An Empirical Analysis of Retailers' Perception towards E-Retailing with Reference to the Brick-and-Click Approach

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[Abstract] The purpose of this study is to determine the perceptions of small retailers toward online selling of products in India. This study determines retailers' awareness of and willingness to use the bricks-and-clicks approach and the concerns of retailers for the cost of opening an online shop in an established website. This study suggests that retailers are aware of E-retailing but still are not connected to the online business, as they perceive that online selling of their products is a complex process and will incur high costs. E-commerce players should promote the facts that online selling of products is not costly and is, instead, economical.

Introduction

High internet access rate, declining PC costs, increased smart- phone user rates, growing mobile internet user rates, reduced smart-phone costs, and added internet speed have enabled online shopping to be much more user-friendly and easier to use in recent years. Today, the online world includes a variety of products with different categories that attract consumers across the globe. India is one of the fastest growing economies; its online population growth is also comparatively faster than in other countries. The e-commerce market in India has grown sharply from $4.4 billion in 2010 to $13.6 billion in 2014 (Deloitte & Assocham, 2015). The Indian retail sector is expected to grow to $1.3 trillion by 2020. E-commerce is expected to contribute $120 billion out of $1.3 trillion by 2020 (Sobia Khan, Anarock Property Consultants, 2018). As the people are turning towards online shopping from the traditional mode of shopping, small retailers are also aware of this new change.

The retailers know that people are doing shopping through the internet. *Online business provides lots of new ways of getting more sales and platforms where these retailers can communicate with their customers.* Now, there are different online portals on the internet that offer numerous varieties of products. Now, retailers also want to connect with the online markets so that they can grab more customers. The current requirement for the small retailers is to explore the online world for business purposes. The internet is connecting buyers and sellers from all over the world. Consumers are using the internet to search for products, locations of stores, and shopping purposes. Established retailers need to utilize multi-channel formats for coping with the diverse requirements of customers (Hahn & Kim, 2009).

For entering the online business, retailers have two options: either they can open their online website or they can associate with an established website as a vendor. The internet has innovated a new economic system called the "internet marketplace." The internet marketplace provides a space to many small retailers or businesses to showcase their products. There are big leading portals like flipkart, Amazon, shopclues, and e-bay. Initially, most online portals worked on an inventory-based model, but in this model, all responsibilities were on the shoulders of the online portals' owners. Later, these online portals found a way to solve this problem, and these portals started working with marketplace models. In marketplace modeling, online portals provide platforms to different vendors; these vendors can post their products on the site and can sell their products to online buyers. Online portals provide platforms to e-retailers or vendors for selling products to online buyers and, in return, these portals are taking a small amount, which is a percentage of e-tailers' total online sales. With the marketplace model, online portals only need to manage marketing of

the portals and take care of both sellers and buyers, but online portals need not stock inventory of the products. In the online marketplace, portals are playing a mediator role between buyers and sellers. Retailers have two options for entering the online market. First, they can create their own website. Big retailers or wholesalers are creating their own websites for their businesses, like shopper stop and lifestyle. They are managing all the work related to online business, like marketing, selling, customer care, complaints handing, hosting, and search engine optimization. This first option seems a bit complex for small retailers, especially small retailers of developing countries like India. Second, they can open an online shop in online portals that are working with marketplace models, post or update products on the site, and create online sales from the portal. Small retailers are afraid of opening their own website because they do not have such knowledge. Small retailers are using online portals that have worked with the internet marketplace model for selling their products over the internet, as it seems less risky to them.

