Attributes to Construct Trust on E-Commerce: A Qualitative Study

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Abstract

The consumer's decision to make online purchases is intricate and refined, with trust playing a significant role and exerting a powerful influence on their buying choices. The future of e-commerce hinges primarily on trust. There are a number of factors that, according to marketing literature, help buyers and sellers build trust while doing business online. However, only a handful of characteristics, such perceived security and privacy, are really the focus of any given study. Incorporating all the features mentioned in the literature into a unified model is the goal of this research. Following a comprehensive literature review, this study used qualitative methods to inquire into the elements that help build trust in online environments. The popularity of e-commerce is increasing globally due to the convenience it offers to both online retailers and customers. However, with the increasing prevalence of electronic commerce, several major issues arise, including privacy concerns, customer unhappiness, inefficient deliveries, and most importantly, trust issues. The researchers conducted a qualitative study focused on the perceived trustworthiness of e-commerce. The aim was to determine if the findings align with previous studies and to offer online users with information that can assist them in making informed decisions when buying or selling things online. According to empirical statistics, clients have a positive attitude towards online purchases, albeit they are less confident when compared to offline transactions. Based on the data that is available, it is clear that trust is important to customers.

Keywords: E-commerce, Trust, Purchase decision, Consumers, Online purchase.

Introduction

The Internet has challenged conventional methods of distributing goods and services, transforming the speed and approach to buying, as well as communication with customers and suppliers through the utilization of Information Technology (Kord, 2011). Trust is the fundamental component of business, encompassing both traditional models and e-commerce. Bauer, Grether, & Leach (2002) proposed that trust serves as the fundamental basis for individuals to make their purchasing choices.

E-commerce refers to the process of buying and selling things or transferring money through electronic methods, primarily using the internet and mobile applications (Rouse, 2019). Despite gaining popularity among the general public, e-commerce continues to encounter many challenges in the realm of online buying, impacting both online merchants and users. Tamturk (2017) found that individuals with internet connection were reluctant to participate in online business activities due to concerns about privacy and security. These issues have hindered the expansion and advancement of the digital market. Trust played a crucial role in the realm of global internet commerce. Online sellers should enhance the product information they provide and take into account the characteristics of their clients. Trust plays a major influence on a customer's decision to make an online purchase, which is a complex and nuanced process (Mcknight & Chervany, 2002). The future of online shopping hinges on consumers' ability to trust businesses, say Wang and Emurian (2005).

The main objective of this study was to assist internet users in the realm of electronic commerce. In order to accomplish this, the researchers specifically aimed to ascertain the perspectives and insights of customers regarding e-commerce. The researchers aimed to examine the dependability, ease of use, and credibility of online firms, as perceived by customers through their shopping experiences. This research aims to comprehensively analyze

the various attributes identified in literature that can collectively influence consumers' trust. The objective is to provide a comprehensive understanding of the relative significance of each attribute and summarize the existing literature on trust in e-commerce. The primary aim of this research is to comprehend the significance of trust in the context of electronic commerce. Simultaneously, it highlights the elements that impact customer trust in ecommerce, identifies the vulnerabilities of e-commerce related to trust, and examines the role of trust in the growth of online commerce. The study aims to address the subject of how buyers perceive the trustworthiness of e-commerce.

Methodology

The qualitative research method involves conducting focus groups. Focus group research has various advantages over other qualitative investigations (Smithson, 2000). They have the ability to motivate engagement from individuals who are hesitant to be interviewed individually and can foster contributions from individuals who believe they lack anything to contribute. Focus groups provide a straightforward means of gaining insight into the perceptions of the participants. Ultimately, a transcript of the key concepts will be generated during the focus group, and participants will have the opportunity to review it at the conclusion of the session.

Convenience sampling is employed to select participants for the focus groups. It signifies that the most readily available topics are utilized. Conducting this type of research is advantageous for the researcher in terms of time, effort, and money, as it is the least expensive option. However, there is a risk of obtaining low-quality data (Marshall, 1996). Convenience sampling is commonly used in qualitative investigations for its convenience. Nevertheless, the sample structure is specifically designed to be representative, aiming to achieve relevance to our data. The focus group has 10 participants aged between 22 and 45 years. This focus group allows

for engaging in a conversation with participants who have expertise with online buying in order to delve deeper into trust issues. The focus group is somewhat unstructured, as it is a form of exploratory study.

