

E-TAILING OF GROCERY- AN ASSESSMENT OF ATTRIBUTES OF A WEB STORE

(With special reference to households doing online grocery shopping in Bangalore city)

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Abstract

E- commerce has changed the face of marketing worldwide. It has helped in simpler, faster and easier business transactions. Online shopping is seeping into each and every household. India though a large population is positively moving towards online shopping. There is a great scope of online selling in India. As the Indian population gets more educated and well versed with the internet technology, the e-commerce is spreading drastically. Online grocery is a recent feature in India. Starting with the books, CD's and consumer durables, consumer has started buying online grocery. A good friendly website can work not only to promote the company but also add more customers to it. Good website attributes make or break the business. Consumer is looking for online offers and also the solution to their problems on websites only. Online grocery companies are enhancing their website attributes to attract the consumer towards them and retain them by offering them quality products and services.

Key words – Web store, Attributes, online grocery.

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INTRODUCTION

One of the most challenging sectors of the retail market today is the grocery segment, specifically e-grocers. It is now possible for the next door grocery store to become digitized and available on your smart phone, tablet, or computer. All this is possible with the online shopping today, no longer checkout lines, counting the number of items to see if you qualify for the Express Lane, forgetting your grocery list at home, or carrying heavy bags up your front steps. Online grocery shopping is dramatically changing the consumer's relationship with the food market and making a service that may have once felt luxurious into an everyday convenience. An online grocery store is a website that allows users to purchase grocery, fruits and vegetables over the Internet to be delivered to the person at a later time at its door step. Ordering food and grocery on the Internet is similar to ordering any other products like books, CD's, electronic goods etc which can be done just with the click on the net and browsing through the list of products displayed on the web store as found on the rack display in the physical stores.

The real benefit of online grocery shopping is convenience. By ordering online, one can quickly search for the products one needs and order them without having to physically walk through those long aisles. It also saves travel expenses and time going to the grocery store. With availability of internet connectivity everywhere consumer has the chance to make its household purchases during the lunch break in his/ her office.

The demerit of online shopping is the extra cost the customer has to bear for the luxury of grocery, fruits and vegetables at their door step. Online grocery shopping need to be ordered well in advance and cannot be delivered instantaneously. The lady of the house need to plan the ingredients for the dish and cannot order the products as and when wish to make a new dish. Online shopping forces the customer to be home during the delivery to collect the food when it is delivered. Web stores may operate in limited areas. They may not cater to the whole population of the country.

E-grocery retailing is still at the infancy stage and the volume of internet groceries buying leaves much to be desired for e-grocers in India to sustain profitable growth in the long run. The thought of purchasing perishable products including fish over the internet provokes some skepticism among most customers as the reliability and accountability of the service comes into question. E-grocery retailers can build brand equity, generating repeat business and this will

result in market penetration in this industry. What is clear is that e-grocers must not only demonstrate that online grocery shopping is convenient, safe, easy and fun, they must also offer other incentives and motivations to persuade consumers. They must build consumer confidence and offer more rewarding shopping experience than that which is presently available.

Some of the known grocery web stores are discussed below who are selling grocery in different cities in the country. Some of the well known names are Big Basket.com, Fresh n Daily, Veg club.com etc.

Fresh n Daily

Fresh N Daily is Mumbai's first online fruits and vegetable store. They procure goods directly from the farmers/ brand owners and ensure there are no intermediaries. This means that the cost structure is very lean: low rental costs, low manpower costs, low overheads etc. The prices are therefore the most competitive.

Aaramshop.com

New-Delhi based start-up Aaramshop.com has launched an e-commerce site for buying groceries. Daily essentials such as laundry supplies, cereals, butter, jam, rice, atta (flour), lentils, cooking oil, biscuits, chocolates, sweets, milk, spices, coffee and tea are available on the website. Once the user selects the items needed, adds them to the shopping bag and checks out, a confirmation e-mail and text message is sent with the amount and time of delivery.

Zop now

According to company website, it wants to build a customer centric online store that will leverage the hybrid model of online, call center, mobile application and physical touch. Zopnow claims to deliver great customer experience by providing customers, a convenient way to shop and in the process cut down the time at the checkout counter, traffic and parking.

