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## **TO WHAT EXTANT HAS E-SHOPPING CHANGED PEOPLE’S HABITS?**

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**Abstract :** E-shopping has become a critical part of people shopping life. Shopping online has a lot of benefits which help the consumer to save their time and facilitate the exchange of products and its flow from the producer to the consumer through the internet to achieve the benefits for all parties. E-shopping provides protection and privacy for the consumer. However, there are some fears of using it because some of the consumer’s beliefs that e-shopping are insecure. Thus, in this paper it will be discussed the benefits as opposed to the flaws of online shopping and how this affected people’s attitude while shopping on an on-line platform taking e-books as an example.

**Keywords:** E-shopping, People’s habits, Online Shopping

### **Introduction**

E-shopping is defined as the most advanced and modern revolution of technology in the implementation of operations, marketing activities and the delivery of products through online shopping platforms (Katawetawaraks And Wang 2011:70). E-shopping is also known as simply purchase of products by consumers via the Internet from traders (Jusoh and Ling 2012:223). Research has proved that online



shopping revenues have been increasing. The ability to shop instantly and efficiently online has greatly motivated people to shop through online platforms (Rohm and Swaminathan 2004:749).

As based on the revolutionary change in the way people shop nowadays and the increasing attitude of shopping online, it is interesting to put together the advantages and disadvantages of e-shopping and form a reliable argument that can give an introduction of how this new way of shopping that has been going on in the last decade has changed people's attitude towards shopping choices. Factors such as cut-down costs online and the ability to shop anywhere any time has dramatically motivated people towards shopping online. Another factor that led to a huge move of people towards e-shopping is the continuous upgrading of online security of payments that gave people much trust into such platforms to buy from. However, it was conducted by research that there also flaws that comes with e-shopping such as high cost of Value added tax (VAT) for international online shopping and further flaws that are discussed within this study paper. Book shopping was taken as an example of the change of people attitude towards shopping in the context of how a huge number of people switched from hard copy books to e-books.

The aim of this study paper is to discuss how people attitude changed towards shopping in response to the revolution in online shopping that gave people many benefits but still has it is flaws that need to be addressed.

### **1. Security of payments when e-shopping**

Electronic Security is a piece of the information system of any successful business. (Chang and Chen 2009:411). Korea as an example has strongly developed their IT network creating a world-class IT infrastructure. Since the mid-1990s, the Korean government has launched several policies for spreading and promoting e-shopping. As a result of these huge investments towards developing security online, Korea now has one of the highest number of people who use internet to shop even a higher number than USA, UK and France (Kim and others, 2010:48).

E-payment methods has multiple benefits to the customer such as being able to make payments in a secure, reliable, anonymous, private, acceptable, adaptable, efficient and convenient way (Kim et al. 2010:84). Two examples of secure payment methods on the internet that made people feel more secure on the internet and so shop more online are Electronic Secure Transaction (SET) and Digital cash (E-cash). The former is now a common e-payment method that includes the procedure of the client entering his payment cards information (e.g Visa credit card) on the seller's website. Although this system is very secure and an evolution of the of the previous credit card based payments. SET enhanced the security of transferring information of payments through authentication of transaction participant identifies through registration and certification. The latter enables the users to use digital cash which is a digital payment that doesn't get verified until the issuing bank verifies it. This method provides full anonymity that other payment systems cannot provide.

On the other hand and despite of all the security measures in place; SecureTest, a security "ethical hacking" consultancy has shown some accusations to the UK online community of basic flaws in the way of handling customer's details including payment details. The same consultancy claims that the government



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has not built enough regulations to provide enough security that the private credit card industry started putting its own regulations (Bradbury 2008).

For customers to protect themselves, they should avoid making common mistakes while E-shopping such as; shopping on websites that might not be secure and leaving PCs open to infections( M and Chahar 2013:12).

Based on the above, It is believed that Every payment method can have its own flaws and that all what consumers can do is to try to avoid common mistakes as mentioned above and using trusted websites. However, it was also seen that the continuous developing and deforming of payment methods has positively increased the number of people using online websites to shop.

## **2. Cost reduction and time convenience**

Since consumers don't usually visit multiple stores before actually deciding on a product, interactive shopping online can be lower in cost, as it is very easy to search online for a product and have a lot of information about it and finally choose one to buy. Furthermore, one of the great benefits of e-shopping that has increased the number of people shopping online is the ability to shop from any place 24 hr/7 days a week. As an example a person living in Florida can shop at Harod's in London in less time than what it can take them to visit the local store (Childersa et al 2001:517)

In opposition to the above, Some of the products consumers buy online might be even more expensive than the products they buy physically in stores as the consumer might sometimes be charged for expensive shipping costs, Value added tax (VAT) and company's handling fee that can vary from which is anything from a £4 Royal Mail up to £13.50 with Parcel Force in the UK (no author 2008).

