

Marketers Shifted From The Herd To The Swarm – Its Fizz Or Fizzle?

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Abstract

Due to immense competition, companies need to find out the unspoken and unmet need of the consumer. So it's very important for companies to build strong and influential brands. Consumption of any product is not accidental, but a manifestation of a consumer buying behavior and consumer's belief. Social networking websites have seen the growth of users. Various organizations have started exploring the power of such a large user membership. Technology advancement and social media has changed the process of flow of the information and made a huge impact in the life of information generation. Today, consumers are becoming a human swarm by using digital media. The traditional media has its own place and will always be there. But the revolution in marketing era will change the thinking of the society. So, swarm marketing is based on swarm intelligence which is described as the field of study as "Collective Wisdom".

Key words- Swarm marketing, consumer buying behavior, online shopping, purchase intention, utilitarian and hedonic need

Introduction

What is "Swarm Intelligence"?

"The emergent collective intelligence of groups of simple agents." (Bonabeau et al, 1999)

As per an article published in "what is digital marketing, May, 2013", swarm intelligence is the offshoot of artificial intelligence. In simple terms, it can be described as the "Collective wisdom". Swarm behavior shows by animals and animals make group, move together without even told what to do. Due to technology advancement, human behavior has become more relevant to this swarm behavior. Through social networking websites, people cross boundaries and language barriers and share information with other. The information available on these websites easily becomes the voice of many. The paper discusses the human mindset and human collective behavior on consumer purchasing and

buying pattern. Everyday we see different type individuals and they behave in a very different way as a single identity then to collectively in a group. Human swarm mindset is an array of project and it's very important to maximize the number of happy customers.

As per mosquito interactive, swarm marketing is a method of interactive marketing that creates and manages a literal swarm of thousand. Swarm marketing is not SEO (search engine optimization) and PPC (page per click). Swarm marketing includes both SEO and PPC and it's a simple concept that develops one unique page for every useful search term for which an organization has an offerings. These days, individuals are having access to lot of information because of social networking websites. Swarm intelligence works as a collective intelligence tool and the companies needs to understand the hidden benefits of swarm intelligence. Organizations are working on social networks for marketing, but they lack in understanding the behavior of an individual who is present on the social network. An individual, who is there on the social network, is independent and will also find the solution themselves by sharing knowledge, information and intelligence with others. So, it's very important to understand that an independent individual, who is present on social network, can act as reader and writer by sharing their own set of thoughts with others and also passing the intelligence over the passage of time.

Companies need to understand the power of human swarm and also start providing the social networking apps that can give best results from the social networks. Companies should use their own system by using their own game rules. They can use various practices to help human swarm and take the benefits. Organizations need to define new protocols of communication and find various modes or channels to reduce the language barriers worldwide. They need to provide the appropriate interface to fulfill the requirement of communication through social network and the applications should have the database and knowledge management system for all the users. This knowledge management system will maintain the data of various users and the information regarding the experiences, reviews and feedback. This type of application will work as source of information for users in future related to marketing activities.

So, it's very important to understand the human swarm thinking and their information sharing pattern on social network. Companies need to understand the pattern of sharing information and find out various activities by which they can attract these types of human swarm. Human swarm will help an organization to build a string brand which will help an organization to fulfill there long term objectives. Human swarm do various type of activities on social network like updating their status, liking various posts, writing comments, sharing posts and commenting on other posts. Marketers need to find out

human swarm of different traits and personalities like bloggers, scientists, students, writers, journalists and musicians etc. by the help of these human swarms, it will be easy for marketers to integrate all the possible options to find the solution for the problem. The way of flowing the information and the source of information have changed because instead of using the expert source of information, individuals are relying on their own source of information like friends, family, peers, reference groups, fellow online members on social networks. To control this voice about the brand is not an easy task. If a brand will be able to connect with human swarm then it can outperform. So the marketing has moved from traditional way to new way of brighter world where people create brands, products and services and then talk about it with other people.

