase products via online channels rather than offline channel, after searching information through online channels, can be moderated by the risks of online transactions, benefits of online transactions, and the types of products they intend to purchase. Moreover, product type, and risks and benefits of online transactions, can also influence the chances of online purchases independently and directly. Rambo, Liu and Nakata (2009) said that there are several reasons why people prefer online shopping. For instance, consumers can purchase anything at anytime without travelling to the physical store; they can get the same product at a reduced price by comparing various websites at the same time; sometimes they intend to avoid pressure and queues when meeting other customers and physically interacting with salespeople. These factors can be classified into four categories such as information, convenience, time and cost efficiency, and availability of services and products.

3.0 Methodology

3.1 Grounded Theory

The focus of this study is exploratory rather than explanatory. This research study assumes the grounded theory built by Glaser and Strauss (1967) who reasoned that research is primarily a growth of theory or a confirmation of theory through logical reasoning rather than from experimental data. Grounded theory majorly concentrates on systematic qualitative processes for building a theory which explains action, procedure, concepts or interaction about the topic. Charmaz (2014) supposed that the function of exploratory research is to gather preliminary data that facilitates description and suggestion of hypotheses. The data collection method systematically collects information about the respondents. Data can be gathered through sampling methods. Typically, sampling methods are categorized into two types: probability sampling and non-probability sampling (Merriam, 2009; Silverman, 2009). The customers of Saudi Arabia are taken as a population. Normally, the population of Saudi Arabia is too large for an attempt to survey all of its members. Normally, in a non-probability sampling technique, the population is represented by a small number of groups. Thus, a non-probability sampling method would be suitable in this research study. A subset of a population is known as the size of the sample, especially with the aim of creating a forecast based on a numerical count. According to Birks and Mills (2015), a sample is normally a fixed portion of a statistical population whose characteristics are calculated to gain information about the whole population. The sampling method is an important factor of the general sampling strategy because it enables the researcher to get the most significant data for further studies.

Participant observation is the most vital qualitative data collection technique that assists the researcher in understanding the population under study (Charmaz, 2014; Phella, Bloch & Seale, 2011). This is particularly suitable for assessing expressive studies and studies focused on developing theoretical interpretations. The findings made as a result of participant observational research are appropriate for examining theories. Participant observation enables the researcher to not only observe what is occurring, but feel the experiences of the participants. The research techniques focus on observing factors that affect consumer purchasing decisions, and also consumers interacting with their products and services including their surroundings. The interview is a common method of collecting data in a qualitative study. A semi-structured interview technique would be a suitable method to understand consumer behaviour towards online shopping. This technique enables interviewees to talk about their viewpoints on a specific topic. The researcher can give and obtain information associated with the topic. A semi-structured interview presents questions and topics to interviewees though it aims to explore ideas and opinions of the interviewees (Silverman, 2009; Birks & Mills, 2015). The method gives choices to the interviewees to enable the researcher to examine the topic in-depth. The focus of the interview is to explore consumers' opinions towards online shopping. Data analysis is a technique of organizing the raw data through which important information can be extracted. Charmaz (2014) supposed that collected data from interviews and observation will be analysed through a grounded theory process technique: axial coding, open coding, as well as selective coding. Secondary data are obtained from library facilities such reports, journals and books, while primary data are obtained for the research fields.

4.0 Findings

Out of 35 respondents interviewed, 18 were females and 17 were males. The age of the respondents ranged from 20 to 40 years. Table 1 illustrates the profile of the interviewees. Majority of respondents liked searching online channels for information "more" than offline channels. Except for 2 interviewees, the data showed that 33 interviewees had searched online for product information within the last month.