Literature Review

Increased internet penetration, increased use of mobile internet, cheap smart phones, and weird lifestyles stimulate the growth of online shopping in India. Consumers have become habitual users of online shopping, which has enhanced the evolution of internet retailing (also known as electronic retailing). Electronic retailing is defined as "Retailing conducted online, over the internet" (Turban et.al., 2006). There are a number of studies on the evolution of internet retailing (Laudon & Traver, 2013). There are articles in journals regarding the evolution of internet retailing from the marketing perspective (Ngai, 2003) and from the consumer perspective (Rohm & Swaminathan, 2004). E-retailing has less impact on shoppers' behaviors in the short term, but it has a replacement effect in the long term (Weltevreden, 2007). Consumers are moving towards online shopping. The number of online sales has increased, which is beneficial to the largest retailers (Colin Jones Nicola Livingstone, 2015), but this, in turn, has created pressure on small retailers.

Currently, sales figures show that E-retailing is not strong enough to replace traditional retailing (Hart et al., 2000), but, still, online sales are increasing continuously. Traditional retailers cannot ignore the importance of online retailing (Enders & Jelassi, 2000). The proportion of online sales is growing gradually in numbers (Biggs & Suhren, 2013). Small retailers are losing their sales to the online market because consumers are switching to online shopping. Internet innovation has increased the pressure on retailers (Dholakia & Uusitalo, 2002). Retailers need to consider the internet as one of the significant elements in developing the strategies for maintaining a competitive edge (Weltevrenden & Boschma, 2008).

Instead of competing with the internet or online market, Indian retailers should be part of the online market so they can increase their sales. Traditional retailers or brick-and-mortar companies are those companies that have products available in their stores and in their distribution channels and facilities (Kotzab & Madlberger, 2001). Traditional retailers and brick-and-mortar firms are facing a challenge from the online non–store retailing. Online channels are considered as complementing offline retailers (traditional retailers and brick-and-mortar retailers) and enhanced the customer relationships (Shankar et al., 2003).

Retailers have started connecting to the internet for selling products, but this will also put pressure on retailers as consumer's needs are changing and consumers require friendly interfaces (Wirtz et al., 2010). There are some customers who use click-and-brick physical channels to infer the characteristics and features of a seller's online operations (Cyr et al., 2007). Although online channels are providing new ways to increase online sales, the advantage of e-shopping can't be over-ruled by benefits of traditional shopping (Kacen et al., 2013). Traditional retailers have concern for adopting the click-and-brick approach so that they can simply cannibalize their existing off-line operations (Enders & Jelassi, 2000). Electronic retailers have captured a huge market share of the traditional retailers. Big e-commerce companies like Amazon, flipkart, and e-bay have taken a big market share from the traditional retailers or brick-and-mortar companies. Although electronic retailers or e-tailers are facing problems due to the growth in the online business, e-tailers require physical stores. The non-physical presence of pure click retailers created a security and privacy concern in customers. The customers can have tangible information in click-and-brick retailers, and the physical presence of click-and-brick retailers can enhance the online trust in the consumers

(Stewart, 2003). This is because pure online retailers have started opening physical stores for expanding their span of service (Verhoef et al., 2015) and building trust in customers (Stewart, 2003). After exploring the store offline, consumers can utilize their experience and move towards the store's online operations (Kaun & Bock, 2007).

Traditional retailers cannot ignore the importance of online retailing (Enders & Jelassi, 2000). Traditional retailers can deal with this problem with the help of multi-channel retailing. The numerous channels of sales will also create logistics problems for the retailers (Handfield et al., 2013). The benefit of multi-channel retailing can be increased by taking care of issues, such as customer management across channels and proper integration of the channels (Neslin et al., 2006). A channel can be defined as a customer contact point or a medium through which the company and the customer interact (Neslin et al., 2006). By adopting the concept of omni-channel retailing, small retailers can enhance sales of their products. There are articles in journals that explain omni-channel retailing (Bell et al., 2014; Brynjolfsson et al., 2013), which can easily distribute responsibilities across channels. However, no formal category exists between multi-channel retailing and omni-channel retailing (N. Beck et al., 2015).

