Chapter-VIII

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY AND FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

The chapter is divided in two sections. The first section highlights some of the limitations of this research. The second section discusses few suggestions and directions for future research focusing on the subject matter for reducing the effect of the limitations.

8.1 Limitations of the Study

The most obvious limitation of the study is its cross-sectional design. Therefore, firm conclusions about the directions of causality implied in the model cannot be drawn. Thus, relationships among variables must be interpreted with caution. Interpretations of models using structural equation modelling are also not proof of causality. True causal inferences can only be drawn testing models using longitudinal data. This is especially important for a subject like online shopping behavior that is not static but is a developmental process that changes over time.

Since only self-report measures were used, common-method variance and response consistency effects may have biased the observed relationships. However, perceptions of usefulness and ease of use are not objective measures. Because perceptions are necessarily self-reported, such measures are the most effective at measuring these cognitions. Therefore, this is an unavoidable criticism of the study of online shopping behavior.

The data collection was confined to only five relatively large cities of India since constraints were faced during data collection. The replication of the study at different regions of India would enable better generalizability of the findings of the study. At the
same time data collection during real shopping experience could have elicited better responses improving findings.

The sample for the present study comprised of 509 shoppers of Electronic Gadgets and Home Appliances. This sample is only a very small proportion of the entire population of retail shoppers in the country. Therefore, research studies with much larger sample size would be required to ensure appropriate generalization of the findings of the study.

The study was limited to individual shopping behavior. India being a collectivistic country, most of the shopping happens in a family set up. Consideration of family shopping behavior might have revealed interesting findings.

The construct of Shopping orientations was measured through an instrument developed by a researcher in other country. Though the instrument shows scientific reliability and validity, yet this is the first study for which it has been adapted in India and more studies are required before it is established as an acceptable tool for exploring Shopping orientations.

The present study has relied largely on quantitative methodology of data collection (though qualitative methodology was used to a limited extent) and is therefore restrictive. Therefore, more of qualitative methodology of data collection should be undertaken in future to provide wider perspective to the present study. For instance, the research design can employ case study methodology or content analysis to provide a holistic picture to the given subject.
This study explored Perceived Usefulness and Perceived Ease of Use as antecedents of Attitude towards using online shopping. The inherent assumption was that Perceived Usefulness and Perceived Ease of Use gets derived from a person’s beliefs and values. A more rigorous research design should consider Behavioral, Normative and Control Beliefs explicitly as proposed in Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen, 1991).

8.2 Future Research Directions

While the model of online shopping behavior in the present study examined relevant variables as antecedents and consequences of various attributes, yet there are certain additional variables that were excluded due to reasons like measurements issues, specification error (highlighted earlier) etc. For instance, Moon and Kim (2001) in their study on extending the TAM for a World-Wide-Web context found that perceptions of playfulness appear to influence shopper's attitude toward using the WWW. Thus, the given variables could be examined in future research. Apart from this, as mentioned above, a person’s Behavioral, Normative and Control beliefs might be influencing online shopper’s Attitude. Therefore, future research aimed at making the proposed model robust should consider these constructs and their impacts on Attitude towards using.

This study focused on shopping orientations and their causal relationships with attributes of online shopping adoption at macro level. Future research exploring shopping orientations should also focus on clusters of potential online shoppers within each shopping orientation and the behavioral differences among the four shopping orientations at micro level. Demographic variables have been traditionally used for segmenting retail shoppers. Although the present study found shopping behavior orientations as better predictors of actual behavior of online shopping, a deeper dive into demographic characteristics within each shopping orientation would reveal valuable
strategic insights. As identifying demographic characteristics is relatively easier, future research studies exploring demographic characteristics as part of shopping behavior orientations would add significant value to behavioral research exploring online shopping adoption. Therefore, for developing sound marketing strategy for the success of online shopping, it is very important to explore each shopping orientation and the characteristics and preferences of shoppers within each in further details.

Mall-Socializing emerged to be a single shopping orientation though characteristically they both seem quite different. Better sampling and research design might help in deriving accurate shopping orientations.

In the present study Behavioral Intention to Use was considered a soul antecedent of Actual Behavior. Moderating effects of other relevant constructs (like Security/Privacy concerns, infrastructure, technical skills etc.) on Intentions-Action gap was not explored. Future research should explore moderating effects of other variables on Intention-Action gap.

The present study was cross-sectional in nature and given the corresponding drawbacks of the same, longitudinal studies should be conducted in future to test the proposed model so as to re-evaluate directions of causality among the study variables.

Online shopping has been researched more often in developed countries and this research was focused on a developing country. Thus, there is a need for cross-country comparison studies to identify common and disparate factors related to shopping orientations and online shopping behavior.
Lastly, future research should try to further establish the psychometric properties of the shopping orientation scale used and validated in this study. Though the instrument shows scientific reliability and validity, yet this is the first study for which it has been adopted in India and more studies are required before it is established as an acceptable tool for measuring shopping orientations. Similarly, the causal relations within the proposed model were tested through the five multiple regression models. This was done to maintain consistency with earlier research. Testing the overall model using causal modeling, or path analysis techniques like SEM (Structural Equation Modeling), which hypothesizes causal relationships among variables and tests the causal models with a linear equation system, would help in validating the overall model rather than just the subsets of the model as is done in this research. Therefore future research should also aim at validating the overall model which will help in studying the internet shopping adoption in a holistic view.