Table 1: Profile of the interviewees

PROFILE	TOTAL	PERCENTAGE
<i>nationality</i>		
Saudi citizens	35	100%
<i>gender</i>		
male	17	49%
female	18	51%
<i>age</i>		
20-24	8	22.8%
25-29	9	25.7%
30-34	9	25.7%
35-40	9	25.7%
<i>education</i>		
less than bachelors	15	42%
bachelors and above	20	58%
<i>occupation</i>		
employed	21	61%
unemployed (includes, housewives and students)	14	39%

The results indicate that Saudi citizens are more interested in searching online for product information. The results indicate that females are more interested in online shopping when compared to their male counterparts, although the result is not significant. Also another finding is that individuals of age 25 years and above are more interested in online shopping compared to people aged less than 25 years old; nevertheless, the result is not significant (Al-Mowalad & Putit, 2012). The education level of consumers positively influences their decision for online shopping; participants with a bachelor's degree and above show an interest in online shopping. Furthermore, employment status has an influence on online shopping; individuals employed (i.e. those who are working) show more interest in online shopping compared to unemployed individuals (i.e. those who are not working).

The results identify the psychographic factors such as convenience, information, available services and goods, time and cost efficiency, and security, in examining the fundamental characteristics of Saudi customers' information search behaviour. Khalil (2014) identified that the revolution in online platforms has created a great opportunity for Saudi citizens, particularly women who had often encountered many cultural and social obstacles that hindered them from engaging in work. The results based on the demographic profile shows that many females are increasingly attracted towards online "shopping".

Online shopping is a new phenomenon in Saudi Arabia. People are increasingly embracing online shopping. About 61% of the respondents said that they have used and enjoyed online shopping and surfing online for pleasure, have the accessibility of a wider, deeper product selection, have a fun, online shopping experience, and a greater variety of stores (Heinrichs et al., 2016; Pan & Fesenmaier, 2006). However, 47% of the respondents revealed that they never buy anything online. It is evident that Saudi consumers appreciate the benefits of online shopping. The benefits are endless and it is time local businesses seize the online opportunity in the digital era of the 21st century. However, some Saudi citizens have yet to be convinced of such a popular, global shopping technique.

4.1 Convenience

A total of 56% of the respondents identified that online shopping is more convenient as it involves less effort than offline shopping. Shopping tasks are now made simpler and are available 24/7, as nowadays people can search and buy products in the middle of the night with the use of smartphones and other technological tools. It shows 61% of the respondents said "yes, they feel that online shopping is easy and convenient to make wider product selection, carry out broader information search, and purchases are better priced compared to offline shopping" (Hoda, Ahmad & Melibari, 2014; Alam et al., 2014). A total of 49% of the respondents said "no, they don't feel online shopping is convenient".

4.2 Information

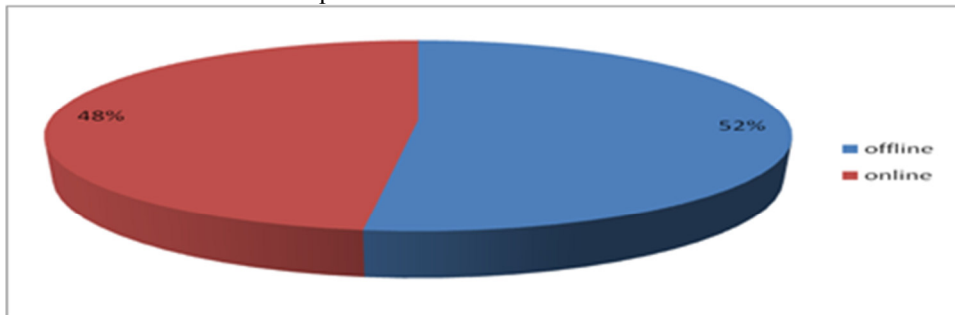
It is noticed that 100% of the respondents declared that they prefer searching for product information online, and said that online platforms have made it easier to access information. Online platforms offer more product information, which respondents said they frequently utilize when seeking products and services online (Watchravesringkan & Shim, 2003; Morris, Teevan & Panovich, 2010; Punj & Moore, 2009; Saleh, 2015). Respondents claimed they often seek information online to meet their needs for products and services. Residents

said they get information online and benefit from product reviews made by other customers.