Literature Review

Retailing in India is becoming the next boom industry and on its way of modernization. The future of organize retail is promising; the retail market is growing due to various reasons like technology advancement, friendly government policies and growth in the consumption by the Indian population. As per Capgemini (Future Channel Shopping, 2009), the online channel will grow to 25% to 30% of total retail sales, up from the current 4% to 15% by 2020. Consumers are informative, knowledgeable, empowered, and connected to the outside world and know better how to get the value from the traditional point of exchange.

Online purchase behavior of consumer

Various studies have attempted to understand the online consumer buying behavior of metropolitan area. Consumer's attitude, intention and influencing factors lead to purchase intention (Tonita, Benedict, Ruyter 2004). There is a shift from traditional store-base retailing to online retailing (Keen *et al.*, 2002). Online shopping has few different and same characteristics as physical shopping (Chen and Leteney, 2000; Lohse and Spiller, 1999). Online shopping fulfills various needs of consumers as compare to traditional shopping (Grewal *et al.*, 2002; Chen and Leteney, 2000; Haubl and Trifts, 2000). Online shopping provides various advantages to the consumer like conveniences, information about the various products, products availability, anonymity and product assortment and variety (Grewal *et al.*, 2002). Consumers show five important dimensions like technology advancement, product variety and assortment, customization, ease of use, and trust lead to online shopping (Raymond R. Burke, 2002).

Factors influencing consumer buying behavior

There are various factors which can influence the online consumer buying behavior. Internet is a fast medium of information search and information share; collection and aggregation of information through large online communities are available at very low cost. Technology plays a big role in building relationship and large scale of word-of-mouth networks (Chrysanthos Dellarocas, 2003). People communicate about product knowledge, their price, effectiveness, multiple perspectives, and potential problems via online word-of-mouth marketing (Kineta and Stella, 2007). In the modern era, personalized information and recommendation system is increasing through internet for mass-customization of products (Ansari *et al.*, 2000). Internet plays the role of virtual personal advisor and will help the company in building relationship with the customers by providing value to them (Urban, Sultan, & Qualls, 1999). Social networking websites, personal websites, blogs and forums (eWOM sources) refer as the CGM (Consumer-Generated Media) and these sources educate consumers about products, brands, services and personal issues (Peter & Mike, 2006). Online review has become the major source of information for consumers and plays a big role in the process of purchase of consumers (Nan, Paul, Jennifer, 2006). Online customer reviews play a crucial role in repurchase intention and most importantly percentage of positive reviews have major influence on customer repurchase intention (Dinesh, Amit, Raghav, 2008). When online consumers have minor dissatisfaction about the experience then they never spread negative word. But, if they will be highly dissatisfied then they spread negative Word-of-Mouth (Richins and Root-Shaffer, 1998). There is a fine line difference between opinion leaders and opinion seekers. Some times, opinion leaders become opinion seekers because they try to find updated information about the products (Tao, Seounmi, Guohua, Mana, 2006). Human intelligence is the combination of eWOM and SEO, human swarm share information with strangers who have never met or seen (Patrali and Rutgers, 2001). Due to internet, consumers are not just having access to interpersonal communication with friends, relatives and other personal source of information; but also having information to various sources (Pamela and Deborah, 2001). Earlier, customer loyalty was used as the competitive advantage over the competitors. Now, customer loyalty considered to be as the most important parameters for survival (Frederick, Robert, Christopher, 2000). Customers believe in three major types of online reviews sources: (1) other consumers, (2) human experts, (3) recommender system (Senecal and Nantel, 2002).

