

**CELL PHONE BUYING BEHAVIOUR OF STUDENTS THROUGH ONLINE MEDIUM****Dr. Indu Santosh*, Nandita Singh**

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DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.569971**KEYWORDS:** Internet, E-Commerce, E-tailing, Online buying, Adoption, Security, Trust, Enjoyment.**ABSTRACT**

In the present era, people does not purchase mobile phones just to remain in touch rather youth today use it to express their thoughts via social networking, play games, read news, surf on the internet, listen to music, chat instantly with friends & families and even use it for e-commerce activities. Competition among the cell phone companies becomes fierce today rapid transformation in the technology. All companies used to launch their upgraded model within a very short period of time to remain ahead in the competition. This has decreases the life cycle of the model and on the other hand gives a wide variety to the consumers for purchasing. Increasing variety and competition leads to put pressure on price and results in decrease in the profit margin of the companies. To decrease the overall cost, companies started shrinking their distribution channels and make presence over internet either through their own web sites (Xiaomi) or through online retailers (egFlipkart, Amazon). Thus, studying online buying behavior of the consumers becomes vital for the marketers so as to attract more pool of customers. This paper is useful in understanding the online buying behavior of students when they undergone process of cell phone purchasing.

INTRODUCTION

Internet today, becomes vital and essential in our daily lives not only to acquire knowledge, but also to procure various goods and services offered by companies and retailers online. The existence of the internet has significantly affected retail businesses nowadays. With the presence of technology-driven generations and further heightening of technological development, the internet has driven businesses to transition its typical marketing mode into a more convenient and encouraging way. Likewise, the internet has able to facilitate companies in streamlining its operations, allowing better communication to customers and reducing unnecessary costs incurred (Millyard, 2015). Besides, a new business function called e-business/e-commerce was created with a platform to facilitate buying and selling of goods and services through the internet (Vitez, 2015). With the nearly 2 billion people using the internet, e-commerce made a strong contribution to economic growth, generating around 3.4% of the GDP across large economies (Manyika and Roxburgh, 2011). A tremendous growth in online business and buying is seen in developing countries like India. This is due to increase in literacy rate, income and transforming technology. E-retailers still continue to face a number of challenges in the online environment, inhibiting them to craft stable and sound marketing decisions for amplified performance.

As internet shopping continues to be renowned, users or customers at different age groups are also soaring up. According to Statistica Inc., (2014), among the users, a significant 26.5 percent were at age between 25 to 34 years old, followed by users between 15 and 24 years old at 25.4 percent; which are common age range for university students. In other words, students represent a significant portion of the target market of e-retailing businesses. It was also found that these consumers mostly prefers electronic items to purchase from online medium and the major shares among these items are of cell phones. Many cell phone companies (e.g. Asus, Xiaomi, Motorola, Lenovo etc) prefers online business rather than traditional brick and mortar medium of distribution. This transformation in companies strategy pushes consumers, specially students, to become more indulge in online shopping as students are more cell phone savvy in comparison to other consumers. But in country like India, still majority of consumers do not prefer online shopping due to lack of trust and awareness.



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Being aware on every aspect of the targeted consumers is crucial in attaining business success. Thus, the study aims to explore how do students behave in online shopping environment when they are about to purchase a cell phone. It also seeks to find out motivating and constraining factors affecting them to go online shopping through quantitative marketing research. In so doing, gathered information will be used as basis in crafting suitable marketing decisions and subsequently assist in the development of strategies that upkeep the preferences or needs of the present generation.

PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

At any given time there are millions of people online, specially students and each of them is a potential customer for a company providing online sales. As discussed earlier, students were more likely used to purchase electronic items from online retail stores and cell phone constitutes a major share in it. Due to the rapid development of the technologies surrounding the Internet, cell phone companies were also taking more interest in selling products from its websites which on one hand will reduce their cost of distribution and traditional promotion and on the other hand gives them an edge in the fierce competition. Since there are so many potential consumers, it is of the out most importance to be able to understand what the consumer wants and needs. The importance of analysing and identifying factors that influence the students when they decide to purchase a cell phone over Internet is vital. Since the Internet is a new medium for there have been new demands set by the consumer. That is why it is crucial for the online retailers to know what influences the online consumer. Thus stated purpose is summarized in the form of objectives as:

- To study the concept of online buying behaviour of the student consumers.
- To assess the relationship between demographic profile of the students with their online buying behavior in Bilaspur.
- To identify the various factors influencing students' online buying behavior of cell phones in Bilaspur.
- To study the impact of various factors on online buying behavior of students in Bilaspur
- To study the perception and satisfaction of students towards online purchasing of cell phones in Bilaspur

RESEARCH METHODS

To get the first hand information and relevant data with respect to objectives of this study, a field survey is conducted among the students in Bilaspur city so that not only answers but expressions related to attractiveness of ads and excitements can also be noted. The target respondents for this study are students who were indulge in buying of cell phones online hence researcher has majorly target the people between the age group of 15 – 30 years for getting the response. This particular age group is targeted for conducting the research as this demographic is particularly hard to reach as it is *"not as gullible and consider themselves to be quite media literate and able to 'see through' advertising"* (Sharma, R and Sharma, S. K., 2015). According to McCracken's (1988), *"less is more"* approach, we selected our sample group of 100 people to offer a deeper understanding of our study. In order to find suitable respondents we relied on the purposive sampling method as we have a pre-defined purpose of obtaining data on online buying of cell phones only. In order to formulate the theoretical background which will clearly explains the concept of online buying, various research papers were studied and used in this research.

ONLINE CELL PHONE BUYING BEHAVIOUR

Understanding the system of online shopping and the behaviors of the online consumers is crucial for practitioners to compete in the fast expanding virtual marketplace (Constantinides, 2004). Lohse, Bellman and Johnson (2000) explain that understanding online consumer behavior is also important as it may help companies clarify their online retail strategies for web site design, online advertising, market segmentation and product variety.

Constantinides (2004) notes that most of the research and debate focuses on the recognition and analysis of factors that can influence the behavior of online consumers while purchasing a cell phone. Cheung, Zhu, Kwong, Chan and Limayem (2003) study online consumer behavior and explore how consumers adopt and use online purchasing. In particularly, the emphasis is on the antecedents of consumer online purchasing intention and adoption (Cheung et al., 2003). In addition, a good deal of research effort focuses on modeling the online buying and decision-making process (O'Cass&Fenech, 2003).



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Cheung et al.'s (2003) study makes an important input into the growing number of research papers on online customers' behavior. The study analyzes online consumer behavior by proposing a research framework with three building blocks (intention, adoption and continuance). The authors find that most studies investigate intention and the adoption of online shopping, whereas continuance behavior is under-researched. Moreover, the study uses these building blocks (intention, adoption, and continuance) to analyze online consumer behavior as a framework (Sharma, R and Sharma, S.K., 2015).

The Consumer Decision-Making Process

As cell phone falls under the category of specialty goods, the decision process is detailed in this case and thus mobile phone purchases is found as extended or complex decision-making processes. There are numerous models trying to explain consumer behaviour. A simplified model for showing cell phone buying process is presented in figure 1.1. which is adapted from the model given by Cant et al. (2004).