4.3 Available services and products

Most respondents revealed that online platforms provide a variety of services and products, and have made transactions easier than before. Respondents said they can get all types of products online from across the world; thus saving a lot of time compared to traveling to offline channels (Makki & Chang, 2015; Prasad, & Aryasri, 2009). Various companies provide easily reachable websites and payments methods are secure. However, 52% of the respondents said that they like shopping in offline stores to touch and visualize products they intend to buy, while 48% said they like online shopping due to the wide variety of products. See figure 1.

Figure 1: offline vs. online services and products



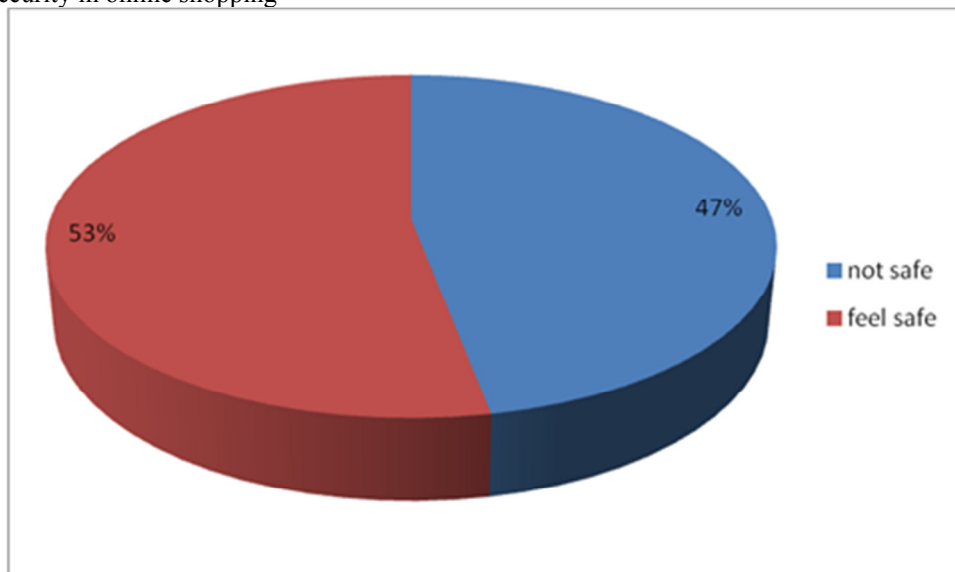
4.4 Time and cost efficiency

A total of 59% of the respondents indicated that online platforms provide better deals for products at lower prices than offline channels. According to Al-Maghrabi & Dennis (2011), in today's society many people are busy with work and value their leisure activities. People save time searching for product information online rather than travelling to offline shops (Turban et al., 2010). The respondents believed that a lot of time is saved in online shopping and online products are cheaper than offline products. However, 41% of the respondents identified that offline stores provide affordable products compared to online channels.

4.5 Security

However, security is the main threat hindering most Saudi consumers from shopping online. A total of 47% of the respondents said that they do not feel secure shopping online due to concerns about providing their account and personal details (e.g. credit card details) because of unauthorized use and fraudulent activities (Eid, 2011; McCole, Ramsey & Williams, 2010; Metzger, 2004). This explains why, currently, a large number of Saudi consumers still like to shop in offline channels rather than via online channels. See figure 2.