Most business experts refer to the retail world where customers can shop anytime through channels (LCP Consulting, 2013); in some articles, it is referred to as multi-channel retailing (Zhang et al., 2010). Established retailers understand the importance of online channels for enhancing sales figures. Brick-and-mortar retailers have developed their online presence and developed omni-channels for serving customers through multiple sales channels. This, in turn, will reduce the difference between physical brick-and-mortar retailers and pure online retailers (Banker & Cooke, 2013).

Instead of competing with the internet, traditional retailers should work on a hybrid model in which they get sales from both offline and online mediums. The internet is providing an incremental increase in the performance of retailers (Wolk & Skiera, 2009) and helps in enhancing a competitive position in the market (Doherty & Ellis-Chadwick, 2009). The internet is proving to be a rich and flexible channel to retailers (Basu & Muylle, 2003). Consumers are accepting innovations created by the internet (Soopramanien & Robertson, 2007), and online retail sales are increasing efficiently (Ho et al., 2007). Established retailers should develop strategies through which they can integrate their offline and online channels for enhancing the satisfaction of the consumers (Neil F. Doherty and Fiona Ellis-Chadwick, 2010).

Small retailers should use the "bricks-and-clicks" approach with the intention of enhancing the sales of the products. The bricks-and-clicks approach can provide a win-win situation to both retailers and customers. Customers prefer to shop for products online from a vendor that has actual stores (Sharma & Sheth, 2004). The "clicks-and mortar" strategy gives strength to the business of retailers, and it also allows retailers "to leverage existing physical assets and brands" (Tse, 2007). Brick-and-click retailers were gaining benefits from both online and offline modes as retailers and were able to provide better service to customers (KJ. Stewart, 2003). With the help of the brick-and-click approach, traditional retailers can get more sales and better utilization of stocks and distribution networks. Customers generally purchase from those vendors online that they trust a lot or know as the vendor or their store (Min & Wolfinbarger, 2005). The trusted vendor can utilize the trust of the customers in acquiring these customers' online purchases, also.

Traditional retailers have plus points because they already have stocks of the products, distribution networks, and stores for storing their products; retailers can use these benefits for acquiring customers in their online markets. Traditional retailers can direct online customers to their offline stores if customers demand a trial or for removing the doubt of the customers. Park et al. (2004) suggested that if traditional retailers work with both online and offline operations, then they will have the benefits of broader distribution, reputation, management skills, and capital. In the future, firms have to take a step forward towards the brick-and-click approach, but the point is how to best execute this in the real world. Creating a presence online by launching a website is a costly affair. The solution is that retailers should join established online portals that allow retailers to create an online presence in an effective way and offer numerous sales. In this way, retailers can enter the online market in a cheaper way. Through the bricks-and-clicks approach, traditional retailers can handle the problem, which is created by the internet (Dennis et al., 2002). There are online retailers working on the marketplace model instead of an inventory model, which,

in turn, helps in cutting down inventory costs.

This marketplace model actually opens the door to many small traditional retailers so that they can be the part of the online market without spending much on it. Small, traditional retailers can open their online shop or be a vendor on an established website; then, retailers need to work on several key strategic practices. Retailers need to adjust prices of the product for both online business and the store business. Retailers should manage both businesses, which is not easy for the retailers because both businesses (online shop or store) require a great deal of hard work. There is some evidence that indicates that some consumers browse information of the products online but make their final purchase in store. The reason behind this is that consumers want to touch and feel the product; only then do they want to purchase it. As per Grau (2009), the sales in brick-and-mortar stores by those consumers who first browsed the product information online are more than three times higher than online sales. If traditional retailers connect with the online market, then they will get sales from their online business and, also, some consumers can directly purchase products from their store offline after researching the product online.

