

A New Framework For Customer Satisfaction In Electronic Commerce

¹Dr. Parvaneh Gelard and ²Dr. Amirnima Negahdari

¹Assistant Professor and Faculty Member of Management Islamic Azad University, South Tehran Branch, Iran.

²PhD in Business Management and Economics, Yerevan State University.

Abstract: From the birth of commerce, knowledge of one's customer has been a precondition of a successful enterprise (Walsh & Godfrey 2000). Today, centuries later, in the growing field of electronic commerce (e-commerce) the challenges of attracting, knowing, and retaining satisfied customers within the online realm, dubbed e-satisfaction," are even more daunting. This challenge of satisfying online customers is felt in the mainstream business-to-consumer e-commerce realm. Though the Web allows for an unprecedented level of choice, where consumers now have more control over the consumption of online content when compared with traditional media, the customers' opinions as to what makes them satisfied with Websites and the online purchasing process is rarely sought. In noting that the focus of control has switched from sellers to buyers some businesses are becoming more like small niche players, building personalized experiences, improving customer service, and customizing interfaces (Novak and Hoffman & Yung, 2000). On the other hand, the Web-based marketing efforts by some organizations have remained basically "brochure ware" concepts using the mentality that as long as there is a Website, customers will come and do business. However, with the demands of the online world, where business function takes precedence over customer values, many online businesses have fallen short in their consumer-focused efforts (Tierney 2000), (Weber and Roehl 1999). In this article the findings regarding the empirical data of the survey will be presented. In this article the findings regarding the empirical data of the survey will be presented. Study found that online customer satisfaction is affected by the Merchandising (Quantity of information, Number of offering and Quality of information), Security, Service ability, Site design (Convenience, Easy way of buying, Shopping time and Ease of browsing) and company (Company antiquity and Company reputation). For data collecting and final testing of the E-SAT model Questionnaire was designed and distributed between 221 people in Germany.

Keywords: customer satisfaction, e-satisfaction, e-commerce, online shopping, online buyer, online consumer behavior.

INTRODUCTION

The Internet allows for the online exchange of value, without geographical or time restrictions, between companies and partners, customers, suppliers, and employees. This online relationship is referred to as electronic or e-commerce (Lynch and Rose 1993).

E-commerce, in summing two definitions presented by Kalakota and Whinston (1996) is any business transaction where one or more of the processes required to complete the transaction occurs electronically or with the assistance of electronic tools, private networks, direct link telephone systems, and last but not least the Internet. E-commerce also includes all ancillary activities related to an online transaction such as shopping, ordering, delivery, payment and customer support functions. Since its birth in the 1970s, e-commerce has grown to involve many complex relationships. These include business-to-business (B2B), business-to-consumer (B2C), Consumer-to-consumer (C2C), Consumer-to-business (C2B), as well as non-business and intra business relationships. This study focuses on the B2C relationship, which is defined as traditional retailing transactions with individual shoppers. (Kalakota and Whinston 1996).

While considerable research has investigated the drivers of service quality and satisfaction in the offline environment (Zeithaml, 2000) a small, but growing body of research has examined the drivers in the online environment (Francis and White 2002; Donthu, 2001; Loiacono Watson and Goodhue 2002; Srinivasan, Anderson, and Ponnayolu 2002) (Zeithaml, Parasuraman, and Malhotra, 2000). This is not surprising considering both the newness and importance of the field. One of the consequences of "newness" is that research on the basic questions - what drives online satisfaction and retention - is still in the exploratory stage as both theory and empirical investigations are emerging. From a broad perspective, the Internet is a new technology and Web site satisfaction will be driven by ease of use and usefulness (Davis 1989) As noted by Davis (1989) these two concepts are predominant in predicting how much consumers will be using computer technologies. The ability to easily navigate a Web site and its perceived value (e.g. entertainment, convenience, community) will influence both usage level and satisfaction. By extension, satisfaction in the online

Corresponding Authors: Dr. Parvaneh Gelard, Assistant professor and faculty member of management Islamic Azad University, south Tehran branch, Iran.