Figure 2: security in online shopping



5.0 Discussion

When asked about their motivation towards online channel choice, the respondents' answers were mainly connected to convenience. Such a finding is linked with the theory of Kim and Forsythe (2007), who identified

that consumers who shop via an online platform have more functional motivation to behave in that way. Such consumers mostly have special thoughts of what they are searching for online. Often, they know what they want to buy online. Moreover, Kim and Forsythe (2007) revealed that consumers who choose online platforms are more concerned with purchasing in a timely and efficient way to accomplish their needs, with the least amount of effort, and this is also stated in the research. A respondent identified that she does not have time to walk from one physical store to another and it is time consuming. This is why she prefers buying things online. Convenience, explained in terms of accessibility, is supported by Brosdahl and Almousa (2013), who identified that 24/7 accessibility, and availability through more than one location make online channels more beneficial than offline channels for Saudi consumers.

Consumers can search for product information at any time and shop whenever they want. With new technology, products are delivered very quickly. Consumers can order goods, and within two days the products are received, and they can search for anything and purchase from all parts of the world. It is about convenience. Online channels bring efficient shopping and increases the benefits of searches. Heinemann and Schwarzl (2010) called information possibilities as channel attribute in which online platforms differ from offline channels. It is as easy to search information and shop online, as it is to click for information online. Searching for information online is much easier than searching through pages of hard copies.

Many Saudi consumers are increasingly using online channels to search and buy products online. Consumers' intentions towards online channels are increasing and becoming more fashionable in Saudi Arabia (Hernandez, Jimenez & Martin, 2011). The findings showed that younger generations, like students and younger professionals, have highly embraced online channels, as they prefer to search for information and buy products and services online. When consumers like to search for product information online, various factors influence them in purchasing products online. Al-Maghrabi Dennis and Halliday (2011) identified that the key influencing factors include convenience, information, available services and products, and time and cost efficiency. Price factors motivate consumers since prices are mostly lower through online channels compared to offline stores in the market. Online channels are of great benefit to local consumers in terms of saving money and time, and they enjoy its convenience. Furthermore, discounts and promotional deals encourage local consumers to be positive about online shopping.

Despite the advancement of information technology, many people still do not buy products and services online compared to other countries. Online shopping remains a new trend in Saudi Arabia's information technology revolution. Saudi consumers' attitudes towards the use of online channels are just beginning, but they are expected to grow as supported by the results. Still, many consumers like to touch and visualize products when purchasing, and that is the reason for the number of consumers who like to purchase products in offline stores. Though the country has the fastest and largest growing Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in the Middle East, Saudi Arabia is still experiencing a slow growth in online shopping (Vuylsteke et al., 2010; Heinrichs et al., 2016). It is expected that in the future, more Saudi people will attempt online shopping. With better understanding of the target customers, online entrepreneurs and retailers would be in a position to build more efficient and more focused online retail operations that meet the expectations and requirements of their online shopping customers. Therefore, the study aimed at identifying factors that may influence the online buying behaviour of consumers in Saudi Arabia. The findings of the study identified that several factors may influence customers' decisions towards online behaviour in Saudi Arabia. This can assist online e-retailers in developing their strategies towards targeting the right potential customers. This study indicates that customers' demographic factors are a significant influence in online shopping. The results show that in Saudi Arabia, online shoppers are more educated, are over 25 years of age, and women are more interested in online shopping compared to men (Hernandez, Jimenez & Martin, 2011). Also, employment status influences online shopping behaviour. Compared to other countries, many people still do not engage in online shopping in Saudi Arabia. Cultural factors and security issues discourage many Saudi consumers from engaging in online shopping. However, the number is likely to grow in the future as many consumers have shown an interest in online shopping. With the advancement of technology, psychographic factors appear to influence consumers towards online shopping. However, security and cultural factors still discourage many consumers from shopping online.

