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Factors Influencing Women's Buying Decisions while Shopping for Lingerie Products Online

Dejavniki, ki vplivajo na odločitve žensk pri spletnem nakupovanju spodnjega perila

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Abstract

One reason driving lingerie sales in India is growing e-commerce and a rising demand for premium brands. With improved technologies, many lingerie producers are using delicate fabrics and intricate lace trimmings for lingerie of different styles to enhance lingerie demand in the country. Rising demand for lingerie sets, a growing middle-class population, and an increasing number of financially independent women are all driving this development. Many professional opportunities for women, and their access to round-the-clock internet services, have enabled them to gain trust, feel inspired, and be praised for their ability to decide. Their familiarity with technological advances like internet access via smart phones has enabled the Indian lingerie industry to shift their focus from an earlier marketing strategy of "touch and feel," being available only in retail stores, to going online and taking the additional risk of advertising their product line on e-commerce platforms. This study found factors that influence women's buying decisions while shopping online for lingerie products. Questionnaires were distributed to Indian women consumers to gauge their online buying intentions and multiple linear regressions were used as a statistical method to evaluate the formed hypotheses. The study revealed that convenience of shopping, variety of brands, quality of products, online discounts, delivery services and secure online payment have a positive impact on the buying decisions of Indian women regarding lingerie products. The research findings will serve as a baseline for understanding the major aspects that influence retailers' online lingerie buying decisions.

Keywords: buying decisions, online shopping, lingerie, quality, variety, discounts

Izvleček

Eden od razlogov za spodbujanje prodaje spodnjega perila v Indiji je naraščanje števila e-trgovin in povpraševanja po vrhunskih blagovnih znamkah. Napredne proizvodne tehnologije so izdelovalcem spodnjega perila omogočile uporabo občutljivih tkanin in zapletenih čipk za izdelavo perila različnih stilov, da bi povečali povpraševanje po spodnjem perilu v državi. Ta razvoj spodbujajo naraščajoče povpraševanje po kompletnih spodnjega perila, rastoča populacija srednjega razreda in čedalje več finančno neodvisnih žensk. Številne poklicne priložnosti in dostop do 24-urnih spletnih storitev so ženskam omogočili, da so pridobile zaupanje, se počutile navdihnjene in bile pohvaljene za svojo sposobnost odločanja. Njihovo poznavanje tehnološkega napredka, kot je dostop do spleta s pametnimi telefoni, je indijski industriji spodnjega

perila omogočilo premik od marketinške strategije »dotika in občutka«, ki je izvedljiva samo v maloprodajnih trgovinah, k spletni prodaji in s tem prevzela dodatno tveganje pri oglaševanju svojih linij izdelkov na platformah e-trgovin. Ta študija je odkrila dejavnike, ki vplivajo na nakupne odločitve žensk med spletnim nakupovanjem izdelkov za spodnje perilo. Med indijske uporabnice so razdelili vprašalnike, da bi ocenili njihovo spletno nakupovalno namero kot statistično metodo, za oceno oblikovanih hipotez pa so bile uporabljene večkratne linearne regresije. Študija je pokazala, da ugodnost nakupovanja, raznolikost blagovnih znamk, kakovost izdelkov, spletni popusti, dostavne storitve in varno spletno plačilo pozitivno vplivajo na odločitve indijskih žensk za nakup perila. Ugotovitve iz raziskave bodo izhodišče za razumevanje glavnih vidikov, ki vplivajo na spletne odločitve prodajalcev o nakupu spodnjega perila. Ključne besede: odločitev o nakupu, spletno nakupovanje, spodnje perilo, kakovost, raznolikost, popusti

1 Introduction

Women's lingerie is undergoing a renaissance. Lingerie shopping was traditionally not a pleasant experience for women, with discussions on the topic occurring in hushed tones. Offline lingerie shopping in India is often an inconvenience for women and men. Lingerie shopping is an intimate experience that needs privacy and freedom regardless of the factors such as the environment and people. Many consumers had unpleasant lingerie shopping experiences and are hesitant to buy in an offline store again. The reasons are understandable as lingerie shopping in India is generally tied to a social stigma, and talking about size and shape is still taboo. Although lingerie-related awkward moments persist, women have become more confident in experimenting and buying 'intimate' wear in recent years, and this trend can be attributed to online lingerie sites to a large extent, if not completely. Women no longer shy away from sharing their feelings in a category that is closet essential.