Tel: +9821-22895753-5, E-mail: P_gelard@azad.ac.ir, P_gelard@yahoo.com

environment may also be driven by consumer benefits in using self-service technologies. As presented by Van Riel (2001), these benefits include convenience (Meuter Ostrom, Roundtree and Bitner 2000; Reichheld and Scheffer 2000) (Zeithaml, Parasuraman, and Malhotra, 2000), saving time and money (Meuter, Ostrom, Roundtree and Bitner (2000) avoiding interpersonal interaction (Meuter Ostrom, Roundtree and Bitner 2000) and being in control (Bauer and Grether, 2002).

Literature Review:

Szymanski and Hise's model:

Szymanski and Hise (2000) examined the role that consumer perceptions of online convenience, merchandising (product offerings and product information), site design, and financial security played in e-satisfaction assessments. Using a sample of online shoppers, the authors found that convenience, site design, and financial security are the dominant factors in consumer assessments of e-satisfaction. E-satisfaction is depicted in Figure 1 as the outcome of consumer perceptions of online convenience, merchandising, site design, and financial security.

The authors noted that the elements captured in the model are also ones discussed in the academic literature and popular press as representing advantages or disadvantages of e-retailing. Regression analysis was used to estimate the unique effect of convenience, product offerings, product information, site design, and financial security concerns on consumers' e-satisfaction levels using the stated hypotheses:

- 1). Satisfaction with e-retailing increases as perceptions of convenience becomes more positive, all else equal.
 - 2). Satisfaction with e-retailing increases as perceptions of online merchandising become more positive, all else equal.
 - 3). Satisfaction with e-retailing increases as perceptions of site design become more positive, all else equal.
 - 4). Satisfaction with e-retailing increases as perceptions of online financial security becomes more positive, all else equal.
- Using a qualitative approach following Miles and Huberman (1994) to analyze focus group responses followed by a quantitative assessment of 1,007 shoppers the study found that convenience, site design, and financial security are the dominant factors in consumer assessments of e-satisfaction Company.

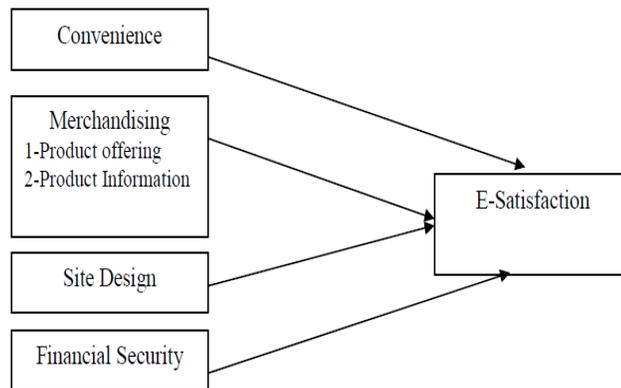


Fig. 1: Szymanski and Hise Model of E-Satisfaction.

These hypotheses could also be tested in the area of customer satisfaction with. Such testing would involve the obvious change in the merchandising component of the model to product, services, and information. While Szymanski and Hise (2000) used regression analysis to test the proposed model, a path analysis approach would also be applicable.

Lee's Model of Internet Customer Satisfaction:

Lee's Internet customer satisfaction model, as described by Turban, Lee, King, and Chung (2000) and Koivumaki (2001) which is presented in Figure 2 suggests that repeat Web purchase is determined by customer satisfaction. Customer satisfaction, in turn, is the result of several properties related to the Web technology in general and to the individual Web shop. In Lee's model the antecedents of customer satisfaction are logistics support, or how the shipments of the purchased goods are handled, customer support, pricing, and the different properties of the Web shop (online store). These properties include privacy and security issues, the operational properties of the store, such as speed of operation and system reliability, and ease of use. Also the content, quality, and the manner in which the goods are presented are assumed to be among the determinants of customer satisfaction.