This study examines the perspective of small retailers towards online selling of the products in India. There is a necessity for the study regarding the measures that e-commerce website owners can adapt to link the small retailers with a platform that they provide over the internet for the online selling of products. The majority of researchers suggest that it is a win-win situation for the traditional retailers if they join their offline business with the online world. Previous research has suggested that the brick-and-click approach should be utilized by the small retailers for sustaining their business in this changing environment. There is no current research available that can explain the perception of Indian small retailers for online selling of the products or "Are they aware about the marketplace model which can help them in this regard?" This study tries to find out two things: First, do Indian small retailers have knowledge about those sites which are providing a platform to retailers where they can sell their products online without spending much for entering in the online market. Second, "are small retailers willing to open their online shop in established online portals?"

The hypothesis is prepared by considering the information in the literature review:

H_{A1}: There is a significant association between investment and vendors' willingness to open their online shops in established online portals.

Methodology

The survey method was used for analyzing the research problem. The questionnaire prepared for this study included two sections. The first section included questions related to the demographic profile of the retailers, and the second section included questions related to the research objective and the hypothesis of this paper. A total of 130 questionnaires were distributed; there were 115 usable questionnaires returned of which 12 questionnaires were rejected because of missing data. The questionnaires used were free from error and were completely filled ion. The sample size for this study was 103. A convenient sampling method was used for data collection. Data were collected from New Delhi, a metropolitan city in India. In this state, consumers are more active in online activities than consumers in rural areas. The latest report of IAMAI titled "**Mobile Internet in India** 2016" indicated that the **majority of the internet users belong to urban areas** in India. Responses were collected through offline mode. The author visited different markets and various places for collecting data in the given city. Retailers are bound to their work, and their first priorities are to their customers, so, per their schedules, responses were taken. The study was conducted in New Delhi. A descriptive analysis was initially performed to provide information pertaining to the demographics of the respondents.

An associative analysis in the form of a Fisher exact test was conducted to test for association of the variables to the attitude of the retailers towards E-retailing. Later, hypothesis testing was subsequently conducted to determine whether the hypothesis proposed, based upon a review from existing literature, was supported or not supported. Last, implications of the results from the analysis are discussed. Collected data were analyzed using SPSS version 21.0. For checking sample adequacy, the Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin (KMO) test was performed.

Descriptive Analysis of Primary Data

Sample Adequacy Test

For checking sample adequacy, the Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin (KMO) test was performed. It measures sampling adequacy. In Table 1, the KMO value of this sample exceeds the recommended level of 0.60 (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2001).

Table1
Sample Adequacy Test

KMO and Bartlett's Test		
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		.648
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	363.205
	Df	45
	Sig.	.000

Source: Primary data

This section includes demographic variables of the retailers. Gender, age, marital status, and education of the retailers are the demographic variables taken into the study. As shown in Table 2, this study included 78 males and 25 females; the majority of the respondents are in one of two age groups: 30 – 40 years or 40 – 50 years; they are , are graduated, married, and earning between 50000 – 80000.

Table 2
Demographic Variables of the Retailers

Demographic variables		
Gender	Male: 78	Female: 25
Age	20-30years: 8, 40-50years: 36,	30-40years: 35 Above 50years: 24
Education	Higher Secondary: 15, Post Graduation: 27,	Graduation: 46 Other: 15
Income	Less than 20000: 7, 50000 – 80000: 45,	20000 – 50000: 40 Above 80000: 11
Marital Status	Married: 87	Single: 16

Source: Primary data

Indian retailers are showing their interest in online selling of their products. Retailers are equipped with what they really need for creating online shops on the platform of online portals. Retailers have space for storage, availability of stocks, availability of warehouse space, and available workers. They just need to sign up on online portals, which are providing an internet market place to them, start displaying their products, and start their business over the internet. However, still, the majority of the Indian retailers are not entering the online market for selling purposes. The cost of creating and maintaining an online shop using the internet is hampering Indian retailers from entering the online market for online selling of the products. For testing this hypothesis, a Chi-square test was utilized. Before analyzing this, it needs to be understood that how retailers are doing online selling of products and how much they are spending for maintaining their online presence. As shown in Table 3, only 30% of the retailers are selling their products through the internet; this means only 30% of the retailers are using the bricks-and-clicks approach. These

retailers are getting sales from both the online and offline model. The rest, 70%, of the retailers are not using the internet for selling products.