The Indian lingerie market is primarily driven by the rise in the adoption of western culture, growing urbanisation, a rise of disposable income, more women participating in sports and physical activities, a change in consumer preferences, deep expertise in lingerie design, presence in online space and social media impact. There has been exponential growth in recent years to meet the demand for fashionable, contemporary, and premium-quality lingerie. The segment has improved gradually with easy product availability in hypermarkets, supermarkets, multi-brand outlets, exclusive business outlets and online platforms. While physical stores ring in the bulk of sales, the unavailability of sizes, lack of privacy, and shortage of trained personnel have paved the way for online lingerie portals. Lingerie purchasing in India has progressed from small, packed stores staffed by untrained salespeople to enticing

websites staffed by fitting specialists. Many Indian companies have reaped the benefits of e-commerce implementation and integration into their enterprises by shifting their marketing approach from brick and mortar locations to the Internet. The product descriptions for online products are extremely detailed, even including visual elements that contribute to understanding of the functionality. Some brands launch a series of infomercials to educate female consumers on different categories. In recent years, Skype and phone calls have become available for consultations on fitting-related issues. Women have now spoken up on issues that have been taboo for many years. Buying online enables the transaction to be kept private and delivered discreetly, providing online lingerie businesses with an advantage over traditional stores. In addition to privacy, other factors that drive lingerie retailing include discounts, the availability of foreign brands, a wide range of designs, and different size options ranging from slender to plus-size.

The Indian lingerie sector has been a fast-growing driver in the apparel industry and is currently experiencing its most exciting era, with a diverse consumer base which enables brands to experiment with designs, styles, cuts, and colours. What was originally a staple product with little innovation has developed into an impregnable market. Its tale of development and importance, particularly in the Internet world, has captivated and piqued the interest of investors like nothing else. Today, multiple lingerie brands compete fiercely in e-commerce. This has flared up the entire industry, which is populated by a diverse range of global, national, regional, and online players. The Indian lingerie market is projected to rise at a robust Compound Annual Growth Rate of 14 per cent, reaching EUR 3.69 billion in 2021 and EUR 7.1 billion in 2026, owing to the growing middle-class population, fashion, wellness, and media visibility, as well as more women

Table 1: Categories of the online lingerie retail sector

Online category	Major brands
Multi-category apparel	Amazon, Fashionara, Flipkart, Jabong, Myntra, Snapdeal (other best-selling clothing items is highlighted)
Private lingerie labels	Amante, Enamor, Lovable, PrettySecrets, (product aimed at brand-loyal customers)
Exclusive multi-brand online lingerie portals	The Darling Trap, Straps and Strings, Zivame (exclusive lingerie brands)

becoming financially independent. According to a Technopak survey, the lingerie category is currently worth EUR 2.95 billion and accounts for 8% of India's overall apparel industry. Luxurious, premium, mid-market, and mass-market are now the most popular categories in the Indian lingerie sector, with the mid-market category accounting for the most sales. Compared to the mid-market category, the premium and luxury sectors are rising at almost double the rate. While foreign brands such as Calvin Klein, La Senza, Victoria's Secret, and others are vying for a piece of the Indian industry, domestic brands are stepping up their game as well [1]. The current companies in the online lingerie retail sector in India can be categorised into three types.

Several lingerie brand advertisements incorporate experiential marketing, which is more effective than traditional commercials. These online educative steps and assistance reach out to more consumers and offer to pick the 'right fit' innerwear. The Enamor positioning 'Fabulous As I Am' is derived from the stance that women look forward to everything that life offers - from jobs and occasions to family time. Amante's latest campaign, positioning itself on 'Dare To Be', urges women to embrace different personalities, whether it be a serious executive by day or an enchantress by night. Online player Zivame's 'Fit For All' campaign is based on the idea that, much like Indian women, lingerie should be available in various sizes. It was created in response to consumer feedback that most women had difficulty finding lingerie in sizes other than the predefined "so-called popular sizes."