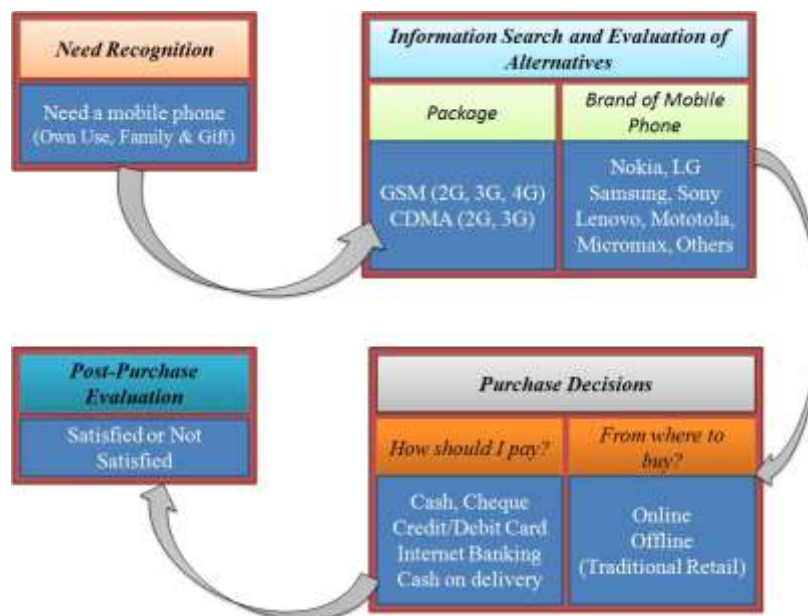


Figure 1.1: Cell phone buying process (Source: Sharma, R and Sharma, S. K, 2015)

The whole cell phone buying steps was divided into four steps: Need recognition, Information search and evaluation of alternatives, Purchase decisions and post – purchase evaluation.

- **Need recognition:** Here person recognizes the need of new cell phone which may be used to give as a gift or for the use of some family member or for self-utilization. The need for self-utilization is aroused due to upgraded technology and features offered, on viewing certain Ads, or due to status and prestige factor (Sharma and Sharma, 2015).
- **Information Search and Evaluation of Alternatives:** Once the need of new cell phone aroused, consumer starts gathering the information regarding various brands and packages available in the market which suits his need to be satisfied. Evaluation of alternatives was based on pros and cons of brands, models available and packages. Consumer tries to select the best combination of each attribute with respect to the need (Sharma and Sharma, 2015).
- **Purchase Decision:** When consumers arrive to the decision with respect to brand, model, and package, the next thing which he thinks about is the place of buying and mode of payment. Consumer may go online or traditional store as per his suitability and convenience, likewise mode of payment is also selected. It is to be noted that maximum consumers opt the mode of cash on delivery while online shopping due to the factor of trust (Sharma and Sharma, 2015).
- **Post – Purchase Evaluation:** After using the cell phone, the consumer may form a perception and attitude towards brand. If the performance of phone is good, it will satisfied the consumer and vice versa. In case



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of gift, consumers seek the feedback from the person whom it is given to judge the performance. Satisfaction results in repeat purchase and selection of same brand whereas dissatisfaction results in loss of customers as they switch the brand and never consider it at the next purchase (Sharma and Sharma, 2015).

Adoption of Mobile Phones

After having discussed the youth's attitudes towards new technologies (mobile phones), it is important to see how they adopt such a device in their everyday lives. The speed of adaptation in the case of young consumers is often fast and leaves suppliers surprised; new technologies are picked up quickly provided that they observe the basic rules of (Spero and Stone, 2004):

- Economy (not too expensive)
- Adaptability (quick, easy and cheap to adapt to user needs)
- Technical pervasiveness (you can use them anywhere)
- Market pervasiveness (lots of people using them hence it is easy to establish one's own network of connection)

According to Engel, Blackwell and Miniard (1994), "marketing analysts have examined the process of both adoption and diffusion of innovations for many years." Models that have been used to depict the process are shown in Figure 1.2:

- The *AIDA model* consisting of the stages awareness, interest, desire and action
- The *Adoption Process* model where awareness, interest, evaluation, trial and adoption are the different steps
- The *Hierarchy of Effects* model has the following stages: awareness, knowledge, liking, preference, conviction and adoption
- The *Robertson model* has the most stages: problem recognition, awareness, comprehension, attitude, legitimation, trial, adoption, dissonance
- The most widely adopted model is that of *Rogers* where knowledge, persuasion, decision, implementation and confirmation are all the different stages (See Figure).