The central implication of Lee's model is the positive relationship between customer satisfaction and customer retention. Increasing customer satisfaction related to using a Web shop by, for example, enhancing the navigational properties of the shop increases the likelihood of a repeat purchase.

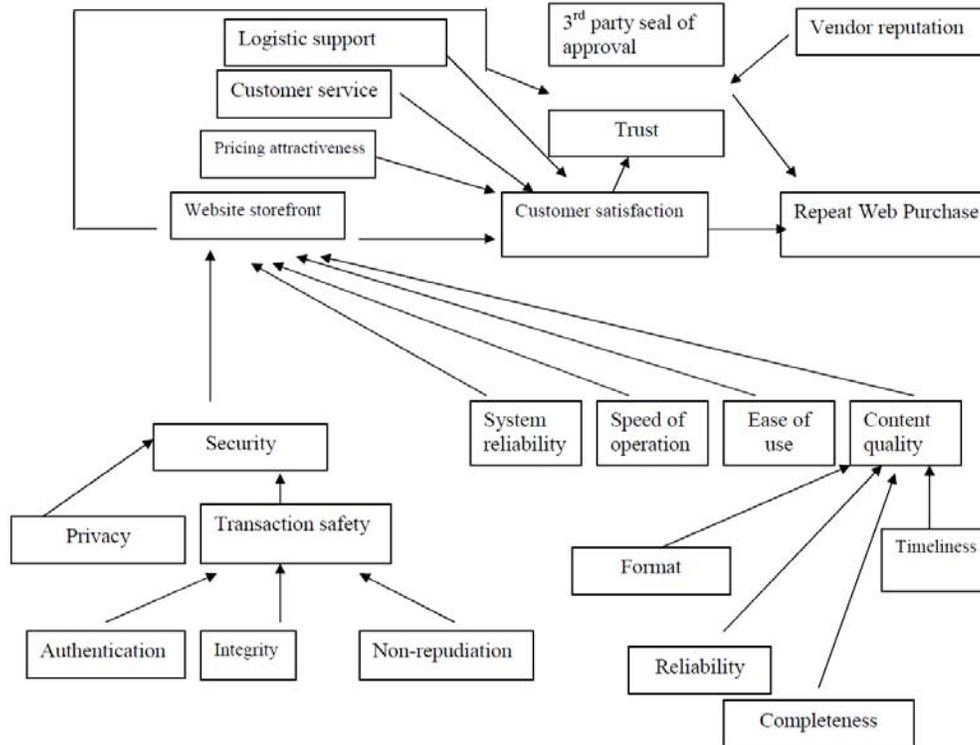


Fig. 2: Lee's Model of Internet Customer Satisfaction.

The Business-to-consumer (B2C) E-SAT Model (Millis's Model):

Mills (2002) proposed that customer satisfaction is affected by the customer experience at the B2C Website. This model is shown in Figure 3. In the model, the customer experience is, in turn, affected by the B2C Website interface. The B2C Website interface is comprised of three elements, Website design, Website access, and Website security. If a consumer finds that the design presented on a B2C Website is not pleasing or appealing to them, then they will have a lower or negative impression of the Website interface and their overall consumer experience will be less positive. Likewise, the satisfaction derived from the Website experience will be lowered.

Using a first- and second-order confirmatory factor analysis, as well as structural equation modeling, the model also proposes that the perceived quality of B2C Website services and perceived value of the B2C Website impacts the customer's experience and ultimate satisfaction with the Website. The perceived quality of a B2C Website's services is comprised of three elements, feedback, incentives provided by the B2C Website, and the reliability of the Website. In addition, the model proposes that the perceived value of a Website to the consumer is a function of three factors, usage/familiarity, transaction value, and shopping convenience. If the customer perceives the Web has having very little value, and that customer is largely unfamiliar with navigating and searching the Web, he or she will be less satisfied with a B2C Website.