Technological advances in lingerie production aid the development of this industry, with an increasing number of factories using superior quality fabrics and carving enticing designs. Technical inputs extend the horizons from a basic necessity to designer wear, with a focus on style and comfort. In recent years, the e-commerce boom in the B2C sector has witnessed extensive growth, and the lingerie indus-

try has stepped up its efforts to reach out to its customers through its online mode. Online availability of lingerie products has made women avoid embarrassment, buy in a private ambience, get a consultation if necessary and spend more time selecting what they want. As a result, male consumers are emerging as significant buyers of women's lingerie because of the privacy it offers. This brought the lingerie enterprises hope and confidence to revise their strategy since they recognised an opportunity that they wanted to build on. This study finds the correlation between various factors that influence women's buying decisions for online lingerie products and statistically validate the findings through the use of multivariate statistical tools. The objectives of the study are the following:

- i). To determine the factors influencing the buying decisions of women across India concerning lingerie products during online purchase, and
- ii). to establish and validate that the determining factors positively affect the buying decisions of women concerning online lingerie products.

The research provides useful insights into what women desire, helping different marketers to develop and adapt in response to the needs of female Indian consumers. The most satisfied customers usually have the intent to re-purchase if product performance meets their expectations. Thus, to influence customers and improve business performance, online retailers must clearly understand the factors that positively affect buying decisions. Several studies are available to categorise the various variables that influence online shopping. A few of them are extensively explored during the review of the literature.

1.1 Literature review

Several studies have been conducted to determine the factors that influence consumers' buying decisions for online shopping. A consumer must be happy with their first online shopping experience

before buying more products and services online [2]. It is also stated that the service offered during the purchase is essential in convincing consumers to make repeat purchases online [3]. Consumer views and beliefs regarding comfort and protection concerns have a very significant effect on their decision to buy online [4]. Women, on the whole, have a good outlook about shopping for apparel online [5]. While women are aware of some disadvantages of online apparel shopping, these drawbacks do not deter them from doing so. The Internet user base is growing rapidly in India, and it is inspiring to see that the women's user base is also increasing rapidly [6]. Due to the Internet, Indian women have convenient access to information, enabling them to make smarter decisions in their everyday lives. Most youngsters (18–25 years old) are particularly interested in online shopping because they are familiar with the technology [7].

The simplicity with which products on a website can be navigated has a positive effect on online purchasing behaviour and purchasing decisions [8]. Security is another significant aspect that influences online shopping satisfaction. Security vulnerabilities during online shopping have also been reported in the literature. It was further discussed that the ability of an online portal to protect a customer's data fosters loyalty and improves satisfaction. According to previous research work [9], satisfaction with the information service of online retailers is expected to rise as the perception of security risks declines. A high level of protection affects the extent to which purchasing decisions are made.

The quality of product details on e-commerce websites is another important aspect that influences buying decisions. Consumer satisfaction in online shopping is influenced by accurate product and quality information. Online shoppers require websites to provide safe payment options and protect the privacy of their online communications [10]. According to Pappas et al. [11], information content, website architecture, product attributes, ease of purchases, online transaction security, payment, delivery, and consumer services were good predictors of online buying decisions. The same study states that a wide range of merchandise variety and a relatively low price would have a positive impact on buying decisions in the online shopping environment.

Convenience is the backbone of e-commerce, and it is one of the primary reasons that online shopping has grown in popularity in recent years. Shopping con-

venience can be defined as consumers' perceptions of the time and effort involved in buying products and services [12]. Shopping online offers the convenience of purchasing items when and where it suits you, via a payment method of choice, while also having the item delivered via a suitable method. Corbitt et al., argue that purchase-related information and the opportunity to compare alternative deals play an important role in the absence of sales personnel and the inability to view and try the product [13]. Research reports show that shopping convenience has surpassed price and selection and has become the number one reason consumers shop online [14].