Moreover, it is more time convenient to buy products such as clothes from stores where consumers can try the product before they buy it rather than online as it will save time of returning products of wrong sizes or unsatisfactory quality and rebuying them again (Chen 2008).

Upon what has been already mentioned, a sensible argument would be that time convenience and cost reduction benefits depend on the product being bought online. Consumers must be aware of what products they can buy online that can allow them to take the benefits of less cost and time such as e-books and avoid buying products that might not save money or cost such as Dvd's with high tax or clothes that might take time to return in case the size needs to be changed or if consumers are not satisfied by the quality.

## **3. Social Online Shopping**

Currently, social networking takes advantage of the capabilities of social networks, partners of product companies emerges in social network as an intermediate between customers and companies. Besides,



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intermediate businesses were proved to be very successful by offering discount deals to groups who have limited budget or keen on getting early technology releases (Lee and Lee 2012:441). The New York Times defined social online shopping as a type of business that tries to combine two desired habits of people which are communication and shopping together at one time. (Anderson 2009:1).

Thus, social network shopping has been increasing steadily over the past few years. In general, businesses are keen to use social media to increase their sales. However, this is not always possible as gaining the trust of social network users is not an easy task. The reason why is that social networks are mostly visited by people to connect with people whom they already know in real life or to make new virtual relationships. (Anderson 2009:1).

Yet, people usually get influenced by each other's opinion and tend to buy products that are popular online assuming the quality of popular products is always high-standard quality which may not be true (Chen 2008).

Obviously, social shopping can deceive shoppers to buy a certain product thinking it is high in quality just because it is popular within social media. Consumers must put effort to know more about the product before buying it and not only rely on people's opinion.

#### **4. Buying e-books habit**

According to Amazon, one of the largest e-book platforms on the internet, the standard prices of hard copy books range from \$12.99 to \$14.99. On the other hand, Amazon sells most of its nearly million e-books for less than \$9.99 and some are as cheap as 99 cents. Although e-books overall do not sell as much as hard-copy books outside of Amazon, the online bookstore is certainly a strong evidence that e-books are trending. Moreover, according to the Association of American Publishers, e-book sales in March 2011 were \$69 million which is an increase of 146 percent from 2010. In addition, new companies have started competing in the e-book market, like Apple and Google (Miller and Bosman 2011).

Nonetheless, the above only applies for non-academic books, according to a report from the University of Nottingham when it comes to academic textbooks, the cost and time of searching and deciding on a book should be the same for students.

The purchase of e-books depends on the type of book being purchased. Yet, it is also worth mentioning that some people still prefer the habit of holding and feeling a book in their hand to read from it rather than reading electronically (Macum 2012).

#### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, it is obvious how the benefits of e-shopping such as cost reduction, time convenience, security of payments, and ease of shopping on social media have increasingly driven people towards buying online as can be seen from the example given above of how people moved towards e-books rather than hard copy books, as an example. The revolution of e-books and the increasing revenue of it in major companies such as Amazon is a great example to demonstrate how all the factors discussed above can lead to more people using e-shopping. However, there are flaws for every factor that can negatively affect the consumer's experience.



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The development of paying methods that appeared on the online market such as Electronic Secure Transaction (SET) and Digital cash (E-cash) that were proved to be more secured have driven a lot of people to trust more the online platforms to buy their products. However, some research papers and articles shows that there are still basic flaws that can cause the consumer not to fully trust the online system which might be a reason why there are still a lot of people away from these platforms. Another aspect of online shopping is the cost reduction and time convenience that can be taken advantage of in many products that do not need to be tried such as grocery or diet products; however, it does not suit others such as clothes that need to be tried. Not only this, but also shopping on social media or “Social Shopping” has also attracted a lot of consumers giving them the opportunity to communicate while shopping and knowing friends’ opinions, yet there still a flaw of people being too much influenced by other people’s opinion on social media which might give a false impression of high quality to people just because a product is popular. All the above factors combined has influenced people to change a lot of their shopping attitude as they have started using online platforms to shop rather than physically visiting a shop. This was obvious from how people changed their habit of reading a hard copy book to an electronic book which is clear from the increasing revenue of e-book online platforms. The flaws discussed in this study must be addressed as to give a better chance of a more positive experience to the consumers and this might attract more consumers who still prefer traditional shopping on online shopping.

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