Utilizing an exploratory approach 147 students at a large Midwestern university was surveyed. The study found that customer satisfaction is positively affected by the consumer's online B2C Website experience. Perceived value of the B2C Website to the consumer had the most positive effect on the consumer's B2C Website experience.

Perceived value of the B2C Website was also positively affected by Website interface and perceived quality of the B2C Website services, shopping convenience, and the transaction value of the B2C Website to the consumer.

Bauer and Grether's Model:

Bauer and Grether (2002) present a critical theoretical and empirical analysis of the contribution the Internet can make to successful relationship marketing. The study focuses on the influence that important characteristics of the WWW, such as its interactive structure and constant availability of information, can have

on key variables of relationship marketing, such as commitment, satisfaction, and trust. The authors proposed and used the model shown in Figure 4 as a frame of reference for consumer relations through the Internet. These authors contend that an innovative instrument for shaping customer relations can be characterized by the constant availability of information, interactivity (the related activities of several parties), the efficient transfer of information, individuality or individualization of communication, and integration of communication and transaction. These factors, in turn, influence trust, satisfaction and commitment, which are key elements of relationship marketing.

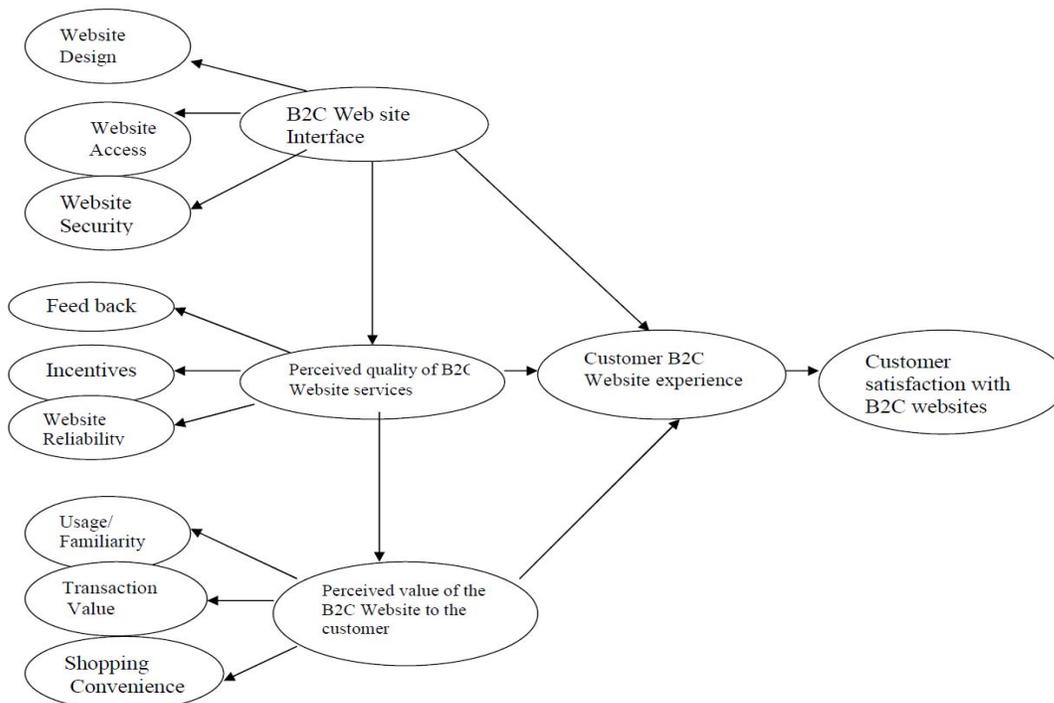


Fig. 3: B2C E-commerce Satisfaction E-SAT Millis's Model.