Trust and security appeared to be interconnected, where the consumer needed a secure payment to trust the payment method. If there is insufficient trust in the online payment process, the purchase is likely to be cancelled. Choosing an appropriate secure payment system for online transactions creates a more trustworthy condition for the consumer [15]. A strong transaction security policy helps gain a shopper's trust to purchase online, without the worries of risks in the transaction [16]. Most consumers in the e-commerce world believe that big businesses are more trustworthy, which can influence their trust and online buying intentions [17]. Scholars stated that trust performs a critical role in e-commerce because of the limited face-to-face communication between retailers and consumers in the virtual world. Hence, the intention of consumers to shop online derives from their trust in their information security. However, scholars have argued that further external factors play a vital role in purchasing intentions [18].

Apart from trust, perceived quality was found as another critical component of online purchase intention. Perceived quality is defined as the quality of a consumer product or service that is based on its ability to satisfy stated or implied customer needs, which in turn affects a customer's buying decisions. Perceived quality is considered when consumers evaluate the quality of the product to choose which product suits them the most [19]. Customers are likely to visit an online shop with various and high-quality products. If the product quality meets the expectations, customers regard the online shop as useful and continue to visit it. Therefore, product-related characteristics can develop, sustain and improve customer satisfaction in online shopping. In an online purchase, a consumer cannot touch and feel the product; hence, quality perception plays a vital role

in determining product perception and trust in the vendor [20].

The variety of products offered to consumers while shopping online is difficult to match by offline stores. Offline shoppers usually have to visit different stores to search for the products, whereas online shopping provides a wide variety of products on a single website. Product perception is also termed product value, which entails understanding a product in terms of price, product quality, and variety. Price is defined as the cost paid for an item by the consumer, and it should be comparable with prices available for the same product at alternative sources (online or offline). Product variety is the number of alternatives available to the customer when choosing a product. Product quality perception is the product's ability to satisfy the customer [21].

The most important factors influencing online purchase are convenience and attractive pricing [22]. The retailers can attract online bargain hunters with a visible selection, discounts, and special promotions (e.g. incentives and gifts). Consumers can easily compare prices from various suppliers, leading to utilitarian browsing for purchases [23]. As a marketing stimulus, price comprises positive and negative cues in predicting consumer behaviour. In the online context, consumers depend on price information, as the product is not available for examination before purchasing. Increasing the usability and perceived depth of online information can reduce price sensitivity [24].

The product delivery problem is prominent in an online retail environment and has a significant impact on purchasing decisions. Customer loyalty suffers when products arrive with a delay. In an online environment, timely and reliable delivery plays a critical role in meeting customer's expectations and satisfaction. Customers can switch easily between webpages with just a single click or even customers move toward conventional brick and mortar retailers because of late, unsafe, or undesirable product delivery. It can be concluded that a delivery service is a service organised by a supplier or a shop to take goods to customers. Several studies state that the delivery quality has a significant impact on purchasing decisions and accounts for a larger variation in online shopping satisfaction. In the scenario of an online shopping environment, reliable, safe, and timely delivery is a fundamental and integral aim of online buyers [25]. Customers buy products at home, and require a safe, reliable, and quick de-

livery of the desired product to their destination. The delivery service is the link in a supply chain that directly deals with customers, and is a driver of customer satisfaction [26].

While online shopping has several advantages over the traditional method, there are a few pitfalls of internet buying. In virtual shops, the consumer cannot see and check the product quality, as would be the case in a physical store. In fact, for the consumer, buying products on the Internet appears to be a more complex decision as it is more difficult to form an impression about whether the products on offer are appropriate. The second area of complexity concerns the mode of payment for the ordered products. Most of the consumers who are habituated to paying in cash at the checkout may find the electronic transfer and security checks unfamiliar and more complex [27].

Attracting, retaining, and satisfying female customers remains limited, despite the growth in the application of technology-based online retail services. A marketer often encounters a difficulty in understanding and managing the dynamics of female consumer behaviour. This requires a study of behavioural issues in online retail shopping in order to establish an online presence. While the number of female consumers buying online products in India continues to rise, the success of some e-retailers and the lack of such for others emphasise the need for research. What leads a female buyer to shop online has also evoked a lot of interest from both researchers and marketers. Thus, through an elaborate review of existing literature on buying decisions for online shopping, we determined that buying decisions depend on many factors. Some factors identified through the literature review have a significant influence on buying decisions and have been considered in this study. The factors identified are (i) convenience of shopping, (ii) variety of brands, (iii) quality of products, (iv) online discounts, (v) delivery services, (vi) secure online payment.

