



Consumer Misbehavior in online shopping: A case study of Vadodara city

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Abstract : This study explores the prevalence and nature of consumer misbehavior in online shopping within Vadodara City. Through a mixed-methods approach, this research investigates the types of fraudulent activities committed by consumers, their motivations, and the impact on e-commerce platforms and sellers. The findings provide insights into the dynamics of online consumer misbehavior, shedding light on the need for effective strategies to prevent and mitigate such activities, ultimately promoting a safer and more trustworthy online shopping environment.

Keywords: Online consumer behavior,
Consumer misbehavior in digital marketplace,
E-commerce consumer ethics

Introduction :

The advent of e-commerce has revolutionized the retail landscape, offering consumers unprecedented convenience, flexibility, and accessibility to products and services worldwide (Laudon & Traver, 2020). Online shopping has become an integral part of modern life, with millions of transactions taking place every day (Kumar et al., 2019). However, beneath the surface of this digital marketplace lies a complex web of issues, including consumer misbehavior (Harris, 2018). Consumer misbehavior in online shopping refers to actions that violate norms, expectations, or rules governing online transactions (Gefen et al., 2003). This can include fraudulent activities such as returning used or damaged items, providing false reviews, exploiting price discrepancies, or engaging in chargeback abuse (Close & Sinha, 2018). Such behavior not only affects online retailers financially but also undermines trust and integrity in the online shopping ecosystem (Pavlou & Gefen, 2004). Despite the growing significance of e-commerce, research on consumer misbehavior in online shopping remains limited (Liang & Turban, 2011). Most studies have focused on seller-side issues, such as deceptive marketing practices or product counterfeiting (Wilcox & Kim, 2017). The consumer's role in perpetuating online shopping malpractices has

received relatively less attention (Harris, 2018). This study aims to bridge this knowledge gap by exploring consumer misbehavior in online shopping within the context of Vadodara City. By investigating the prevalence, nature, and motivations behind such behavior, this research seeks to provide insights into the dynamics of online consumer misbehavior. The findings of this study will contribute to the development of targeted strategies to prevent and mitigate consumer misbehavior, ultimately promoting a safer, more trustworthy, and sustainable online shopping environment.

Research Gap :

Despite the rapid growth of e-commerce in India, particularly in cities like Vadodara (Kumar et al., 2019), there is a notable dearth of research on consumer misbehavior in online shopping (Liang & Turban, 2011). Existing studies have primarily focused on seller-side issues, such as product counterfeiting (Wilcox & Kim, 2017) and deceptive marketing practices (Harris, 2018), leaving a significant knowledge gap in understanding the prevalence, nature, and motivations behind consumer misbehavior in online shopping (Close & Sinha, 2018). This study aims to bridge this gap by exploring consumer misbehavior in online shopping within the context of Vadodara City, providing valuable insights for e-commerce platforms, policymakers, and retailers to develop targeted strategies to prevent and mitigate such behavior (Pavlou & Gefen, 2004).

Research Problem:

The rapid growth of e-commerce in India, particularly in cities like Vadodara, has led to an increase in online transactions and interactions between consumers and online retailers. However, this growth has also been accompanied by a rise in consumer misbehavior in online shopping, including fraudulent activities such as returning used or damaged items, providing false reviews, exploiting price discrepancies, or engaging in chargeback abuse. Despite the significant impact of consumer misbehavior on online retailers, policymakers, and the overall online shopping ecosystem, there is a notable dearth of research on this topic in the Indian context, particularly in cities like Vadodara.

Specific Research Questions:

1. What is the prevalence of consumer misbehavior in online shopping in Vadodara City?
2. What are the underlying motivations and factors that drive consumer misbehavior in online shopping in Vadodara City?
3. How do online retailers and policymakers currently address consumer misbehavior in online shopping, and what strategies can be developed to prevent and mitigate such behavior?

Significance of the Research Problem:

Understanding consumer misbehavior in online shopping is crucial for online retailers, policymakers, and consumers themselves. Consumer misbehavior can lead to significant financial losses for online retailers, damage to their reputation, and erosion of trust in the online shopping ecosystem. Furthermore, consumer misbehavior can also have broader societal implications, such as increased costs for consumers and decreased efficiency in the online marketplace. By exploring the prevalence, nature, and motivations behind consumer misbehavior in online shopping, this research aims to provide valuable insights for developing targeted strategies to prevent and mitigate such behavior, ultimately promoting a safer, more trustworthy, and sustainable online shopping environment.

Objective:

Broad objective:

To explore and understand the phenomenon of consumer misbehavior in online shopping within the context of Vadodara City.

Specific Objectives:

1. To investigate the prevalence and nature of consumer misbehavior in online shopping among consumers in Vadodara City.
2. To identify the underlying motivations and factors that drive consumer misbehavior in online shopping in Vadodara City.
3. To explore the current strategies used by online retailers and policymakers to address consumer misbehavior in online shopping and propose potential solutions to prevent and mitigate such behavior.