6.0 Conclusion

This study's findings presents sufficient information for online retailers to strategically plan their online business operations and be successful in the Saudi market. In Saudi Arabia, the online market looks promising as it has a large potential due to strong indicators. The findings indicate that Saudi citizens are more interested in online shopping. Based on the interest in online shopping, online retailers need to concentrate on customers above 25 years of age who appear to be involved in online shopping. Also, online retailers should target females using unique and different marketing strategies. Typically, customers consider retailers' image when buying products online. Thus, online retailers should apply appropriate marketing strategies to promote image building. Moreover, the role that web atmosphere plays in influencing customers towards online shopping is very important. Thus,

more informative and highly organized, simple websites of online retailers may motivate Saudi customers towards online purchasing. The study revealed consumers' attitudes towards online shopping. The government and online retailers can benefit from the findings of this study to create appropriate strategies to build customer awareness about online shopping. The findings of the study revealed that the progress Saudi Arabia is making towards adopting online shopping is slow compared to other countries. However, many Saudi nationals are interested in online shopping. The study revealed reasons that prevent people shopping online. The reasons include security risks and distrust, and consumers like to experience, touch and visualize products when purchasing products in offline stores.

Our study concludes that Saudi consumers have positive attitudes towards online shopping and are increasingly interested. Many consumers have begun purchasing products and services online and they are satisfied. The results of the study indicate that 62% of the respondents prefer online shopping to offline shopping. The key reasons that influence consumers to shop online include convenience, better offers (prices), and time saving. Products and services such as electronic devices, airline tickets, booking hotels, online payment methods, clothing, furniture, vehicles, and machineries significantly influence Saudi customer to shop online. The study concludes that such are some of products and services that influence consumers to shop online. Therefore, there is a significant correlation between online shopping and factors of risk and demography, and types of services and products. Our study provides online retailers and the Saudi government with significant and useful information about consumers' attitudes, including the key factors and reasons that influence online shopping. Online retailers and the government should cooperate to enhance consumer awareness towards online shopping, and they should eradicate risks hindering consumers to shop online. In the future, there is a need to carry out similar studies that include both Saudi nationals and non-Saudi nationals who live in Saudi Arabia.

7.0 References

- Alam, A., Ahmed, M., Ul Haq, Z. & Ul Hadi, N. (2014). Customers Preferences for Grocery Shopping in Riyadh Saudi Arabia. *Asian Journal of Research in Banking and Finance*, 4(11), pp.169-180.
- Al-Salamin, H. A. & Al-Hammad, A. A. (2014). ATTITUDE OF SAUDI CONSUMERS TOWARDS ONLINE SHOPPING WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO AL-HASSA REGION (KSA). *Journal of WEI Business and Economics-December*, 3(3).
- Anderson, K. C., Knight, D. K., Pookulangara, S. & Josiam, B. (2014). Influence of hedonic and utilitarian motivations on retailer loyalty and purchase intention: a facebook perspective. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, 21(5), pp.773-779.
- Abdul-Muhmin, A. (2010). Repeat purchase intentions in online shopping: the role of satisfaction, attitude, and online retailers' performance. *Journal of international consumer marketing*, 23(1), pp.5-20.
- Al-Ghaith, W., Sanzogni, L. & Sandhu, K. (2010). Factors influencing the adoption and usage of online services in Saudi Arabia. *The electronic journal on information systems in developing countries*, 40(1), pp.34-36.
- Al-Maghrabi, T. & Dennis, C. (2011). What drives consumers' continuance intention to e-shopping? Conceptual framework and management implications in the case of Saudi Arabia. *International journal of retail and distribution management*, 39(12), pp.899-926.
- Al-Maghrabi, T., Dennis, C. & Halliday, S. (2011). Antecedents of continuance intentions towards e-shopping: the case of Saudi Arabia. *Journal of enterprise information management*, 24(1), pp.85-111.
- Al-Mowalad, A. & Putit, L. (2012). Factors that influence Saudi consumers' behavior to online purchase. *International conference on management, behavioral sciences and economics issues*, 2(3), pp.13-18.
- Birks, M. & Mills, J. (2015). *Grounded theory: a practical guide*. London: SAGE.
- Brosdahl, D. & Almousa, M. 2013. Risk perception and internet shopping: comparing United States and Saudi Arabia consumers. *Journal of management and marketing research*, 13(2), pp.1-17.
- Charmaz, K. (2014). *Constructing grounded theory 2nd ed*. London: SAGE.
- Eid, M. (2011). Determinants of e-commerce customer satisfaction, trust, and loyalty in Saudi Arabia. *Journal of electronic commerce research*, 12(1), pp.78-93.
- Glaser, B. & Strauss, A. (1967). *The discovery of grounded theory: strategies for qualitative research*. Chicago: Aldine Publishing Company.
- Grange, C. & Benbasat, I. (2014). Explaining Customers' Utilitarian and Hedonic Perceptions in the Context of Product Search within Social Network-Enabled Shopping Websites.
- Haas, A. & Kenning, P. (2014). Utilitarian and Hedonic Motivators of Shoppers' Decision to Consult with Salespeople. *Journal of Retailing*, 90(3), pp.428-441.
- Harris, L. C. & Goode, M. H. (2010). Online servicescapes, trust, and purchase intentions, *Journal of Services Marketing*, 24(3), p. 230 – 243.
- Heinemann, G. & Schwarzl, C. 2010. *New online retailing: innovation and transformation*. Wiesbaden: Gabler.
- Heinrichs, J., Al-Aali, A., Lim, J. & Lim, K. (2016). Gender-moderating effect in e-shopping behavior: a cross-