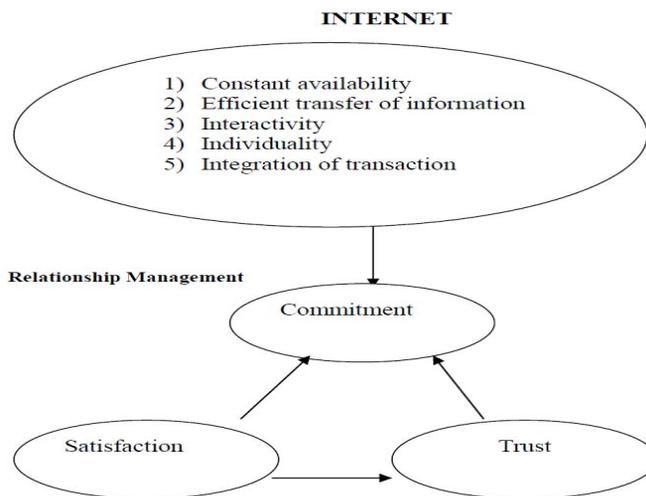


Fig. 4: Bauer and Grether (2002) Frame of Reference for Customer Relations.

The model hypothesizes that: 1). Trust in an online relationship increases with growing satisfaction. 2). Satisfaction influences commitment positively. 3). Commitment shows a positive dependence on trust. 4) The chance to have permanent access to information from a relationship partner increases trust, commitment and satisfaction with the partner. 5). Real time interactivity increases trust, commitment, and satisfaction with that company. 6). Individualization increases the trust, commitment, and satisfaction with the relationship partner. 7).

The use of multimedia capabilities increases trust, commitment and satisfaction with the company. 8). Integration of communication and transaction increases trust, commitment, and satisfaction with the relationship partner.

Research Model:

Prior literature provides the author with a rich foundation to build a research framework for the study of online customer satisfaction.

Author built up a framework (Figure 1) based on the literature review on online customer satisfaction. The model ties together 25 factors representing six major contexts of e-satisfaction: 1) Convenience, 2) Merchandising, 3) Site Design, 4) Security, 5) Serviceability and 6) Company. Key elements of this framework are discussed below:

Convenience:

Online shopping features can be either consumer's perceptions of functional and utilitarian dimensions, like "easy access" and "easy way of buying", or their perceptions of emotional and hedonic dimensions like "enjoyment". E-tailing is promoted widely as a convenient avenue for shopping. Shopping online can economize on time and effort by making it easy to locate merchants, find items, and procure offerings.

Consumers do not have to leave their home nor travel to find and obtain merchandise online. They can also browse for items by category or online store. These time and browsing benefits of online shopping are likely to be manifested in more positive perceptions of convenience and e-satisfaction (Szymanski and Hise 2000)

H1. Satisfaction with e-retailing increases as perception of convenience becomes more positive, all else equal (Szymanski and Hise 2000)

Merchandising:

Positive perceptions of online merchandising represent another set of elements that could positively impact e-satisfaction levels. This includes the number of product offerings, variety of product offering, quality of product information and quantity of product information.

It seems reasonable to expect that e-satisfaction would be more positive when consumers perceive online stores to offer superior product assortments. For one, superior assortments can increase the probability that consumer needs will be met and satisfied. This is especially likely when consumers desire items not widely distributed (e.g., specialty goods), produced in limited quantities, or unavailable at brick-and-mortar stores because shelf space is limited. For example, a traditional book superstore may carry 150,000 titles, but an Amazon.com carries millions of titles. The probability of locating any one title, therefore, would be higher at the online store. The probability of consumers satisfying needs online would also be higher. Second, the wider assortment of products can include items of better quality that may be attractive to consumers. The lower search costs traditionally associated with online shopping are thought to result in consumers buying better quality items. Buying better quality items, in turn, can improve satisfaction by delimiting the costs of failed products. Finally, we expect richer information (more extensive and higher quality) available online to lead to better buying decisions and higher levels of e-satisfaction. Together, rich data and wide product assortments would likely lead to consumer Satisfaction with online retailing. (Szymanski and Hise 2000).