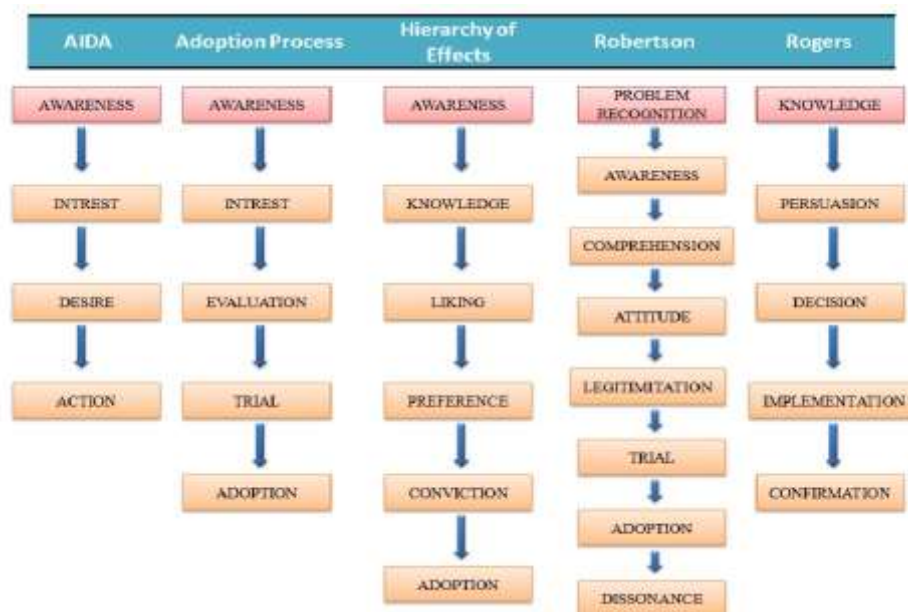


Figure 1.2: Models of adoption/diffusion process (Adapted from Engel et al. 1994)

In the marketing literature, young people tend to be early adopters of technological innovations such as adapting a mobile phone into their lifestyles and usually set the trends when it comes to using their mobile phones in



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innovative ways. Rogers (1995)'s notion of the social element in adoptions is thus obvious in the diffusion of the mobile phone among the youth (Figure 1.2). The adoption of an innovation such as a mobile phone or a new mobile application is making the decision to either accept or reject the innovation depending on relative advantage, compatibility, complexity, trialability, and observability as illustrated in Figure 1.3. According to Andersson and Heinonen (2002) first the relative advantage is that the new adoption must lend itself superior than other alternatives.