- cultural study of the United States and Saudi Arabia. *Journal of global marketing*, 29(2), pp.85-97.
- Hernandez, B., Jimenez, J. & Martin, J. (2011). Age, gender, and income: do they really moderate online shopping behavior? *Online information review*, 35(1), pp.113-133.
- Hoda, N., Ahmad, A. & Melibari, A. (2014). Analysis of demographic factors, internet usage and online shopping for social media users in Saudi Arabia.
- Li, H. & Liu, Y. (2014). Understanding post-adoption behaviors of e-service users in the context of online travel services. *Information & Management*, 51(8), pp.1043-1052.
- Lu, H. P. & Su, P. Y. J. (2009). Factors affecting purchase intention on mobile shopping web sites. *Internet Research*, 19(4), pp. 442-458.
- Khalil, N. (2014). Factors affecting the consumers' attitudes on online shopping in Saudi Arabia. *International journal of scientific and research publications*, 4(11), pp.1-8.
- Kim, J. & Forsythe, S. (2007). Hedonic usage of product virtualization technologies in online apparel shopping. *International journal of retail and distribution management*, 35(6), pp.502-514.
- Mahmud Mohammadian, M. G. (2014). A Study of Factors Influencing Online Brand Trust in Online Service Retailing. *NATIONALPARK-FORSCHUNG IN DER SCHWEIZ (Switzerland Research Park Journal)*, 103(2).
- Mansoor, D. & Jalal, A. (2011). "The Global Business Crisis and Consumer Behaviour: Kingdom of Bahrain as a Case Study", *International Journal of Business and Management*, 6(1),p. 104-116.
- Makki, E. & Chang, L. (2015). Understanding the effects of social media and mobile usage on e-commerce: an exploratory study in Saudi Arabia. *International management review*, 11(2), pp.98-109.
- McCole, P., Ramsey, E. & Williams, J. (2010). Trust considerations on attitudes towards online purchasing: the moderating effect of privacy and security concerns, *Journal of Business Research* 63(9-10), pp.1018-1024.
- Merriam, S. (2009). *Qualitative research: a guide to design and implementation*. USA: Jossey-Bass
- Metzger, M. J. (2004). Privacy, trust, and disclosure: Exploring barriers to electronic commerce. *Journal of Computer - Mediated Communication*, 9(4), p. 00-00.
- Moon, B. J. (2004). Consumer adoption of the internet as an information search and product purchase channel: some research hypotheses. *International Journal of Internet Marketing and Advertising*, 1(1), pp. 104-118.
- Morris, M., Teevan, J. & Panovich, K (2010). A comparison of information seeking using search engines and social networks. In *Proceedings of 4th International AAAI Conference on Weblogs and Social Media*, pp.291-294.
- Özgüven, N. (2011). Analysis of the Relationship Between Perceived Security and Customer Trust and Loyalty in Online Shopping. *Business Review*, 10(11), pp.990-997.
- Pan, B. & Fesenmaier, D. R. (2006). Online Information Search: Vacation Planning Process. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 33(3), pp.809-32.
- Phella, C. N., Bloch, A. & Seale, C. (2011). *Structured Methods: Interviews, Questionnaires and Observation*. Sage Publications.
- Prasad, C. & Aryasri, A. (2009). Determinants of Shopper Behaviour in E-tailing: An Empirical Analysis. *Paradigm*, 13(1), pp.73-84.
- Pries-Heje, J., Venable, J. & Bunker, D. (2010). *Human Benefit through the Diffusion of Information Systems Design Science*. USA: Library of Congress.
- Punj, G. & Moore, R. (2009). Information search and consideration set formation in a web-based store environment. *Journal of Business Research*. 62 (6), pp. 644-650.
- Rahim, M. M. D. & Scheepers, H. (2011) "Experienced Benefits and Barriers of e-Business Technology Adoption by SME Suppliers", BIMA Publishing, Accessed on 11th December., 2016
<http://www.ibimapublishing.com/journals/CIBIMA/2011/791778/791778.pdf>
- Rajagopalan, B., Hillison, D., Calantone, R. & Sambamurthy, V. (2010). Diffusion of Information and Communication Technologies: A Takeoff Analysis. *International Journal of Business Information Systems*, 5(4), pp.329-347.
- Ramady, M. (2010). *The Saudi Arabian Economy: Policies, Achievements, and Challenges*. 2nd ed. New York: Library of Congress
- Ray, S., Ow, T. & Sung, K. (2011). Security Assurance: How Online Service Providers Can Influence Security Control Perceptions and Gain Trust. *Decision Sciences*; May2011, 42 (2), pp.391-412.
- Rowley, J. (2000). "Product search in e-shopping: a review and research proposition", *Journal of Consumer Marketing*, 17 (1), pp. 24-35.
- Rambo, K., Liu, K. & Nakata, K. 2009. The socio-cultural factors influencing online female consumers in Saudi Arabia. *Computational science and engineering*, 2(1), pp.15-18.
- Saleh, M. (2015). Assessing the consumers' propensity for online shopping: a demographic perspective. *The*