H2. Satisfaction with e-retailing increases as perception of online merchandising becomes more positive, all else equal (Szymanski and Hise 2000).

Site Design:

It's important for online retailers to make their sites simple, clear, and efficient. Usability considerations should be of prime importance in the design of an e-tailing websites. "Site characteristics" like search functions, download speed and navigation, fast presentation also play a role in shaping "ease of use" of the website. Thus affecting the success of e-tailing websites. A number of web specific factors including navigation, interface and customized content and updated have been widely investigated in the aforementioned studies.

Shopping is thought to be pleasurable and satisfying to consumers when the retailing sites are fast, uncluttered, and easy-to-navigate. Fast, uncluttered, and easy-to navigate sites economize on shopping time. Uncluttered and easy-to-navigate sites also economize on the cognitive effort consumers expend figuring out how to shop effectively online. (Szymanski and Hise 2000)

H3. Satisfaction with e-retailing increases as perception of site design becomes more positive, all else equal (Szymanski and Hise 2000).

Security:

Lack of trust is one of the most frequently cited reasons for consumers not shopping on the internet. Security and privacy have an impact on consumer trust in shopping on the internet. The apprehensions of the customers regarding the security for online transactions and authenticity of goods are curtailing the success of

the e-tailing model. The key reason for its low acceptance is the unwillingness of people to use credit cards for online purchases. More and more sophisticated online customers would rather pay a higher price to e-tailers who provide high quality e-service. Bruskin/Goldberg Research, for example, reports that 75% of Internet shoppers emphasize credit-card security as a major consideration when deciding whether or not to buy items online(Szymanski and Hise 2000).

H4. Satisfaction with e-retailing increases as perception of web security becomes more positive, all else equal (Szymanski and Hise 2000).

Serviceability:

The level of e-satisfaction is also determined by the quality of e-services, the price level and the purchase process. Product delivery and packaging have the strongest influence on customers' satisfaction and future purchase intentions. Serviceability includes complaint redressal, customer support, packaging, time lines of delivery, post services (Anand 2007), possibility to return.

H5. Satisfaction with e-retailing increases as service offered by e-tailor becomes more positive, all else equal. (Anand 2007).

Company:

These days we have a lot of click –and- Mortar Company and it’s important for them to know does their feature have influence on customer satisfaction or not, it's important for online buyer to buy their needs from well-known company and some parameters are important for them such as company size, reputation, technology, Antiquity.

H6. Online Satisfaction increase as features of company becomes more positive, all else equal

Research Methodology:

With the literature findings as a foundation, the quantitative phase of research reported next, focuses on gathering survey data to empirically test this e- satisfaction model. Online and Questionnaire methodologies were chosen. In total, 221 shoppers were identified.

The respondents come from Germany. Respondents included 56 percent males and 44 percent females.

42.2 percent of the respondents were ages 25-35; 31.65percent were ages of 35- 45, 10.1percent were ages45-55, 9.63 percent were ages18–25; 6.42percent were over age 55. The majority of the respondents were between 25-35 years old. It may be the result of the old people desire to continue traditional methods and it is the young generation who always prefer to try novel methods.

Most frequently bought items of the respondents was Book and CDs with 36.2 Percent, in addition 29 Percent of the respondent bought Apparel, 21.2 percent of the respondent bought Electronic goods and 13.6percent of them bought Sports equipment

Data Analysis:

As most of the scales are new, an exploratory factor analysis using SPSS 11 was performed on the six-factor measurement model. All six factors are easily interpreted (see Table 1). They are convenience, site design, financial security, merchandising, serviceability and company.