Literature Review

In their review, Shafiyah, R. Alsaqour, Shaker, O. Alsaqour, and Uddin (2013) provided a definition of e-commerce as the act of maintaining business relationships, sharing business information, and conducting commercial transactions utilizing telecommunication networks, specifically the internet. The advent of this form of enterprise brought about incremental yet profound transformations in the economies of numerous countries worldwide. It facilitated the individuals in acquiring products at a reduced cost and with minimal effort. It also facilitated business-oriented individuals in streamlining their labor while generating profits by providing them with a virtual platform for their stores instead of a real one. Their review also listed the notable characteristics of e-commerce, such as its widespread availability, abundance of content, interactive nature, ability to personalize and customize, worldwide reach, adherence to universal standards, and high information density. These aspects demonstrated the reasons why e-commerce is gaining popularity and widespread acceptance among the population. However, the researchers identified certain issues in the development of e-commerce, specifically cultural barriers and legal hurdles. Nevertheless, they concluded that electronic commerce has the potential to bring about a remarkable transformation in the globe.

In a study conducted by Vaghela (2014), it was found that online shopping refers to the act of purchasing goods and services from vendors who advertise and sell their items on the internet. Ever since the inception of the World Wide Web (WWW), shops have discovered a means to market and sell their products to individuals who browse the internet. Consumers have the ability to access online stores from the comfort of their own homes and enjoy a leisurely

shopping experience in front of their computers. Nowadays, online shopping has gained popularity among individuals who have become comfortable with utilizing the internet and have developed proficiency in technology. The researchers were motivated to explore the utilization of e-commerce and people's opinion of it due to the growing popularity of online buying. This study collected data and analyzed that people perceive internet shopping as superior to traditional shopping, and the majority of online buyers are satisfied with their online transactions. Online purchasers utilize their internet connection at their residence, workplace, and educational institution. The majority of customers purchase accessories, apparel, and electronic devices. The most concerning obstacles of internet purchasing are the requirement to disclose one's credit card data and the inability to physically inspect the merchandise. Customers concur with the notion that online purchases are more expensive than in-person shopping and that there is an additional time delay in the delivery of their products.

Trust, as defined by the Oxford Dictionary of English, is a strong conviction in the dependability, veracity, or competence of an individual or entity. Trust is a fundamental aspect of human social interactions. Virtually every facet of an individual's existence relies on a certain degree of trust. Nevertheless, there is disagreement regarding the precise concept of trust. The challenge of defining trust is supported by various researchers (Wang & Emurian, 2005) and is frequently understood based on the characteristics of a certain situation. Trust is a complex idea that encompasses both cognitive and emotional aspects (Koehn, 2003) as well as behavioral elements (Lewis & Weigert, 1985). Trust is a matter that is based on personal opinions and feelings. It is intricately connected to and influenced by variations among individuals and situational circumstances. Individuals perceive the concept of trust in various ways depending on the situation, and they exhibit varying levels of trust towards different individuals or entities. The significance of trust, however, varies according on the characteristics and intricacy of one's engagement with others (Gefen, 2000). Trust has a crucial

role in determining the efficiency of many relationships in business. Its significance in the successful adoption of new technologies also makes trust a vital prerequisite for e-commerce (Gefen, 2000). The internet's open nature as a transaction infrastructure and its global reach have made trust a vital component of e-commerce.

Trust is widely regarded by studies as the fundamental basis for individuals to make their purchasing decisions (Bauer et al., 2002). Trust in online situations is characterized by more complexity, making it challenging to discern the specific components that contribute to its formation. Online trust and offline trust varies in various respects (Safari, 2012). Initially, there exists a tangible separation between the customer and the retailer. Furthermore, there is a deficiency in direct engagement between the consumer and the merchant. Furthermore, there is a distinction between time and space inside an online setting. This implies that the customer's level of uncertainty is elevated. With the emergence of ecommerce, the concept of e-trust has been a focal point for numerous researchers. The study of trust encompasses a wide range of academic fields. An intriguing aspect of this research is to examine, from a marketer's perspective, the current literature on e-commerce, which dates back to the late 1990s. The focus will be on identifying the features that pose risks to customers in the e-commerce domain. The Hoffman study (Hoffman et al., 2000) identified two elements that have an impact on consumers' trust: perceived security and perceived privacy. Several academics concentrate on these two characteristics in an attempt to elucidate customer trust (Miyazaki & Fernandez, 2001; Flavián & Guinalíu, 2006), while others include these concepts into their models (Lauer & Deng, 2007; Safari, 2012). The researchers contend that while security is prioritized over privacy, online firms should earnestly contemplate incorporating robust privacy declarations and security measures in order to gain the trust of customers. One of the significant studies on customer trust is "Consumer trust in an Internet store" conducted by Javenpaa et al. (2000). Javenpaa et al. identify two elements that impact customer trust: the perceived size and