1.2 Hypothesis

Based on the literature review, the following hypotheses were developed for this study concerning buying decisions of Indian women for lingerie products:

H₁: Convenience of shopping influences buying decisions during online shopping.

H₂: Variety of brands influences buying decisions during online shopping.

H₃: Quality of product influences buying decisions during online shopping.

H₄: Online discounts influence buying decisions during online shopping.

H₅: Delivery services influence buying decisions during online shopping.

H₆: Secure online payment influences buying decisions during online shopping.

2 Methodology

A total of 150 questionnaires were circulated at random among female Indian consumers from diverse backgrounds to better understand what motivates them to buy online lingerie products. Their identities were kept anonymous to ensure that their reasoning and preferences are not criticised or differentiated, and that their confidentiality is maintained throughout. The non-probability convenience sampling [28] was used in this exploratory research study, as it is the most effective way to obtain basic information quickly and efficiently. Only responses from 120 female respondents over the age of 16 were received. In this study, the questionnaire comprises close-ended questions showing demographic and variable-related information for measuring online buying decisions. This was derived from a response range of strongly agree to disagree, on a five-point Likert Scale. The questionnaire was

simple and easy to understand, so that the respondent would have no difficulty answering them. This comes under a correlational study that attempts to examine the statistical association between online buying decisions influenced by six independent variables identified as significant in buying decisions. The variables were the convenience of shopping, variety of brands, quality of products, online discounts, delivery services, and secure online payment. Secondary data sources include the previously published research papers, journals, authorised industry statistics, and some major websites, all of which contributed to data credibility. The validity of these responses was confirmed using the statistical tool of Multiple Regression Analysis. Cronbach's alpha coefficient was used to assess the internal consistency reliability of the data set [29].

3 Results and discussion

The survey was gender specific, and only women from various backgrounds were included. Most of the 120 participants were students (50 per cent) between the age group of 21 to 25 years. (38.3 per cent). There was no upper age limit for women who took part in this survey, and all respondents were over the age of 16. Table 2 shows the age group, education status, occupational status, and monthly income of all women respondents.

Table 2: Demographic data of women respondents

Demographics	Description	Frequency, N	Share (%)
Age group (years)	16-20	8	6.7
	21-25	46	38.3
	26-30	25	20.8
	31-35	17	14.2
	36-40	12	10.0
	40 or above	12	10.0
Education status	High School	9	7.5
	Graduate	63	52.5
	Postgraduate	38	31.7
	Doctorate	10	8.3
Occupational status	Student	60	50.0
	Employed	32	26.7
	Business	24	20.0
	Homemaker	4	3.3
Monthly income (EUR)	Below 1000	26	21.7
	1000-2000	14	11.7
	2001-3000	15	12.5
	3001-4000	22	18.3
	Over 4000	43	35.8

3.1 Reliability analysis

Table 3 shows the reliability coefficient (Cronbach's alpha) values for the variables under study. The Cronbach's alpha for all the proposed variables exceeds the minimum threshold value of 0.70 [30], with values ranging from (0.701) to (0.836), confirming that the data is statistically reliable and acceptable for further analysis.

Table 3: Reliability analysis of independent variables

Variables	Items	Cronbach's Alpha
Convenience of shopping	3	0.711
Variety of brands	5	0.836
Quality of products	5	0.733
Online discounts	2	0.753
Delivery services	2	0.789
Secure online payment	3	0.701

3.2 Multiple regression analysis

Tables 4a and 4b show the results of multiple regression analysis. The independent variables had multicollinearity if the tolerance value is below 0.1 and the value of Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) spans from 1.096 to 1.690, all of which are less than 5, showing no multicollinearity among the six independent variables [31].