- journal of American academy of business, 21(1), pp.186-194.
- Seock, Y. & Norton, M. (2007). Attitude toward internet web sites, online information search, and channel choices for purchasing", *Journal of Fashion Marketing and Management*, 11 (4), pp.571–586.
- Silverman, D. (2009). *Doing qualitative research*. Sage Publications Limited.
- Simsim, M. (2011). Internet usage and user preferences in Saudi Arabia, *Journal of King Saud University - Engineering Sciences*. 2(23), pp.101-107.
- Turban, E., Lee, J. K., King, D., Liang, T. P. & Turban, D. (2010). "Electronic commerce: a managerial perspective". Prentice Hall. 6th edition.
- Vuylsteke, L., Wen, Z., Baesens, B. & Poelmans, J. (2010). Consumers' Search for Information on the Internet: How and Why China Differs from Western Europe, *Journal of Interactive Marketing*, 24(4), pp.309-331.
- Watchravesringkan, K. & Shim, S. (2003). "Information search and shopping intentions through internet for apparel products", *Clothing and Textiles Research Journal*, 21 (1), pp. 1-7.
- Yuangdong, Y., W. Zhan & T. Lai, (2005). How individual differences influence technology users behavior? Toward an integrated framework. <http://www.allbusiness.com/technology/computersoftware-customer-relation/1054798-1.html>