The data collection method was questionnaire. The method which could do this task was Factor analysis. To be sure if it is permitted to use Factor analysis or not, KMO analysis should be conducted. Since KMO is greater than 0.5(=0.779) it shows that the number of samples is big enough for using factor analysis. Moreover since the Sig. of Bartlett's test is 0 it is permitted to use Factor analysis.

Regression was used to estimate the unique effect of convenience, merchandising, site design, financial security, serviceability and company concerns on consumers' e- satisfaction levels. The correlations among the predictor and criterion variables are presented in Table 2.

Table 1: Comparison of the research model with previous models.

factors	Research model (2010)	Bauer and Grether (2002)	Turban, E., Lee, J., King, D., & Chung, M.(2000)	Mills, J. E. (2002).	Szymanski and Hise (2000)	Simms, John Rauniar, Rupak , Morefield, Roger D. ,Rauniar, Deepak(2009)	Wright , Len Tiu ,Charles Dennis, Bill Merrilees, Chanaka Jayawardhena,(2009)
Convenience	▲	-	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲
Merchandising	▲	▲	▲	-	▲	▲	▲
Site design	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲
Security	▲	-	▲	▲	▲	▲	-
Service ability	▲	▲	▲	▲	-	▲	▲
Company	▲	-	-	-	-	-	-

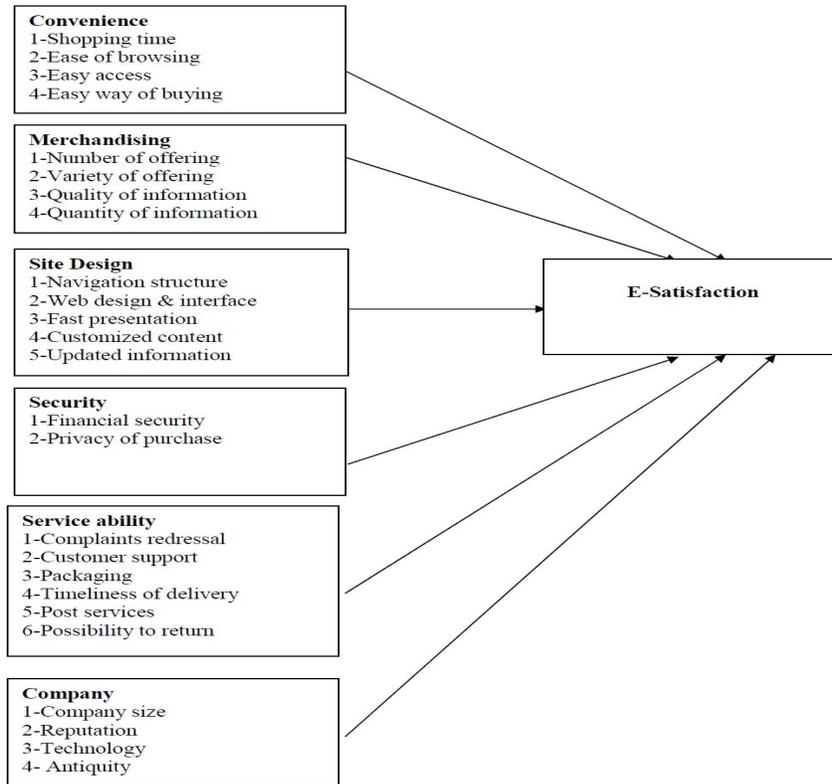


Fig. 5: Research model.

Table 2: Factors Loading for Scale Items.