Table 3
Distribution of the Retailers on the Basis of Using Internet for Selling the Products

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	31	30.1	30.1	30.1
	No	72	69.9	69.9	100.0
	Total	103	100.0	100.0	

Source: Primary data

It is important to explore the factors that retailers consider because those factors, keep many retailers from entering the online world. Online selling of products can add extra perks to a retailer's pockets. Some retailers have knowledge of the benefit of entering the online world, but, still, there are some factors which stop them from entering the online market. In this study, 70% of the retailers are not using internet for selling products. So, it is important to analyze and explore those factors which are stopping many retailers from entering the online market. Indian retailers have asked, "Which factor is preventing them to use internet for selling their products." Most retailers believed that managing business over the internet or selling products over the internet market place's website is time consuming and complex.

Table 4
Distribution of the Retailers on the Basis of Stopping Factors

		Are you using internet for selling your product?	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
No	Valid	I don't know how to manage business over internet.	22	30.6	30.6
		Responses are very less as compared to offline	13	18.1	18.1
		It incurred lot of cost	21	29.2	29.2
		Time consuming & Complex	16	22.2	22.2
		Total	72	100.0	100.0

As shown in Table 4, a total of 22% of the retailers responded that it is a time consuming and complex to update all products with a unique code for the online portal's platform. Retailers have to answer all the queries that are posted by viewers and need to mail stock updates to the online portal. Some retailers believe that the responses are fewer than the offline mode. Almost 18.1% of the retailers feel that the offline mode is much higher than the online mode; 29.2% responded that it incurred lots of cost. Some retailers believe that creating and managing products over the internet must incur a lot of cost. A total 30.6% of the retailers pointed out that they are not well versed with the internet and don't know how to use it.

As seen in the above discussion, the majority of the retailers indicated that they are not well versed with the internet and do not know how to process the internet for business purposes. Some retailers also perceived that online selling of products, or online business, is costly. It is important to analyze this perception of the retailers with the reality faced by those retailers who are actually doing online selling. As

shown in Table 5, only 30% of the retailers are doing online selling of their products. Out of the 30% of the retailers, 51.6% are spending less than Rs10000 for maintaining their online presence, 35.5% of the retailers are spending Rs 10000-30000, and only 12.9% are spending more than 30,000 for processing their business online. As the data indicated, cost is not playing an important role for hampering Indian retailers for entering the online market.

 For testing the hypotheses, there is a need to first test first the association of retailers that start online selling of their products and the problems they face in online selling. As shown in   Table 7, a Chi-square test was applied, but 6 cells (41.7%) have an expected count less than 5, and for Chi-square testing, no cells should have less than a 5% expected count. Fisher's exact test is considered for this analysis. Fisher's exact test with statistics (35.350) with 'p' value 0.00, which is less than 0.05, means the null hypothesis is rejected, so there is a significant association between the retailer's choice to go online and problems they will face while having their products online.

As seen in Table 6, those retailers who are doing online selling of their products are claiming that the cost of maintaining an online business is not a problem. In   Table 5, it can be concluded that there is not a requirement of high investment for creating an online shop over the internet.

Table 5
Experience of Online Selling and Expense in Maintaining Online Presence

			How much amount you spent for maintaining your online presence last year?				Total
			Less than 10000	10000 - 30000	Above 30000	none	
Are you using internet for selling your product?	Yes	Count	16	11	4	0	31
		% within Are you using internet for selling your product?	51.6%	35.5 %	12.9 %	0.0%	100%
	No	Count	0	0	0	72	72
		% within Are you using internet for selling your product	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100%	100%

Retailers who experienced online selling of the products are not pointing out the cost of processing online business is a problem**.** However, the rest of the retailers (70%) who had not started an online shop claim that the cost of maintaining an online business over the internet is a problem. They are assuming that processing online business over the internet will incur high costs. A total of 20.4% of the retailers claimed that it incurred costs, but these 20.4% retailers have no experience in online selling or they didn't start their online shop over the internet. These retailers just perceive that online businesses will incur costs, but the real picture, as shown in Table 6, is different.

