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The effect of assortment and fulfillment on shopping assistance and efficiency: An e-tail servicescape perspective

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ABSTRACT

The study focuses on comparative effectiveness of two e-tail servicescape dimensions, e.g., product assortment and order fulfillment on consumers' online purchase intentions for fashion apparel shopping. The mediating effect of shopping assistance and efficiency between e-tail servicescape dimensions and purchase intentions is examined. Additionally, the moderating influence of fulfillment reliability between e-tail servicescape dimensions and shopping assistance is also examined. The survey instrument was used to execute the study and data were gathered from 442 participants from the national capital of India. The hypothesized relationships were verified using covariance-based structural equation modelling (CB-SEM), hierarchical regression analytics (HRA), and bootstrap procedure. The findings reveal that there are certain e-tail value disposition oriented benefits in investing order fulfillment landscape over product assortment. The mediating role of shopping assistance and shopping efficiency is empirically verified and the moderating influence of fulfillment reliability is also confirmed.

1. Introduction

From fashion to grocery segments, due to the COVID-19 pandemic situation across the globe, e-tailing is poised to take the world by leaps and bounds with social distancing becoming the new normal (Roggeveen and Sethuraman, 2020). E-tailing (or electronic retailing) refers to selling of retail goods via business-to-consumer (B2C) transactions on the Internet (Kautish, 2011; Fagerström et al., 2020). Market analysts forecast that the global e-tailing market will be of US\$ 45,561.7 billion by 2030 (Future Market Insights, 2020). India is the fastest evolving B2C e-commerce market and will rise approximately 1200 percent by 2026 (IBEF, 2020; Kautish et al., 2021a; Padmavathy et al., 2019). Fashion apparel is the largest e-commerce segment of the retail market, which is estimated to grow at 12.2% annually (Khare and Kautish, 2021; Statista, 2020). With the rapid internet-driven advancements in technology (Singh and Söderlund, 2020), corporations got unparalleled business prospects other than the physical boundaries of the conventional retail models (Amin et al., 2015; Shi et al., 2020) and during COVID-19 pandemic it led to non-conventional innovative business avenues such as mobile food delivery apps (Ray et al., 2019), online travel agencies

(Talwar et al., 2020a) and retail investment trading (Talwar et al., 2021). Thus, in order to leverage customer experiences as digital assets (Arya et al., 2019), e-tailers invest in the exploration of new avenues to gain a competitive edge and consumer trust (Paul and Rosenbaum, 2020; Talwar et al., 2020b). Furthermore, the proliferation of seamless internet connectivity, mobile wallet acceptance (Kaur et al., 2020a, 2020b) and consumer loyalty towards virtual goods (Kaur et al., 2020c; Padmavathy et al., 2019) has opened novel landscapes with much greater assortment (Mathmann et al., 2017) and value propositions, i.e., omni-channel as one fine blend of digital (non-physical) and physical (brick and mortar) customer experiences (Poncin and Mimoun, 2014; Reinartz, 2016; Verhoef et al., 2015). During COVID-19 pandemic scenario, retailers have come to realize in a big way the importance of integrating information and services from multiple channels to omni-channels for minimizing data mismatch and enriching shopping value for seamless customer experience (Laato et al., 2020; Shen et al., 2018).. (Fig. 1)

In the present, information technology and Internet of Things led era (Kautish, 2016), e-tailers unify their efforts - whether online or offline on-the-go orders to extend hassle-free experiences in which customers

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