Factor	Factor loading	Cronbach's alpha
Fact 1: Convenience		.71
Shopping time	.73	
Ease of browsing	.58	
Easy access	.78	
Easy way of buying	.86	
Fact 2: Merchandising		.78
Number of offering	.80	
Variety of offering	.86	
Quality of information	.77	
Quantity of information	.71	
Fact 3: Site design		.80
Navigation structure	.77	
Web design and interface	.79	
Fast presentation	.57	
Customized content	.55	
Updated information	.61	
Fact 4: security		.75
Financial security	.88	
Privacy of purchase	.88	
Fact 5:service ability		.64
Complaint redressal	.61	
Customer support	.83	
Packaging	.75	
Timelines of delivery	.54	
Post service	.79	
Possibility to return	.65	
Fact 6:company		.53
Company size	.81	
Reputation	.82	
Technology	.76	
Antiquity	.77	

The data in Table3 show the regression coefficient for merchandising, convenience, serviceability, site design, security and company are statistically significant. Their signs are also in the direction as expected. Moreover, we find that merchandising has the greatest impact on e- satisfaction levels (beta = 0.44). The data also demonstrate that security is the second importance item for e-satisfaction (beta = 0.39), third items that has impact on e-satisfaction level is service ability (beta = 0.37), positive perceptions of site design (beta = 0.34) are important to e-satisfaction assessments. Convenience (beta = 0.31) as the next important predictor of online satisfaction. Finally, the data indicate that company (beta = 0.21) is of less practical significance to e-satisfaction assessments (when p<.1).

Table 3: Correlation Matrix for Predictors of e-satisfaction.

	E-satisfaction	Convenience	Merchandising	security	Service ability	Company	Site design
E-satisfaction	1.00						
Convenience	.32	1.00					
Merchandising	.73	.69	1.00				
Security	.70	.58	.71	1.00			
Service ability	.52	.32	.43	.47	1.00		
Company	.19	.22	.21	.21	.39	1.00	
Site design	.43	.51	.50	.50	.29	.22	1.00

Table 4: Regression Coefficients for Predictors of e-satisfaction.

Predictor variable	Proposed effect	Standard coefficient (Beta)	t-value (p-level)
Merchandising	+	.44	6.37(<.05)
security	+	.39	6.27(<.05)
Service ability	+	.37	5.95(<.05)
Company	+	.21	3.17(<.1)
Site design	+	.34	5.42(<.05)
Convenience	+	.31	5.21 (<.05)

Table 5: Significant and non Significant factors on E-Satisfaction

Main factors on E-satisfaction (sorted by importance)	Significant factors on E-satisfaction (sorted by importance)	Non significant Factors on E-satisfaction
Merchandising	1-Quantity of information 2-Number of offering 3-Quality of information	1- Variety of offering
Security	1-Privacy of purchase 2-Financial security	
Service ability	1-Time lines of delivery 2-Possibility to return 3-Complaint redressal 4-Customer support 5-Packaging	1-Post service
Site design	1-Navigation structure 2-Web design and interface	1-Fast presentation 2-Customizes content 3- Updated information
Convenience	1-Easy way of buying 2-Shopping time 3-Ease of browsing	1-Easy access
Company	1-Company antiquity 2-Company reputation	1-Company technology 2-Company size

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

E-commerce development and emergence of Electronic money, and the ability to perform business operations through internet and computerized networks have led to changes in consumers behaviors. Marketing managers gain information through analysis of consumers’ behaviors. Such information assures their success in the market. Hence, examination of customer satisfaction has a critical importance which is regarded as a means to achieve success. Marketing activities should focus on consumer satisfaction and issues related to that.

Companies should understand the dynamic and ever-changing environment they work in, and should understand the changes happening in that to adapt them with this context.

Study found that online customer satisfaction is affected by the Merchandising(Quantity of information ,Number of offering and Quality of information), Security (Privacy of purchase and Financial security), Service ability (Time lines of delivery, Possibility to return, Complaint redressal ,Customer support

and Packaging), Site design(Navigation structure and Web design and interface),Convenience (Easy way of buying, Shopping time and Ease of browsing) and company (Company antiquity and Company reputation) Study found that online customer behavior, as following:

Target market for online firms is people between 25-45 ages, Most Frequently bought item from the online retailer is Books and CDs, the second frequently bought item from online retailer is Apparel and the third item is Electronic goods.

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