Table 4a: Model summary

Model	R	R ²	Adjusted R ²	Std. Error of the estimate
1	0.857	0.734	0.720	0.59766

Table 4b: Regression analysis-ANOVA

Model	Sum of squares	df	Mean square	F	Sig.
Regression	32.684	6	5.447	15.250	0.000
Residual	72.51	203	0.357		
Total	105.194	209			

Predictors: (Constant), convenience of shopping, variety of brands, quality of products, online discounts, delivery services, secure online payment

All six independent variables have *p*-values less than the alpha value of 0.05 showing that all six independent variables, i.e., convenience of shopping, variety of brands, quality of products, online discounts, delivery services, and secure online payment are positively related to buying decisions of Indian women regarding lingerie products. The study supports both previously proposed hypotheses. The following multiple regression equation was formed using the coefficient table (Table 4c):

Buying decisions = 1.163 + 0.248 (convenience of shopping) + 0.124 (variety of brands) + 0.059 (quality of products) + 0.022 (online discounts) + 0.178 (delivery service) + 0.132 (secure online payment).

The intensity among variables is explained by the data of standardised coefficients. The variables are ranked in order of intensity:

- convenience of shopping (0.360)
- secure online payment (0.171)
- variety of brands (0.151)
- quality of products (0.093)
- delivery services (0.084)
- online discounts (0.026).

Table 4c: Regression analysis - coefficients

Model	Unstandardised coefficients		Standardised coefficients	<i>t</i>	Sig.	Collinearity statistics	
	B	Std. error	β			Tolerance	VIF
(Constant)	1.163	0.252		4.615	0.000		
Convenience of shopping	0.248	0.047	0.360	5.247	0.000	0.720	1.388
Variety of brands	0.124	0.055	0.151	2.256	0.002	0.760	1.316
Quality of products	0.059	0.046	0.093	1.286	0.000	0.645	1.551
Online discounts	0.022	0.052	0.026	0.420	0.005	0.912	1.096
Delivery services	0.178	0.043	0.084	1.262	0.000	0.771	1.297
Secure online payment	0.132	0.058	0.171	2.257	0.025	0.592	1.690

Dependent variable: Buying decisions

Based on the values of the standardised coefficients above, it can be inferred that convenience of shopping is the most important variable that influences Indian women's online purchasing decisions of lingerie items positively, while secure online payment is the second most influential variable. The remaining factors follow the first two.

According to Table 4a, the coefficient of determination (R^2) is 0.734. This shows that a 73.4 per cent chance of the dependent variable buying decisions is caused by the independent variable convenience of shopping, variety of brands, quality of products, online discounts, delivery services, and secure online payment.

4 Conclusion

Lingerie shopping in India has progressed from small, packed shops staffed by inexperienced salespeople to well-equipped portals with appropriate specialists. The apprehension of buying from a shopkeeper, who was sometimes male, often resulted in women missing out on the correct size and fit. It would not be an exaggeration to claim that online retailers have altered the way of shopping. The core ethos of these online shops has been education, especially on the Internet. Brands attempt to raise customer awareness and remove the stigma surrounding this category by means of meaningful and effective communication strategies. They seek to be viewed as authentic by eliminating the clutter and assisting consumers in making smarter choices with the facts and reviews that they have on their websites. As a result, a large consumer base has emerged that has responded enthusiastically to a previously uninspiring market sector. Women today are more willing to experiment with buying intimate apparel digitally.

This research attempts to conduct a decisive study of six variables derived from the elaborative literature review. The variables were the convenience of shopping, variety of brands, quality of products, online discounts, delivery services, and secure online payment that have a positive impact on the buying decisions of Indian women regarding lingerie products during online shopping.

The study results offer input and guidance to online retailers re-drafting/re-considering their strategic techniques for improving efficiency, increasing the

level of purchasing decisions and standing out in an increasingly competitive market in the Internet age. To survive in an increasingly competitive market world, online retailers can re-evaluate all six factors that have a high effect on purchasing decisions and initiate and redesign their strategies accordingly. These variables serve as consumer input when shopping online, showing how they feel and what they want. This research might be useful in assessing and improving their performance.

The online lingerie industry is still in its infancy but has immense potential that is only waiting to be realised. The influx of many more foreign participants will only improve the Indian lingerie industry and provide its consumers with the best options. If not entirely, online retailers can be credited with a significant portion of growth of the Indian lingerie industry. As a result, the lingerie industry has a vast potential to explore and propel their brands for greater consumer loyalty through online purchase mode, while simultaneously increasing customer acquisition and driving sales at a faster pace. The dynamics of the Indian lingerie industry are encouraging enough for these firms to venture into an online business with confidence.

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