Consumer attitude, customer intension and influencing factors pertain to purchase intension

Information available on various sources and networks has direct correlation with consumers' attitude and consumer intention towards purchasing (Gilly *et al.*, 1998). There are different ways in which customer value can be created in e-commerce business like: competitive price, specialized assortment of products, shopping convenience, and superior customer service (Bill, Pirkko, Tawfik, 2002). Customers, who spend more time on internet, have shown different type of lifestyle and attitude. They have shown positive attitude towards convenience and time saving compare to cost saving (Steven, Gerald, & Eric, 1999). Online retailers need to understand that the customer shopping experience plays a big role in online shopping (Keen *et al.*, 2002). In spite of the need, consumer mood, point-of purchase stimuli, and communication seem other important factor for consumer to shop online (Meryl, 1985). The primary motivator of internet shopping is convenience which result in online shopping (Vanitha, Elzbieta, & Bharat, 2006). Online buying experience has a long term competitive advantage. Researchers have studied five online buying experience dimensions like website usability (EASE), on-site resources (SELECTION), customer confidence (TRUST), relationship services (REL), and price leadership (COST). Customer confidence and relationship services have long-term competitive advantage for e-commerce companies, while others dimensions do not provide competitive advantage (Suresh, Shivaram & Mohan, 2004). Hans, Tibert, and Marcel (2003) suggested that there are two types of purchase intensions like technology-oriented and trust-oriented. There is a positive effect trust in the store on perceived risk, which, in turn, having a positive effect of perceived risk on the attitude towards online purchasing.

Objectives

This paper is an attempt to understand the behavior of the shoppers. Specifically the objective of this paper is to understand the followings:

- To learn what attracts or influence a human swarm mindset
- To understand how human swarm think based upon consumer buying behavior and consumer purchasing intension
- How human swarm intension pertain to purchase intension

Research Methodology

Data Collection Methodology

A predominantly quantitative study has been used for this paper. Respondents were selected through social networking websites like facebook, twitter, linkedin, and Google+ etc. The purposive sampling method was used in the research paper and the sample size consists of 100 respondents of online shoppers located in Delhi/ NCR region. The online shoppers have asked questions based upon their experience while doing shopping on two websites. Primary data and secondary data sources has been use for this paper. The primary data source was collected by researcher by conducting an online survey. The secondary data was used using various online databases and online journals.

“Customer shopping experience feedback survey” has 20 common factors to understand 3 major factors. As per the questionnaire, the respondents were asked to indicate their response on a five point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagrees to strongly agree.

Data Analysis Methodology

Various statistical analysis tools have been used for this study. The quantitative data was used to analyze this study. The various statistical tools like reliability test, correlation, regression, ANOVA and multiple regression analysis have been used to analyze the relationship between sixteen dimensions. SPSS 17.0 has been used to analyze the statistical analysis.

The null hypotheses that have been developed from the research questions of this study are as follow:

H1: The customer intension and influencing factor to consumer buying behavior don't have predict purchase intention

H2: The dimensions crystallized from the questionnaire pertaining to customer intension and influencing factors don't have any correlation with purchase intention

Results and Interpretations

The reliability of the questionnaire found to be very high with Cronbach Alpha value of 0.975 showing the good internal consistency of the scale. The result of Cronbach Alpha is:

Table1: Reliability Statistics for “Online Customer Shopping Intension” Questionnaire