Review of Literature

Gemma (2003), traditional grocery stores are jumping into the online grocery business, using existing stores, warehouses and distribution systems to reduce costs. The online grocery market, once predicted to be \$10.8 billion by 2002, reached an estimated \$1 billion in sales last year. **Saha (2004)** explained that ecommerce market in India had clocked close to Rs 50,000 cores by the end of 2011. Though there are less than 10 million internet users who are actually engaging in e-commerce activities, there are about 150 million internet users in India or around 75 million households that are ready for e-commerce. **Mauer & Senbet (2005)**, states that reduction in operational cost is possible as the entire business can be moved online, the need for physical stores has become obsolete. It is far easier and quicker to compare prices of goods online, equipping the customer with the information to decide the right price or terms for themselves. With services like COD, customers can trust the process of going online and purchasing. Market penetration also becomes far more achievable with e-commerce. **Patric (2008)** explained that it is difficult for the investor to invest in these type of business where the market is extremely fragmented. Such a venture can only survive on repeat purchases and that's what one needs to target. If a company knows what it needs to stock, how much it needs to stock and where it needs to deliver, the business will become simpler to manage and run. **Swedberg Dolvin, (2008)**, Indian consumers are moving towards buying high margin products such as clothes and shoes from web stores. **Blum (2009)**, concept of online grocery shopping faces the problem of turning their business into profitable ventures as the concept is new in the market which leads to low margin along with low margin high cost is involved when it comes to logistics. In addition to these problems the perishable items such as fruits & vegetables have a short shelf life, if these items are not delivered before the expiry of their shelf life it would could cause wastage and also add up the cost. **Dave Frederic (2010)**, Convenience is a major motivator of consumers' interest in the online channel for sourcing groceries. It requires less physical effort and a more organized shop compared to the in-store experience. This can only be strengthened further by rapidly advancing mobile accessibility. Quality assurance is core to developing e-grocery to its fullest potential and presently too many consumers view it with skepticism. Consumers are lacking in trust of employees' **Jacinto desouza (2010)**, The global online grocery retailing market is dominated by the UK and the US, which together accounted for almost 75% of the world total in 2009. At less than 1.5%, however, online and internet channels still account for a very modest

share of the global retail grocery market. **Philip (2012)** explained that in order to reduce the cost to their business operation they applied the concept of cloud computing, where it connects the local kirana shops with the buyers. It enables the business to reduce the inventory cost as all the inventories are handled by the local vendor. **Steve Johnson (2012)**, explained that households incur transaction costs when choosing among off-line stores for grocery purchases. They may incur additional transaction costs when buying groceries online versus off-line. We integrate the various transaction costs into a channel choice framework and empirically quantify the relative transaction costs when households choose between the online and off-line channels of the same grocery chain. **John drain (2013)**, research found that efforts of the dot-com companies to keep their expenses low and targeting affluent neighborhoods; Importance of Internet grocery stores to the competitive supermarket industry. **Ford laurane (2013)**, explained that in large and competitive grocery markets, such as the U.S. and Germany, the competition for share is intense and becoming more so, thus limiting the ability to grow by adding stores. Moreover, in most instances, an online grocery operation is a much lower-cost growth option, and it can help grocers address current drivers of dissatisfaction among customers, such as the lack of assistance with carrying packed bags and boxes to their cars. **Estina klauch (2014)**, customers aren't going inside the supermarkets, instead, they just pick up their groceries at the drive-through. They pay and receive a receipt with a pickup time. The business says it keeps orders at the proper temperature until customers arrive to pick up their groceries. **Adam (2014)**, explained that in Europe, we have stores called "Auchan drive and Leader drive" where you can buy your groceries on-line and pick them up the following day at your favorite supermarket. **Jason Tiffer (2014)**, for Amazon, grocery is the big opportunity, it is after all the biggest category in retail in any market, shoppers will always need to eat and drink. Grocery is also where Amazon's future growth will come from, then again it is also the hardest sector to make work profitably online. **Bacon (2014)**, explained that the results on an experiment in which teams in six U.S. cities bought groceries from mid-priced supermarkets and online stores. He found that in some cities the online grocers were no more expensive than supermarkets, although some online stores have minimum order sizes and charge relatively high delivery fees.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Online retailing is happening in India in a big way. Are the people changing the way they shop their food and grocery from the next door Kirana store and subji mandis to online web stores.

Is online grocery purchasing taking the country by storm? What is the scope of web stores selling food and grocery in India? What are the factors and attributes which make the web stores more attractive and culminate in customer satisfaction?

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To study the consumer preference towards online shopping.
- To ascertain the consumer perception towards online grocery shopping.
- To study the website attributes that affects sales of grocery online.
- To study and find customer satisfaction on shopping online grocery.

NEED AND IMPORTANCE OF THE STUDY

- It studies and explains the needs and wants of the modern day consumer to make his grocery purchases online.
- It studies and explains the role of husband wife or other members of the family who influence in the purchase of grocery online.
- It explains those website attributes that consumer give importance to while purchasing online grocery.
- It studies and explains web attributes that can increase the customer responsiveness towards web stores.