reputation of the e-vendor. The study found that customers were able to discern variations in size and reputation between different online retailers, and these variations had an impact on their evaluation of the store's reliability and their perception of potential risks.

In the early 2000s, many studies (Johansson, 2006; Lauer & Deng, 2007; Thaw & Dominic, 2009; McCole, Ramsey, & Williams, 2010) have examined the same characteristics in literature and reached different findings. In the context of e-trust bibliography, researchers have identified several significant factors related to trust in ecommerce. These factors include perceived security, perceived privacy, familiarity, trust disposition, perceived size, perceived reputation, quantity and quality of information on the website, structural assurance, perceived website quality, perceived ease-of-use, and perceived social presence.

Analysis

The focus group commenced with a concise preamble that provided the participants with an explanation of its objectives and the intended utilization of the findings. Each participant was informed that their input would remain entirely anonymous. Every single participant had a substantial experience with online purchasing. In focus groups, participants were given the opportunity to initiate conversation. The initial concepts that were implemented initially bore resemblance. The participants initiated a discussion regarding the security of online purchases. "I purchase numerous items, but none at exorbitant prices. I consider whether my card number can be manipulated each time I provide it. (N1). "It is possible to exercise caution when making payments, such as through PayPal." (N2). "There have been instances of online fraud involving the use of customers' usernames and passwords." Subsequently, the bank bears no liability" (N3).

Nevertheless, there is an additional characteristic that seems to be as intensely contested in security discourse as security itself. This pertains to privacy. Certain participants expressed

significant apprehension regarding privacy. "I never divulge personal information to individuals I do not know." "I have no idea what might occur thereafter." (N4). "On occasion, I provide deceptive information on the internet." (N5) "One thing that greatly annoys me is searching for a discount, such as on travel, only to be bombarded with advertisements for the exact thing you asked for." Recently, I attempted to find inexpensive fares to Qatar, and each time an offer appears on social media platforms, etc... "I purchased a phone charger from Amazon, but I continue to see advertisements for additional chargers." "I have no issue if they are interested in knowing where I spend my vacations," (N6) " "I commit no wrongdoing." (N7). "Verily, if I could have avoided, I did." One must pay a premium for intimacy on the internet. (N8).

Out of the total of ten participants, a mere two expressed a lack of significant concern regarding the privacy security of the combination. "Have you ever considered that your confidential information is currently ubiquitous? "How often did you present your identification?" (N9). Regardless, the security and privacy attributes surface spontaneously and require an extended duration of discussion. When I directed the focus group toward the characteristics that inspire confidence in a website, a great deal more insightful data emerged. "Your confidence is bolstered by the fact that the most renowned websites and significant brands will not deceive you. They also guarantee the quality of the products you purchase. (N4) This sentence pertains closely to the notions of reputation and perceived dimensions. Different iterations of this concept emerge throughout the focus group. While the majority of the participants consider reputation to be a significant factor, there are a few who hold the opposite view.

"I do not admire a well-known brand." I consider whether a product is affordable or of higher quality. (N5) Further delving into the attributes associated with trust in e-commerce, a recurring concept akin to reputation becomes apparent: A state of familiarity. "There may be pages that require an extended period of time to deliver products or other content." One benefits from

utilizing a page that is already aware of the security measures they employ. (N6) "I prefer purchasing from a well-known website or one that I receive advice from." (N7) Indeed, quite a few remarks pertained to the level of familiarity and reputation. Arguments included confidence, the brand, and the convenience of use resulting from familiarity with the website's functionality and the ability to complete a purchase with a single "click" due to the possession of personal information. Another concept that has been identified in the literature is perceived simplicity of use. However, this notion has yet to attain significance in and of itself; it merely appears to be discussing familiarity.