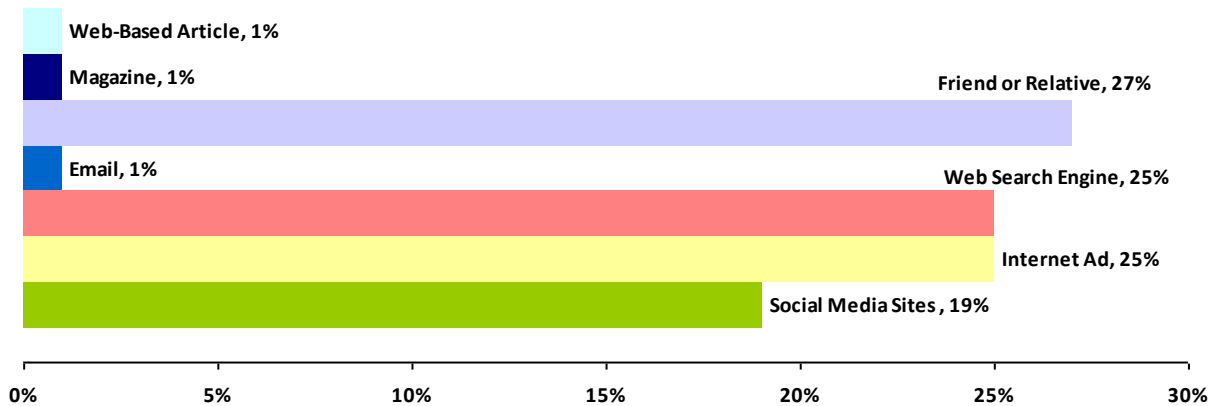
Reliability Statistics	
Cronbach’s Alpha	0.975
N of Items	17

The questionnaire was divided in to 3 parts. The first part of the questionnaire consisted of questions related to consumer intention, the second part of the questionnaire consisted of questions related to influencing factors to consumer buying behavior and the last part of the questionnaire consisted of questions related to purchase intention.

The research is having three major variables. The variables are consumer intension and influencing factors to consumer buying behavior as independent variables and purchase intension as dependent variables. The sixteen dimensions crystallized and have been used for measuring the customer intension and influencing factors to purchase intention.

The study gives the in depth information on the influencing pattern of the consumer while doing shopping online. The customer gets influence through various sources, so it’s very important to understand the channels. The respondents were asked to give their comment on various channels of information and communication, which are as below:

Table 2: How do they get to know about the website?



Table

3: Through which social media they get to know about the website?

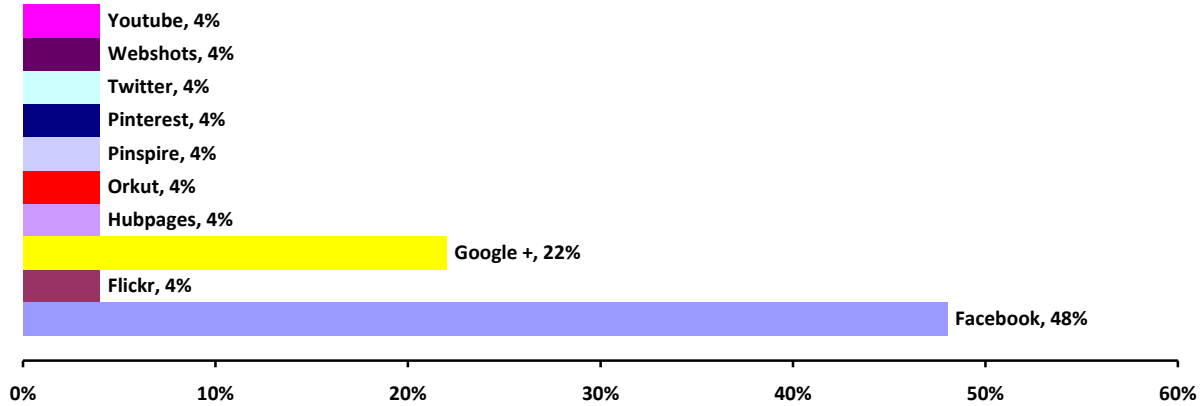
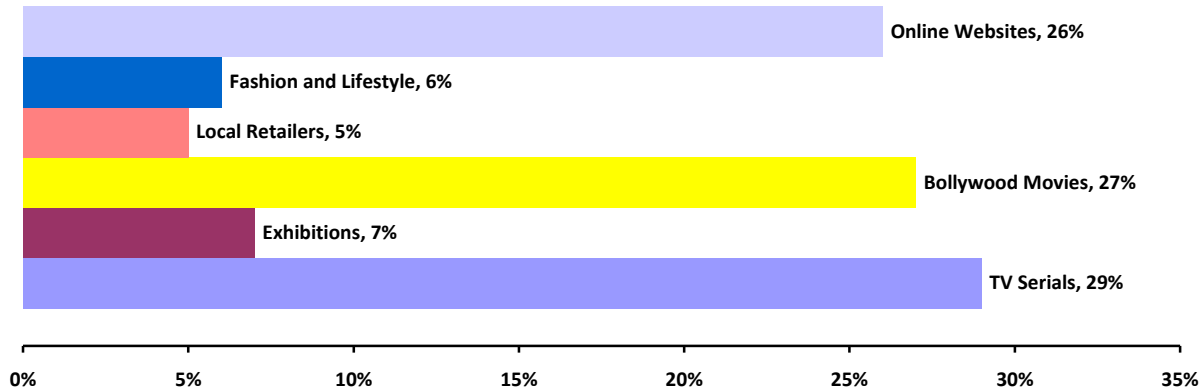