Table 6
Experience of Online Selling and Problems faced by Retailers in Online Selling of the Products: Cross tabulation

			What problems you are facing in selling products online?				Total
			It incurred lot of cost.	Customers return product which incurred extra courier charge on us	Customers are placing dummy orders	Its time consuming.	
Are you using internet for selling your product?	Yes	Count	0	10	9	12	31
		% within Are you using internet for selling your product?	0.0%	32.3%	29.0%	38.7%	100%
	No	Count	21	3	3	45	72
		% within Are you using internet for selling your product?	29.2%	4.2%	4.2%	62.5%	100%
Total		Count	21	13	12	57	103
			20.4%	12.6%	11.7%	55.3%	100%

Table 7
The Experience of Online Selling and Problems Faced by Retailers in Online Selling of Products: Fisher's Exact Test

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	36.980[a]	6	.000	.000
Likelihood Ratio	41.075	6	.000	.000
Fisher's Exact Test	35.350			.000
N of Valid Cases	103			
a. 6 cells (50.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .58.				

Inexperienced retailers perceived that cost of processing online business is high, and this factor is stopping them from online selling. If retailers want to feature their products on the top of the page, then they only have to spend some extra amount of money. Featured listing is a kind of promotion of the product for which online portals will give special space to featured firms where consumer's attention will likely to go more frequently, so chances of clicking on products of the featured firm will be higher.

Result of the Study

This paper attempts to understand the awareness of small retailers about online selling of products and the brick-and-click approach. Small retailers are aware of the importance of online selling. They understand that they are losing their customers to online vendors, and they are also aware of websites that are giving

their online platform to them for online selling. The result of this study is that there is a significant association between the investment and the vendor's willingness to open an online shop on an established website. However, as the data suggests, inexperienced retailers, those who have no experience of online selling, perceive that it will incur high costs, but the reality is completely opposite. Experienced retailers, those who did online selling, pointed out that maintaining an online shop in an established portal is time consuming because retailers have to update complete details of each and every product with a clear image of the products, and they have to answer every query posted by the customers.

Conclusion

The online market has seen tremendous growth in India. Consumers are showing their interest in online shopping, and the number of internet users is increasing at a fast rate in India. Consumers are moving towards the internet for shopping, which, in turn, creates an opportunity for retailers in the online market. For acquiring more sales, retailers have to adapt their businesses to meet the present requirements of the market. Small retailers should use a brick-and-click approach for sustaining their businesses in this changing environment. For starting an online selling of the products, one should have a variety of products, a place for stocking these products, and internet knowledge for conducting online business. Fortunately, small retailers have a variety of products, a place for stocking these products, and basic internet knowledge. Big E-commerce companies should educate small retailers about the kind of plus points they have. Small retailers should not invest separately in starting online selling of the products. By investing a small amount, they can start online selling of the products, and they can get more sales. Those retailers doing online selling of their products on websites pointed out that it is a time-consuming, complex process. For online selling, retailers have to upload all the details of the products into the website, which is a lengthy process and time consuming, too. E-commerce firms should design such an interface for small retailers who make retailers' work less complex. Some retailers want to do online selling, but they have no proper knowledge about how to use the internet for business purposes, and they are not well versed in the internet. E-commerce portals should educate these retailers step by step, starting from joining the online portals to shipment of the orders and handling of complaints or problems faced by the customers. If Indian retailers adopt the brick-and-click approach, then it will create a win-win situation for both retailers and E-commerce portals.

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