SCOPE OF THE STUDY

E-shopping will replace traditional in-store shopping in the near future. Online retail spending has grown over the last one decade. Shopping behavior has been reshaping with the internet technology and the availability of plethora of products over the click of a button. Though the traditional shopping is still to stay but the online buying could change the way people experience shopping grocery.

Grocery vendor are ready to pace up with the ICT and give the consumer all the luxury of buying grocery products straight from their bedrooms into their kitchen with least hassles of getting stuck in the traffic, standing in the long billing counters and holding those big and heavy grocery bags.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

- The survey is limited to Bangalore city.
- Some of the responses can be biased.
- Data analysis cannot be generalized as it limits only to the metro city.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study has been conducted using primary data. The survey has been done via online and offline where some of the respondents were given the hard copy of the questionnaire and requested to fill the questionnaire and also e mails were sent to some respondents using Google docs.

HYPOTHESES

There were two assumptions which were proved using Chi Square test.

Hypothesis 1:

H0: Gender and online grocery buying are independent

H1: Gender and online grocery buying are dependent

Hypothesis 2:

H0: Marital Status and online grocery buying are independent

H1: Marital Status and online grocery buying are dependent.

Sampling type -The research design adopted for this study is Descriptive Research. Descriptive method was adopted because it deals with description of the state of affairs as it exists at present.

Sample size - A sample size of 110 was taken. The samples were collected at convenience. The sample collected comprised of male and females.

Area of sampling – Survey was done online as well as offline. Bangalore city was chosen for the survey offline and the questionnaire was posted on Google doc for survey online.

Sampling unit - Households who are single, married, and couples with kids those who buy fruits, vegetables and grocery were chosen.

Secondary data has been collected from various published sources and websites.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Demographic Profile

- 78% of the total respondents are in between the age bracket of 20-35 years.
- Majority of the total respondents fall under the annual house hold income of 5-8 lacs.
- 55% of the respondents are unmarried who have gone through the survey
- Majority are the students and housewives who shop online.

FINDINGS

- 78% of the total respondents are in between the age bracket of 20-35 years. Majority of respondents were in this age group as these age group people who are in their prime of their lives. They work outside and are likely to purchase food and grocery online.
- 59% of the total respondents fall under the annual house hold income of 5-8 lacs. 27% of the total respondents fall under the annual house hold income of 2-5 lacs. Majority of respondents fall in the income category of 5 -8 lacs. It is apparent that the standard of living of the household in India is increasing and improving day by day. The economy is booming and the economy is on the rise.
- 45% of the respondents are unmarried and 55% of the respondents were married. The researcher made sure that equal number of married and unmarried people

were surveyed so that the scope of online grocery sale can be studied among both the married and unmarried.

- 24% of the respondents are housewives, 27% are students, 20% of the respondents are involved in business and 22% of the respondents work in corporate. A balance was maintained so as to see that all the respondents can be covered to have a comprehensive view about the occupation and their attitude towards online grocery sales.
- 96% of the people shop online some or the other products. Only 4% of the respondents surveyed were not shopping online. One of the reasons for not shopping online is non availability of internet in the house.
- 12% of the respondents buy books online, 21% of the respondents buy electronics online, 14% of the respondents buy food from restaurants online, 6% of the respondents buy games online, 6% of the respondents buy music online and 14% of the respondents buy grocery, fruits and vegetables online. 27% purchase other products like clothing, jewelry, accessories etc
- 26% people spend Rs 500 to Rs 1000 for online shopping every month. On the other hand 57% respondents spend Rs 1000 to Rs 5000 for online shopping every month. Majority of people are spending at least up to Rs 5000 per month for online shopping. It is on the rise. It is a positive sign as the online buying is becoming popular among the residents of the Bangalore city.
- Majority of respondents say that they shop online when they want something unique and special. Whereas the other respondents say that they shop online when need to compare prices. 31% of the respondents say that they shop online when they don't have the time to find things in different markets.