Table 4: Where do they generally get the information about the products?



Finding of the study indicate Friends and relatives, social media websites, and website search engines have chosen as the best mode for getting the information about the product website and the company. Facebook considered being as the main source of information in the category of social media websites. Respondents consider online websites as one of the topmost source of getting information about the various products.

Descriptive Statistics for the dimensions of customer intension and influencing factors to purchase intension:

The Sixteen factors have seen used to analyze the customer intension and influencing factors to purchasing intension.

Table 5: Descriptive Statistics for the sixteen dimensions of customer intension, influencing factors to purchase intension

Descriptive Statistics		
	Mean	Std. Deviation
will you shop in future using this website	4.085085	1.588967
finding a particular item	3.972973	1.532634
website navigation	3.835836	1.724246
moving items into cart	4.062062	1.719321
removing items from the cart	3.980981	1.784098
modifying items in the cart	3.732733	1.80059
purpose of purchase	1.082082	0.569137
product detail on website	3.563564	1.618318
purchase process on website	3.625626	1.63687
variety of products on website	3.542543	1.633793
fashion quotient of product on website	3.504505	1.628199
visual appeal of the website	3.595596	1.663778
page load speed	3.491491	1.641056
product image quality	3.655656	1.623829
overall information available	3.63964	1.649154
satisfy with the available payment system	4.224224	1.435931

The result indicates that three dimensions of influencing factors i.e. variety of products on website, fashion quotient of product on website and page loading speed are not taken care of by the company very well. Purpose of purchase dimension is having lowest mean score which shows negative response and considered to be as least important dimension for the customer to consider as dimension for purchase intention. The dimension shows that customer never buy products by intension.

Correlation Analysis of Customer Intension and Influencing factors to Purchasing Intention:

To understand the association between customer intension and influencing factors to purchase intention, a correlation matrix was calculated as given in table below. It represents the correlation coefficient for various dimensions which customer have considered as the important factors for shopping in future. The results indicate that customer intention to shopping intention exhibit positive correlation with future purchase intension ranged from 0.609 to 0.775. Purpose of purchase is having the lowest correlation with future shopping intention.

Table 6: Correlation analysis for customer intension, influencing factors to purchase intension dimensions

Dimensions	Mean	Shop in future using website	Sig. (2-tailed)
finding a particular item	Pearson Correlation	0.716**	0.000
website navigation	Pearson Correlation	0.644**	0.000
moving items into cart	Pearson Correlation	0.688**	0.000
removing items from the cart	Pearson Correlation	0.651**	0.000
modifying items in the cart	Pearson Correlation	0.609**	0.000
purpose of purchase	Pearson Correlation	0.480**	0.000
product detail on website	Pearson Correlation	0.657**	0.000
purchase process on website	Pearson Correlation	0.671**	0.000

variety of products on website	Pearson Correlation	0.657**	0.000
fashion quotient of product on website	Pearson Correlation	0.653**	0.000
visual appeal of the website	Pearson Correlation	0.657**	0.000
page load speed	Pearson Correlation	0.629**	0.000
product image quality	Pearson Correlation	0.664**	0.000
overall information available	Pearson Correlation	0.659**	0.000
satisfy with the available payment system	Pearson Correlation	0.775**	0.000
Age of the respondent	Pearson Correlation	0.476**	0.000
Occupation of the respondent	Pearson Correlation	0.316**	0.000
Marital status of the respondent	Pearson Correlation	0.403**	0.000

****Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).**

The correlation between satisfaction with the available payment system and finding a particular item to shop in future using website is 0.775 and 0.716 respectively, which being the value more than 0.7. Purpose of purchase, age, occupation and marital status of the respondent is having the lowest correlation to intention to shop in future, which shows customers don't consider this factor while doing the shopping and demographics factors also don't effect the shopping behavior of the respondents.

Regression Analysis of Customer Intention and Influencing factors to Purchasing Intention:

Regression Analysis is done for hypothesis testing. The regression analysis is done with customer intention and influencing factors dimensions as the independent variables and purchase intension as dependent variable. The finding of the study clearly shows a significant relation between these major factors ($R^2= 0.920$ and the significance= .000, $p<.01$), Hence, the model is found to be significant.

Table 7: Regression analysis for customer intension, influencing factors to purchase intension dimensions

Regression Analysis	R	R Square	Adjusted Square	R Std. Error of the Estimate
	0.959	.920	.900	.579
a. Predictors: marital status of the respondents, purpose of purchase, fashion quotient of product on website, Occupation of the respondents, Age of the respondent, modifying items in the cart, satisfaction with the shopping experience with the website compare to other offline store, finding a particular item, page load speed, website navigation, satisfy with the available payment system, product image quality, product detail on website, purchase process on website, moving items into cart, satisfaction with the shopping experience with the website, variety of products on website, visual appeal of the website, overall information available, removing items from the cart				
b. Dependent Variable: will you shop in future using this website				

To understand further the various dimensions of customer intention and influencing factors to purchasing intention, multiple regressions is required. As per the table 8 results, finding a particular item on the website, moving item into shopping cart, satisfaction with the shopping experience on the website, satisfaction with the shopping experience on the website compare to offline store, age of the respondent and marital status predict the purchase intention ($p < .05$). However, website navigation, removing items from the shopping cart, modifying items from the shopping cart, purpose of purchase, product detail on the website, purchase process on the website, fashion quotient of products on the website, visual appeal of the website, page loading speed of the website, product image quality, overall information available, satisfaction with the available payment system and the occupation of the respondent do not show purchase intension.

So, null hypothesis will be accepted for fourteen dimensions of customer intention and influencing factors and rejected for six dimensions. Thus, the study tells that the marketers need to understand the importance of finding a particular item on the website, moving item into shopping cart, satisfaction with the shopping experience on the website, satisfaction with the shopping experience on the website compare to offline store, age of the respondent and marital status predict the purchase intention and it will lead to purchase intention for online shopping.

Table 8: Multiple regression analysis for customer intension, influencing factors to purchase intension dimensions with twenty dimensions

Multiple Regression Analysis	Beta	t	Sig.
	Value (β)		
finding a particular item	0.057	2.492	0.013
website navigation	0.027	1.044	0.297
moving items into cart	0.150	5.010	0.000
removing items from the cart	-0.002	-0.063	0.950
modifying items in the cart	-0.046	-1.754	0.080
purpose of purchase	0.029	1.913	0.056
product detail on website	-0.044	-1.578	0.115
purchase process on website	-0.026	-0.918	0.359
variety of products on website	-0.016	-0.558	0.577
fashion quotient of product on website	0.009	0.336	0.737
visual appeal of the website	0.000	-0.011	0.991
page load speed	-0.017	-0.639	0.523
product image quality	0.013	0.483	0.629
overall information available	0.011	0.368	0.713
satisfy with the available payment system	0.034	1.353	0.176
satisfaction with the shopping experience with the website	0.455	15.975	0.000
satisfaction with the shopping experience with	0.328	11.935	0.000

the website compare to other offline store			
Age of the respondent	0.056	3.773	0.000
Occupation of the respondents	-0.005	-0.319	0.750
marital status of the respondents	0.027	1.829	0.048

ANOVA (Analysis of Variance) for Customer Intension and Influencing factors to Purchase

Intension:

The analysis is used to determine whether there is any significant differences between the mean of independent variables i.e. customer intension and influencing factors.