Additionally, the notion of perceived website quality is evident: "One can have confidence in a website's quality if it provides a phone number for contacting the organization or if it prominently displays the "Powered by Visa" logo." (N3) Additionally, social presence was identified as a characteristic in the literature; however, only one participant confirmed that they occasionally examine whether a company has a social presence. In addition to the aforementioned attributes that have been identified in the available literature, additional pertinent information emerges during the focus groups. Price and the assortment of products available are both indicative of relevance.

Discussion

Through focus group interviews, the factors that contribute to the establishment of trust in online purchasing were investigated. As a result of these focus groups and our review of the relevant literature, we have identified a number of pertinent consumer factors when it comes to online shopping. It is crucial to emphasize that the purpose of this section is to identify the key determinants that impact ecommerce trust. It is not intended to analyze gender or age

distinctions, nor to determine the magnitude of each factor's influence. The exploratory focus group merely purports to identify alleviating factors that impact ecommerce trust. It is also important to note that factors are subject to change over time. The current situation thus influences to some extent which focus group findings regarding the critical factors that define trust in e-commerce are accurate.

Nonetheless, conclusions remain extremely near to literary concepts. Upon completion of this exploratory analysis, the pertinent factors influencing ecommerce trust can be defined with greater precision. In summary, the majority of the qualities identified in the sources are present. In other words, the following factors are considered perceived: security, privacy, reputation, familiarity, simplicity of use, website quality, and social presence. There are additional concepts that surface, but they are not explicitly associated with trust, thus we do not deliberate upon them. Thus, the focus group enabled us to identify the characteristics that may be more pertinent at a given time and place. Furthermore, in order to ascertain the significance of each attribute, it is unfeasible to include every single one in the model. With reference to the literature and focus groups, the primary determinants that contribute to consumer confidence in electronic commerce can now be succinctly outlined. Moreover, certain factors can now be categorized according to their striking similarity to other factors. Therefore, subfactors exist for each factor.

Conclusion

The function of trust is crucial in commerce. E-commerce places an even greater emphasis on the value of trust. The future of e-commerce, according to Wang and Emurian (2005), is predicated on trust. Nonetheless, online trust is more intricate and its constituent parts are more challenging to discern. The conceptualization of trust is frequently subject to controversy and is contingent upon the characteristics of a given context. Despite this dispute over the definition

of e-trust, numerous disciplines acknowledge the critical nature of online trust. This study attempts to incorporate into a single model all the characteristics identified in the literature. Consumers have a positive attitude toward online purchases, albeit with less confidence than they do with offline purchases, according to the available evidence. It follows that individuals who possess a more favorable disposition towards online shopping also exhibit greater confidence in such transactions. Additionally, the evidence is resolute regarding the value that consumers attribute to trust. This demonstrates that consumers recognize the critical nature of trust in electronic commerce. In regard to the pertinent attributes in e-trust, the focal point of this investigation, intriguing conclusions can be drawn. Each of the factors that are assessed is given some degree of significance by the consumers. As a result, none can be discarded. This is logical given that they have passed a filter in qualitative analysis and are derived from the literature review.

Nonetheless, it is intriguing to examine the degree of significance that consumers consciously attribute to the various factors. In order for respondents to feel confident when making an online purchase, the following factors are most important: social presence, security, product and company information, and purchasing experience. Conversely, the following factors are deemed less significant by respondents in establishing trust when making online purchases: e-vendor size, usability, and familiarity. We ought to acknowledge that this consciously constructed hierarchy of significance is not inherently reflective of reality. Despite this, it is possible to conclude that each of these variables affects e-trust. This study enables us to gain a global perspective on the significance and determinants of trust in electronic commerce.

Additionally, this result has the following intriguing managerial implications: It is imperative for marketers to take into account the significance of consumer trust as evidenced by this research. Moreover, marketers ought to take into account the significance of the factors that have been elucidated. It is recommended that all of them be taken into account in subsequent

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investigations. Furthermore, it is recommended that future research incorporate demographic variables. Moreover, it is intriguing to discern the variations in behavior exhibited by distinct product categories.

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