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# **Toward an Integrative Framework for Online Consumer Behavior Research: A Meta-Analysis Approach**

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## **ABSTRACT**

*The recent failure of a large number of e-tail companies epitomizes the challenges of operating through virtual channels and underscores the need to better understand key drivers of online consumer behavior. The objective of this study is to provide a comprehensive review of the extant information systems (IS) literature related to online consumer behavior and integrate the literature in order to enhance our knowledge of consumer behavior in electronic markets and provide clear directions for future research. This paper introduces a framework that integrates research findings across studies to develop a coherent and comprehensive picture of the online consumer behavior research conducted in the IS field. The integrative framework proposes system quality, information quality, service quality, and vendor and channel characteristics as key factors that impact online consumer behavior, achieving their effects by altering the perceptions of usefulness, ease of use, trust, and shopping enjoyment.*

*Keywords:* electronic commerce, online consumer behavior, meta-analysis, system quality, information quality, service quality, TAM, trust

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## **INTRODUCTION**

The Internet offers immense opportunities for companies to reach a wide base of consumers and efficiently market their products through an electronic channel. According to the Boston Consulting Group, online retailing will reach \$168 billion by

2005 (Mark, 2001). Such estimates substantiate that the Internet has emerged as a powerful alternative channel for selling products and services. However, the recent failure of a large number of e-tail companies exemplifies the challenges of operating through virtual channels and also highlights the need to better understand key

factors that drive consumer behavior in online market channels. The infusion of the Internet technology into customer-supplier interactions requires a reconsideration of existing theories and frameworks regarding consumer behavior. Explicit attention should focus on understanding the factors that can explain a consumer's interaction with the technology, their purchase behavior in electronic channels, and their preference to transact with an electronic vendor on a repeat basis.

Although online consumer behavior has been the subject of considerable research in the last few years, there is a paucity of research that attempts to integrate research findings across studies. Online consumer behavior research is a young and dynamic academic domain that is characterized by a diverse set of variables studied from multiple theoretical perspectives. Researchers have relied on the Technology Acceptance Model (Davis, 1989; Davis et al., 1989), the Theory of Reasoned Action (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975), the Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen, 1991), Innovation Diffusion Theory (Rogers, 1983, 1995), and Flow Theory (Csikszentmihalyi, 1988) in investigating consumers' adoption and use of electronic commerce. Studies have examined various aspects of consumer behavior such as Web site use, future use, purchase, future purchase, unplanned purchase, channel preference, and satisfaction. In terms of explanatory factors that drive such behavior, researchers have explored the role of attributes of the Web site, attributes of the vendor, consumer characteristics, individual perceptions, and the social context (Agarwal & Karahanna, 2000; Agarwal & Venkatesh, 2002; Gefen & Straub, 1997, 2000; Jarvenpaa et al., 2000; Koufaris, 2002; Limayem et al., 2000; Moon & Kim, 2001; Torkzadeh & Dhillon, 2002). While these studies individually pro-

vide meaningful insights, a single study does not resolve a major issue (Hunter & Schmidt, 1990). By integrating research findings across multiple studies, we can accumulate knowledge, develop a comprehensive understanding of the phenomena, and identify remaining research issues.

The objective of this study is to provide a comprehensive review of the extant information systems (IS) literature related to online consumer behavior and rigorously integrate the literature in order to enhance our knowledge of consumer behavior in electronic markets and provide clear directions for future research. To that end, we not only review and analyze studies that have been published in the major IS journals, but also propose an integrative framework that describes the relationships between key variables that predict and determine consumer behavior in electronic channels. Such an approach should provide insights on factors that need to be carefully considered by companies starting or operating electronic businesses, as well as researchers developing and testing models to further understand online consumer behavior.

## STUDY APPROACH

A set of sampling criteria was initially determined in order to identify the studies that formed the foundation for our research endeavor. First, we decided to include only those studies that have been published in major journals within the IS domain. Second, only studies published between 1995 and 2002 were included for further consideration. Third, we limited our focus to those electronic commerce studies that were conducted at the individual level unit of analysis. Hence, consumers or users of Web technologies were the main subjects in these studies. Fourth, for a study to be

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