Table 9: Analysis of Variance for customer intension, influencing factors to purchase intension dimensions with twenty dimensions

ANOVA (Analysis of Variance)					
Model	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	2,150.336	20	107.517	284.630	0.000
Residual	369.432	978	0.378		
Total	2,519.768	998			
a. Predictors: (Constant), marital status of the respondents, purpose of purchase, fashion quotient of product on website, Occupation of the respondents, Age of the respondent, modifying items in the cart, satisfaction with the shopping experience with the website compare to other offline store, finding a particular item, page load speed, website navigation, satisfy with the available payment system, product image quality, product detail on website, purchase process on website, moving items into cart, satisfaction with the shopping experience with the website, variety of products on website, visual appeal of the website, overall information available, removing items from the cart					
b. Dependent Variable: will you shop in future using this website					

ANOVA test has significance level of 0.000, which means the result is significant and overall regression model is a good fit for the data. The table shows that the independent variables significantly predict the

dependent variables, $F(20,978) = 284.630$, $p < .0005$ (i.e. the regression model is a good fit). The F-test shows the model is a good fit for data according to the p-value.

Discussion and Managerial Implications

The importance of this study is to understand the human swarm thinking and their information sharing pattern on social network. As per the findings of the study, the primary source of information for the human swarms is friends and relatives. There are other source of information also like web search engine, internet ads, and social media websites. When it comes to selecting a source of information through social media websites then Facebook is on top. Human swarms search information about the products and services through online websites. So, it's very important for an organization to understand the power of human wisdom, source of information for human swarms and also the flow of the information. The flow of the information for online users has changed to friends and peers. Descriptive statistics shows the human swarm buying pattern and tells the various factors which influence their buying behavior. As per the descriptive statistics, purpose of purchase is having the lowest mean value. So, consumers don't buy based upon their requirement. While buying any product and service, the purpose of the purchase never defined. The correlation analysis depicts that finding a particular item on the website, moving item into shopping cart, purchase process on the website. The regression analysis is done for hypothesis testing with customer intention and influencing factors. As per the multiple regression analysis, finding a particular item on the website, moving item into shopping cart, satisfaction with the shopping experience on the website, satisfaction with the shopping experience on the website compare to offline store, age of the respondent and marital status predict the purchase intention ($p < .05$). The result is in line with the Suresh, Shivaram & Mohan (2004) study that online consumer consider five major dimensions like ease of shopping, selection, trust, relationship and cost, while doing shopping online. So, the marketer needs to understand the shopping behavior of the online consumers. The study had two major limitations. First, there was no measure to understand the actual usability of internet shoppers and information on the purchasing amount spent on the online shopping.

This study has some practical and managerial implications that marketers can use for business purpose to understand the business scenario and consumer buying pattern and also various dimensions which influence a lot on consumer buying behavior. So, it can understand from the study that customer intension and influencing factors lead to purchase intension. The study findings suggests that online consumers consider ease of selection of product, shopping, trust, relationship and cost as the most

important dimensions while doing shopping online. Online shopping is considered to be important for people who have existence online and have social networking websites presence. Within the internet savvy people, marketers need to find and give emphasis to various segments based upon their demographics, psychographics and personal factors. Internet savvy people are combination of premium and middle class, urban and rural, self employed and salaried. So, it's very important to understand their demographics, psychographics and personal factor, which will affect their buying pattern.

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