Online Shopping Behavior of Students in Select Asian Countries (India, Malaysia, Singapore, Uzbekistan and Thailand)

Electronic Commerce has become one of the essential characteristics in the internet era. Online shopping has become the third most popular internet activity, immediately following e-mail usage/ instant messaging and web browsing (Puranik & Bansal, 2014). E-commerce is the purchase and sale of goods and/or services via electronic channels like the internet (businessnewsdaily.com, 2015). One of the oldest studies was done by Quelch and Takeuchi (1981) who have touched some of the factors to understand the online shopping behavior of consumers. It is predicted that such users may take time to feel at ease in the use of technology and the younger generation would adopt it earlier.

Online purchasing decisions have mainly concentrated on identifying the factors which affect the willingness of consumers to engage in internet shopping. Schiffman et al. (2001); Jarvenpaa and Todd (1997) have proposed a model of attitudes and shopping intention towards internet shopping in general.

Need for The Present Study

Though several studies have been done on online shopping, no comprehensive study is conducted and integration of all the factors is also not tested earlier. Brazil and Unites States of America are compared for consumer choices alone and there is no comprehensive model compared with India, Malaysia, Singapore, Uzbekistan and Thailand earlier. The research is an attempt to answer two research questions:

1. Will students' online shopping behaviour vary from country to country?

2. Is it possible to make an integrated model to explain online shopping behaviour of students?

Reasons for Choosing The Countries

A majority of Indian buyers will continue to purchase online even if there are no discounts, according to a report published by Google Inc. and consulting firm A.T. Kearney. The report estimates that the total number of online shoppers in India will rise to 175 million and gross merchandise value will surge to $60 billion by 2020.

Suki et al. (2006) have conducted a study among Malaysian student population and identified that students have enjoyed purchasing Books, Journals and Magazines through online. The diffusion of e-commerce in Singapore is high and come to conclusion that Singapore seems to have potential opportunity for the adoption of e-commerce (Wong, 2003).

Developed nations take advantage of well-designed infrastructure, technological advancement and regulatory environment whereas under-developing countries like Uzbekistan have to identify a new way to overcome the challenges in terms of technology, environment and political system (Jahongir & Shin, 2014). Since 2007, drastic improvements have been seen in hi-speed internet and wireless networks in Thailand (Telephone Organization of Thailand, 2007). As a result, the growth of usage and access to Social Networking Sites (SNSs) and many more SNSs have shown a remarkable phenomenon in Thailand (Zocial Inc, 2014).

Objectives Of The Research

The expansion of the present research agenda has resulted in the formation of research objectives as primary and secondary objectives.

Primary Objective

1.   To study the online shopping behaviour of students in the select Asian countries.

Secondary Objectives

1.   To study and compare the online shopping behaviour and related factors of students in the select Asian countries.

2.   To study the impact of individual factors, IT quality, consumer choices, shopping experience, attitude, trust, shopping enjoyment and social context towards online shopping behaviour.

3.   To compare the countries based on factors of online shopping behaviour among students.

Research Methodology

The research is to test the formulated hypothesis, and the research design for the study is descriptive (Malhotra, 2008). The research involves a descriptive design and uses both quantitative and qualitative data. Data are collected primarily using online survey method with the help of questionpro.com as it has advantages to reach out the target sample, time, cost and easy report generation. The period of the study is from July 2012 to December 2015 because penetration of internet in the countries, use of internet by the students, increasing number of internet providers over the period, attractive internet data packages for students, and growing e-commerce business year by year. The respondents are basically students from various countries. The base line for the sample is based on education and age group. The age group is between 15 and 46 which include both male and female students whereas the classification for education are High School, Diploma, Higher Diploma, Bachelors, and Masters in various universities and educational institutions in all these countries belong to both full time and part time. The respondents who have answered the questions have got previous online purchase experience. The study is conducted across five Asian countries: India, Malaysia, Singapore, Uzbekistan and Thailand. Snowball sampling, which is a non-probability sampling technique, is used. The reason behind this is that the students are spread over the country and it is impossible to

measure and trace the exact population. Snowball sampling may simply be defined as, "A technique for finding research subjects. One subject gives the researcher the name of another subject, who, in turn, provides the name of a third, and so on" (Vogt, 1999). G Power analysis is made to calculate the necessary sample size for a specified power. The total sample size of the survey is 1107 out of which 725 are error free and reliable. Structured questionnaire is used to collect data. The structured questionnaire employs five-point Likert scale anchored by 1 = strongly disagree and 5 = strongly agree, adopted from existing scales. The scales are examined by Cyr et al., (2005). The tools used for analysis are Structural Equation Model, Analysis of Variance, Regression, Factor Analysis and Descriptive Statistics.

Major Findings

The impact of influencing factors such as individual factors, IT Quality, consumer choices, shopping experience, attitude, trust, shopping enjoyment and social context towards online shopping behavior of students in the select countries. Since the result changes country wise, the variable '*Country*' is declared as the moderating variable. The Structural Equation Model (SEM) is used to analyze all the countries with the factors.

In India, One fourth of the *unplanned purchase* happens through the factors such as *IT Quality, shopping experience and attitude, shopping enjoyment and trust* and finally *social context. IT quality* variables such as system quality, information quality, service quality, and vendor channel and characteristics are important for customers to decide on the *trust and shopping enjoyment* of the web stores.

In Malaysia, almost half of the s*hopping enjoyment and trust* happens through *IT quality* and closely, one fourth of the *shopping experience and attitude* happens through *individual factors. Planned purchase* happens through the factors such as *shopping experience and attitude*, *consumer choices* and *social context*. The IT quality variables are important for customers to have better *shopping enjoyment* and *trust* on the web stores. Planned purchase happens if the customers have good *shopping experience* and positive *attitude* on the web stores.

In Singapore, IT quality and social context provide extraordinary *shopping enjoyment and trust* towards online shopping among customers in Singapore. At the same time, consumer choices, shopping experience and attitude influence planned purchase. More than half of the respondents feel that *unplanned purchase* comes by *shopping experience*, *attitude* and *shopping enjoyment.*

In Uzbekistan, more than half of the *planned purchase* comes by *shopping experience, attitude*, *shopping enjoyment and trust*. Closed to half of the *unplanned purchase* comes by *shopping enjoyment and trust*. *IT quality and social context* is also equally important towards *Shopping enjoyment and Trust* for the respondents in Uzbekistan. Individual factors make them to have better shopping experience and attitude.

In Thailand, individual factors have a little influence on shopping experience and attitude.