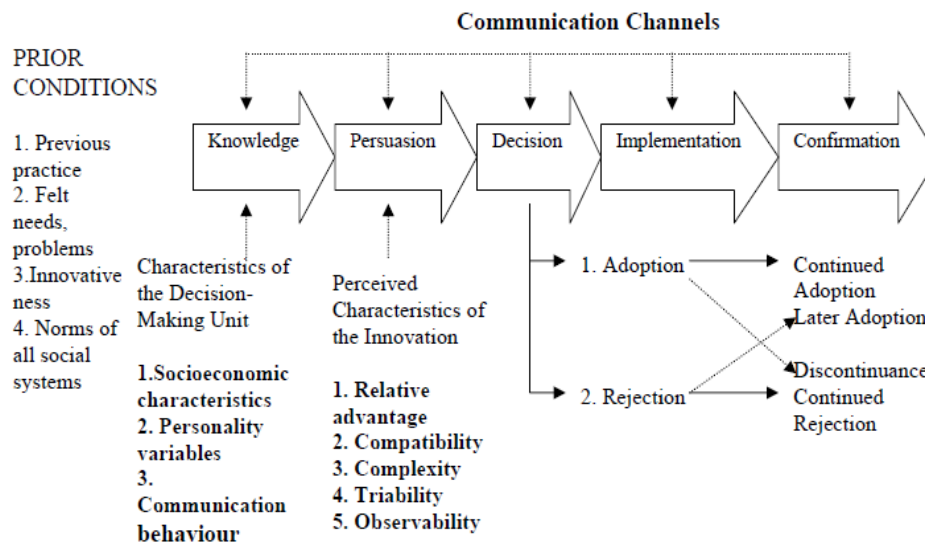


Figure 1.3: Roger's model of the innovation decision process (Adapted from Engel et al. (1994))

The mobile phone was seen according to Rogers' attributes of adoption that the device allowed the youth to coordinate their activities and also provided them with a physical symbol of status. Second the adoption relates to compatibility, where the mobile phone and application of new services must be consistent with the user's present needs, motives, values, beliefs, and behaviours. Furthermore, complexity refers to the difficulty of understanding the relationship between the benefits of new innovation and the attributes; the mobile phone is not by any means complex. Third, the new adoption must be triable, i.e. the customer must be able to try out an innovation without incurring the risk to valued resources such as time and money. The mobile phone was easily tried especially since parents have been using this device for some time. The innovation needs to be observable in order to enable social visibility for the consumer; the results of the mobile phone are easily seen, both in terms of "one's ability to coordinate activities and also in the enhancement of one's status" (Ling, 2001).

On the downside, Ling (2001) finds that there is no real idea in Rogers' work that the life situation of the group is of relevance, and the issue that an innovation will be adopted by a group has no real follow up. "In the work of Rogers, there is a sense that if one has the right sales pitch that it is possible to sell ice cubes to Eskimos" (Ling, 2001). It is therefore important to understand both the potential group of innovators and the type of innovation and to notice that the marketing followed the adoption of the mobile phone and not the other way around—something that is in contrast with Rogers' work.

FACTOR AFFECTING ONLINE CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR

The various factors which affect the online buying behavior of the consumer were broadly classified into two categories: Consumer factor and Marketing factors. These are briefly discussed below.

Consumer Factors

The consumer factor was suggested as important to online shopping and items included were privacy, security, time saving, ease of use, convenience, enjoyment, previous experience, company reputation and tactility and transaction cost (Udo, 2001).