- 32% of the respondents buy grocery items from hypermarkets, 20% of the respondents buy grocery items from supermarkets. 20% of the respondents buy grocery items from local kirana shops. 12% of the respondents buy grocery items from online websites. The Subji Mandi's have almost vanished from the big cities. People prefer to buy from kirana shops, supermarkets or hypermarkets. Online shopping is also on the rise.
- Majority of people visit supermarkets and hypermarkets for good discounts and offers. People visit the hypermarkets, supermarket and subji mandi for variety of products. People visit the ration store and kirana store due to the proximity of the stores to their houses.
- 95% of the respondents say that buying grocery online is beneficial. It indicates that if the people are still not purchasing grocery online, they are likely to purchase in future. As the cities expand people will have to travel long distances for jobs and other activities. As a result of it people are more likely to make online purchase than to go physically and shop.
- The people are shifting towards online grocery shopping because it is easy to order. 22% of the respondents feel that buying online grocery is beneficial as they get variety of products. Few respondents find the online offers and discounts attractive, while few purchase online grocery as they can avoid long queues and save time. The best part about online grocery shopping is that the groceries get delivered at home.
- On doing the survey majority of respondents find the attractive offers and discounts play a very significant role in pulling the customers to visit the same web store again. Other reasons why the customer visits the same web store is the variety of products, aggressive promotion on prime time television as well as on the net go a long way in consumer perception of a good web store. Indian

consumer is very price sensitive and looks for value for money while doing the purchases whether online or offline. Moreover the design of the website plays insignificant role in motivating the customer to visit the website again and buy the groceries from the same web store.

- 79% of the respondents agree that interactive web stores for grocery shopping can increase the sales online. Interactive web stores are already functional in case of jewelry and other high technology products but it is yet to happen in case of online grocery and vegetable purchases.
- Majority of the respondents agree that good vegetables & fruits pictures on the websites increase the sales of grocery online. Consumer goes by the face value of the products displayed. It is very important that the online grocery web store have clear pictures and prices of the products on their websites.
- Majority of the respondents agree that Price tags and pack size availability creates positive impact on online grocery shopping.
- Majority of the respondents agree that easy return policy, friends shopping online grocery and good internet connectivity can increase the sales of grocery online.

HYPOTHESIS TESTING**Hypothesis 1:**

H0: Gender and online grocery buying are independent

H1: Gender and online grocery buying are dependent

Tabulated Data - Gender and Online Grocery Shopping

Gender	Online Grocery shopping		Total
	No	Yes	
Female	36	41	77
Male	28	5	33
Total	64	46	110

Chi Square test

	Value	Df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	13.778 ^a	1	.000
Continuity Correction ^b	12.257	1	.000
Likelihood Ratio	15.042	1	.000
Fisher's Exact Test			
N of Valid Cases	110		

Analysis – As per the table above the chi-square value is 13.778 at 0.000 significance level. It is less than 0.05 level of significance. Therefore null hypothesis is rejected and alternate hypothesis is accepted.

This indicates that there is a relationship between gender and online grocery shopping. Women play important role in buying grocery for the family. As the women spend more time in the kitchen they are able to take decisions about the grocery items to be purchased for the house. Online buying is rising as the lady of the house has joined the work force. She does not have enough time to go to the market and buy groceries. It is not always possible to shop from local store or any supermarket for grocery due to insufficiency of time and hence, online buying is the best medium which results in both time saving and efforts. She finds it more comfortable to buy the food and grocery through internet.

Men are not much involved in online grocery shopping. The reason behind this is that men are involved in their businesses and corporate life. Bigger decisions like purchase of automobiles, laptops, mobile phones, furnishing etc may be made by the men along with their wives but the lady of the house is most of the time purchasing the food and grocery for the house sometime alone, sometime along with the husbands and sometime do the purchasing with the whole family on the weekends when they do the outing to a supermarket, hypermarket or a mall.

Hypothesis 2:

H0: Marital Status and online grocery buying are independent

H1: Marital Status and online grocery buying are dependent.

Tabulated Data -Marital Status and Online Grocery Shopping

Marital Status	Online Grocery shopping		Total
	No	Yes	
Married	20	35	55
Unmarried	44	11	55
Total	64	46	110

Chi Square Test

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	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	21.522 ^a	1	.000
Continuity Correction ^b	19.766	1	.000
Likelihood Ratio	22.386	1	.000
Fisher's Exact Test			
N of Valid Cases	110		

Analysis – As per the table above the chi-square value is 21.522 at 0.000 significance level. It is less than 0.05 level of significance. Therefore null hypothesis is rejected and alternate hypothesis is accepted.

It explains that marital status and online grocery buying are dependent on each other. It has been found that more married people buy grocery online. In the survey it has been analyzed that more married women go for online shopping. 55% of the total respondents in the survey were married women. Married couples want to spend more time with the family as a result of it they end up buying grocery online. On the other hand unmarried people have enough time to themselves and like to spend time in the market shopping at physical store alone or with their friends. Therefore unmarried people are more likely to buy their grocery from brick/physical stores. Unmarried people like to buy clothing, accessories, shoes etc online as that gives them wider choice and more incentives on purchasing online.

RECOMMENDATIONS

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- Women do more online grocery shopping as compared to the men. As women by nature take care of the home and the requirements of the house. In olden days when the lady did not go out of the house the men folk took care of the procurement of the food but as the ladies are becoming mobile due to jobs and frequently moving out of the house.
- The younger generation among the women segment is more interested to shop online grocery. It is very helpful because people do not have sufficient time to shop from the stores and doing online grocery shopping can save their time and efforts.
- Most of the unmarried people do not indulge in grocery shopping. Unmarried people are either eating outside their houses or staying as paying guests. People who are married are more involved in buying grocery online as compared to unmarried people. Online marketers can promote convenience food, ready to eat meals for the unmarried people.
- People in the government jobs have fixed time to go back home. People who are in government sector have less interest towards online grocery shopping where as people working in corporate are attracted more towards online grocery shopping. Online marketers can have an alliance with the big corporate houses so that the grocery can be delivered even to the office premises and kept in the customer cars.
- Majority of the people buy apparels online. The focus should be to increase the sales for online grocery. Marketers can advertise through other media like newspaper, magazines, social sites and popular web stores like Flipkart, Amazon, Myntra and Jabong can also be used for cross selling.
- People are very busy in their lives and have no time to go for shopping to market and hence they prefer to shop online which saves a lots of time. People prefer to buy grocery online as they get variety of products.

- People like to go to supermarkets and hypermarkets as they get quality products. Most of the respondents agreed that buying online grocery items is beneficial but it is important that the marketers selling through online media should take care of quality of products sold; time taken to deliver the products and other after sales issues should be dealt with carefully and to the satisfaction of the customer.
- Most of the people do not want to go to the physical stores and wait in the queue for the billing procedure. Hence, they prefer to buy grocery online which saves their time and effort and also products are delivered at home. The home delivery allows the online marketer to give some surprises to the customer once in a while. It will not only create curiosity in customers but also motivate them to make repeat purchase.
- There are majority of people who are more concerned for the discounts offered in online selling. Good discounts can increase the visits to the same website. There can be contest as well as sweepstakes so as to attract both the intellectual as well as homemakers who can get attractive gifts from the web stores selling groceries.
- It also depends on internet connectivity, but the survey has been conducted in the city of Bangalore hence, people do not face internet connectivity issues and that is the reason that most of the people agreed to it. When we use internet banking to shop something then due to some technical errors money gets deducted but the order does not get booked. Hence, the same has to be improved. Most of the people are concerned about money and they are not sure that once money deducted from their account whether it will come back or not if the order have not booked.
- Majority of the people agree to the statement that good vegetables & fruits pictures on the websites increase the sales of grocery online. Price tags and pack size availability creates positive impact on grocery shopping online. The pictures on the website should be big and clear. The customer should be able to make out the product to be purchased especially the greens which look similar.

- The pictures should be tagged with the name of the product in Hindi, English and the local languages of that area. Some time the customer doesn't buy the product as he is not sure about the name of the product in English.
- The friends influence others to shop online. Attractive incentives can be offered to the customer who introduces new customers to the web store.
- There should be favorable policies in terms online grocery shopping which may results in high requirement and demand in the near future. There should be certain parameters which enable the websites to attract more number of customers. These features are design of the websites, graphics, visibility etc. There should be certain policies by which customers have sense of security. These policies may be-
 - a. Payment policies
 - b. Delivery policies
 - c. Security policies

CONCLUSION

Since post liberalization many companies have entered the e-grocer market. Some were able to sustain but some failed miserably. What leads to failure of these e-grocers? And what makes them succeed? As the e- retailing industry is still in its nascent stage and we can see the "transition," among the consumer from the traditional to electronic purchases, it is difficult to find definite answers to these questions. The research has been useful in gaining useful insights on various attributes of web stores that motivates the consumer to purchase grocery online.

More number of consumers welcomes the idea of shopping grocery online; however, they don't feel it is the ultimate solution to their shopping needs. Consumers still find online grocery shopping expensive. Apart from the cost aspect the other factors that curtails the consumer to go full fledged and do online grocery shopping are the risk in e - transactions, credit card security, shipping costs, the quality of products delivered, the availability of products when required, the

social aspects of the shopping experience and the English language in which most of the company's websites are. The freshness, the need to touch and feel products remains a big hurdle for the online sale of groceries. The value proposition of e-grocers is to become a single-source solution for the busy consumer today.

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