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- (a) **Privacy:** Privacy in a communications system or network is defined as a protection given to information to conceal it from others' access by the system or network (Komiak&Benbasat, 2004). Privacy concerns were the most frequent reason cited by consumers for not making online purchases (George, 2002).
- (b) **Security:** Security is defined as that which secures or makes safe; protection; guard; defense (Komiak, &Benbasat, 2004). In this study, the term security was used in terms of financial security while privacy was the protection of personal information (Komiak&Benbasat, 2004). Research suggested that most consumers fear the risk of misused credit card information (Houston, 1998).
- (c) **Time:** Becker (1965) noted that the efficient use of time was a critical issue for the modern time-scarce consumer. Internet shopping can be viewed as a time saver for the shopper and the buyer (Bellman, & Johnson, 2000). As such, time positively influences Internet shopping as it can eliminate trips to the store and the long lines and delays when at the store (Alreck& Settle, 2002).
- (d) **Ease of Use:** According to Kunz (1997) and Taylor and Cosenza (1999), ease in using the Internet as a means of shopping positively impacted the consumer's online shopping behavior. A similar finding was noted by Segars and Grover (1993) and in Rogers's adoption innovation model (1995).
- (e) **Convenience:** One such attitude that influenced the non-store shoppers has been that of convenience (Alreck& McCorkle, 1994). Convenience has been noted as positively influencing online purchasing behavior as it eliminated the necessity of having to travel to one or more stores. (Stell& Paden, 1999). Internet shoppers more highly value convenience than did non-Internet shoppers (Donthu& Garcia, 1999).
- (f) **Enjoyment:** Enjoyment in shopping can be two-fold: enjoyment from the product purchased as well as the process of shopping itself. Online shopping like in-store shopping, provided both types of enjoyment and such enjoyment can positively or negatively influence online shopping (Taylor & Cosenza, 1999).
- (g) **Previous Experience:** Studies have found that more years of computer experience and use had a positive, direct effect on the user's acceptance of information technology (Salisbury, et al., 2001). This suggests that consumers with more years of computer use would be more likely to adopt the Internet for purchasing.
- (h) **Company Reputation:** Having a positive company reputation can reduce the consumer's perceived risk of trying a new means of distribution (Srinivasan, Anderson, &Ponnavolu, 2002). Such a reputation is developed over time through long-term relationships with the consumer. Online stores, by not having direct contact with the consumer, may have a more difficult time of establishing a reputation, thus decreasing the likelihood of online buying.
- (i) **Tactility:** The last consumer issue is the ability to test, in terms of touch and sight, a product before buying. Consumers express apprehension when buying a product without a tactile examination (Bhatnagar, Misra, &Rao, 2000).
- (j) **Customer Loyalty:** Customer loyalty has been crucial for businesses. 'The success and growth of customer-centric businesses' (Atcharyachanvanich et al., 2006) depends on customer loyalty because it helps to increase the revenue and profit. In online shopping, customers have some expectations from companies before shopping, as in traditional shopping. To satisfy or dissatisfy this expectations or how extent of satisfaction is achieved create the perceived value of customers. Satisfaction or dissatisfaction occurs as depends on experiences which exist after online shopping.
- (k) **Trust:** Since online shopping is an activity which related to a computer-system, individuals cannot touch or feel products. Therefore their decisions based on the information that provided by online retailer. Information issue not only important in terms of availability situation, it is also important in convenience and personalisation concept. Thus, trust will built up over a period of time after few successful transactions and accurate information about products.
- (l) **Transaction costs:** According to results of several researches transaction costs affect consumers' decision about buying online (Teo, et al., 2004; 62). Individuals may lose their willingness to buy online due to high costs of shipping.



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Marketing Factor

The marketing factors which affect the online buying behavior of the consumers are: product quality and variety, price, product promotion, delivery methods, return policy, customer services, technology factor and representativeness of pictures and colors.

- (a) **Product Quality and Variety:** When shopping, consumers want a broad range of quality, price, and variety in products. The online market allows for such diversity thus potentially increasing online sales (Taylor & Cosenza, 1999).
- (b) **Price:** Price of the product is a very crucial factor, especially when it comes to online shopping. In general, consumers are very price sensitive, but when it comes to online purchasing, consumer's fears to purchase high priced product. This is because of one question that what happens to their paid money if there are any difference between the products they seen and ordered online and the product they receive or the product will not performed with respect to their expectation. They find risky to purchase high priced product online.
- (c) **Product Promotion:** Product promotions attempt to influence the consumers' purchasing behavior (Walters & Jamil, 2000). Like other retail methods, online channels have various promotional tools such as corporate logos, banners, pop-up messages, e-mail messages, and text based hyperlinks to web sites. These types of promotions have positively affected Internet buying (Foster & Parsons, 2001).
- (d) **Delivery Methods:** Online purchasing typically involves the use of a delivery service because of the physical separation between the buyer and seller. For the consumer, this separation brings a concern about the time lag between when a product is ordered and when it is received as well as the potential added cost of delivery. These concerns had a negative effect on online shopping. (Yrjola, 2001).
- (e) **Return Policy:** The separation of buyer and seller noted above also plays a role in the consumer's level of comfort in regard to product returns. In the case of online shopping, where the majority of products have been delivered through some third-part means, the customer is now faced with utilizing a similar service in the return process, an additional inconvenience, and potential expense. These issues negatively affected online shopping behavior (Taylor & Cosenza, 1999).
- (f) **Customer Service:** Walsh and Godfrey (2000) suggested that e-tailors might have an advantage over brick and mortar counterparts in the area of customer service with their use of personalized web sites, product customization, and value-added work. Similarly, Kunz (1997) asserted that individuals who sought customer service were likely to purchase at the online store. On the other hand, the product delivery and product return issues may negate the perception of personal service (Schneider & Bowen, 1999). Modern consumers put a premium on personal service (Scott, 2000). The lack of face-to-face service is certainly a limitation for Internet shopping and may negatively affect it (Schneider & Bowen, 1999).
- (g) **Technology Factor:** To a degree, online buying will depend on the efficiency and availability of the technology (Hoffman, Kalsbeek & Novak, 1998). Three main technological factors were suggested as important to online shopping: the availability of personal computers and Internet access, download time and representativeness of pictures and colors (Eroglu, Machleit, & Davis, 2003).
- (h) **Representativeness of Pictures and Colors:** Consumer behavior is also impacted by the accuracy of the product/s displayed. Varying technology may make it difficult to represent the true colors or dimensions of a product. This distortion made consumers uneasy about making an online purchase therefore, negatively affecting online shopping behavior (Eroglu, Machleit & Davis, 2003).

FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

- It was found that the major factors which are responsible for adoption of online shopping over traditional retail stores is availability of wide variety of product over internet.
- Price is found another crucial factor for adoption of online shopping by consumers as they get cheaper product over internet as compared to traditional retail store.
- Friends and family members have very less influence over the consumer with respect to the choice of purchasing online.
- Quality of the purchased product is found to be the most crucial factor among consumers which widely influences their purchase decisions.



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- Seller's credibility and time period of web store presence is considered the least important influencer factor with respect to online buying decisions.
- Price and quality is considered as the most affecting factor while choosing the product online.
- Friends and family were considered as the least affecting factors with respect to the choice and decisions of the consumers.
- Consumer's decision of making an online purchase is altered or postponed due to availability of stock.
- Majority of students says that they are not willing to pay higher prices of the product which they didn't get in the retail shops.
- It was found that majority of people considered all the comprehensive factors for choosing the best product.
- It was found that people formed negative perception towards as they found problem if product sold was found differentiated to the one which they viewed online.
- Majority of consumers agreed that the quality of the product sold online is good in comparison to the product sold in the retail stores
- It was found that majority of students didn't trust the privacy policy of the online retailer.
- Students were always aware and concerned about the theft and interception of their financial information over internet.
- Methods used for making feel consumer's realness about the product in online store is not affective and did not increase their trust towards the store.
- Majority of students did not find the web store credible which shows more positive comments related to any product.
- No relation of credibility with respect to well-known brands was found when it comes to online stores of those brands.
- Students say that pictures of product posted on website of seller are not enough to gain their trust towards the seller and are not credible enough.
- Perception of majority of students was found positive and favorable towards online shopping.

CONCLUSION

This study was focused on the online buying behavior of cell phones by the students of Bilaspur city. Various factors such as price, time, quality of product, availability of stock, variety of product, credibility of website and security issues of website with respect to financial information were identified as the major factors influence online buying behavior. With respect to the adoption of online shopping, factors such as cheap price, ease of use, convenience, comfort. 24 hrs operations of web store and time were found as the crucial factors which made a consumer to adopt the method of online shopping. Keeping in view, it was said that online cell phone seller's has to work hard to build their credibility among their target consumers by deploying the various strategies related to product, services and security. Product of good quality, without error and tested need to be kept to reduce the cost of reverse logistics in case of replacements, proper communication with customer and refund policy in case of product failure for providing better and effective customer service need to be implanted which in turn build the trust and credit of seller among the customers.

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