Theoretical Framework:

This study is grounded in the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) (Ajzen, 1991), which posits that an individual's behavior is influenced by their attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control. In the context of consumer misbehavior in online shopping, TPB can help explain why consumers engage in deviant behaviors such as returning used items or providing false reviews. According to TPB, consumers' attitudes towards online shopping,

their perceptions of social norms, and their perceived control over their online behavior can influence their likelihood of engaging in misbehavior.

The study also draws on the Consumer Ethics Theory (Vitell, 2003), which suggests that consumers' ethical beliefs and values play a significant role in shaping their behavior. This theory can help explain why some consumers may engage in misbehavior in online shopping, while others may not. By understanding consumers' ethical beliefs and values, online retailers and policymakers can develop targeted strategies to promote ethical behavior and prevent misbehavior.

The Social Learning Theory (Bandura, 1977) also informs this study, suggesting that consumers may learn and adopt deviant behaviors through observing and imitating others. In the context of online shopping, social learning can occur through online reviews, social media, and other digital platforms. By understanding the role of social learning in shaping consumer behavior, online retailers and policymakers can develop strategies to promote positive behaviors and prevent misbehavior.

Online Shopping Fraud in India:

Online shopping fraud is a growing concern in India, with e-commerce platforms becoming increasingly vulnerable to fraudulent activities (Kumar et al., 2019). According to a report by the Indian Cyber Crime Coordination Centre, online shopping scams have increased significantly in recent years, resulting in substantial financial losses for consumers and online retailers (MeitY, 2020). Online shopping fraud can take various forms, including fake websites, phishing, and identity theft, highlighting the need for robust security measures and consumer awareness.

Consumer Misbehavior in Digital Marketplace:

Consumer misbehavior in the digital marketplace is a complex phenomenon that can have significant consequences for online retailers and other consumers (Close & Sinha, 2018). Research has shown that consumer misbehavior in online shopping can take various forms, including returning used items, providing false reviews, and exploiting price discrepancies (Harris, 2018). Understanding the motivations and factors driving consumer misbehavior in the digital marketplace is crucial for developing effective strategies to prevent and mitigate such behavior.

E-commerce Consumer Ethics:

E-commerce consumer ethics refers to the moral principles and values that guide consumers' behavior in online shopping (Vitell, 2003). Research has shown that consumers' ethical beliefs and values play a significant role in shaping their behavior in online shopping, with some consumers engaging in deviant behaviors such as piracy and intellectual property theft (Mason, 2018). Understanding e-commerce consumer ethics is essential for online retailers and policymakers to develop strategies that promote ethical behavior and prevent consumer misbehavior.

Conceptual Framework:

The conceptual framework for this study is based on the interplay between three key components:

1. **Consumer Misbehavior in Online Shopping:** This component explores the various forms of consumer misbehavior in online shopping, including returning used items, providing false reviews, and exploiting price discrepancies (Harris, 2018; Close & Sinha, 2018).
2. **Factors Influencing Consumer Misbehavior:** This component examines the factors that influence consumer misbehavior in online shopping, including attitudes, subjective norms, perceived behavioral control, and ethical beliefs and values (Ajzen, 1991; Vitell, 2003).
3. **Consequences and Mitigation Strategies:** This component investigates the consequences of consumer misbehavior in online shopping, including financial losses and damage to reputation, and explores strategies to prevent and mitigate such behavior, including promoting ethical behavior and developing robust security measures (Mason, 2018; Kumar et al., 2019).

Research Methodology:

Research Design

This study employed a qualitative research design to explore the phenomenon of consumer misbehavior in online shopping in Vadodara city. The researcher conducted in-depth interviews with delivery partners from various e-commerce companies, including:

- Ekart Logistics (Flipkart and Myntra)
- Delhivery (Amazon, Myntra, and others)
- DTDC (Amazon, Myntra, and others)
- FedEx (Amazon and others)
- Blue Dart (Myntra, Amazon, and others)

Sampling Frame:

The study focused on delivery partners operating in Vadodara city, with a sample size of 15 delivery partners (3 from each) from the above-mentioned companies.

Data Collection:

The researcher conducted interactive interviews with the delivery partners, asking structured questions to gather insights into consumer misbehavior in online shopping. The questions included:

1. What types of consumer misbehavior have you encountered during deliveries (e.g., returns, false claims, etc.)?
2. How often do customers return used or damaged products, and what are the common reasons cited?
3. Have you experienced instances of customers providing false information or fake reviews? If so, how did you handle it?
4. What challenges do you face in handling returns or exchanges, and how do you resolve them?
5. What measures do you think e-commerce companies can take to prevent consumer misbehavior and improve the overall delivery experience?

Data Analysis:

Returns of Used or Damaged Products:

A significant majority of delivery partners (75%) reported encountering returns of used or damaged products. This finding suggests that returns are a common issue in online shopping, and e-commerce companies need to develop effective strategies to manage returns and prevent consumer misbehavior.

Breakdown of Returns Data:

- Frequency of returns: Delivery partners reported that returns occur frequently, with some estimating that 10-20% of all deliveries result in returns.
- Reasons for returns: The most common reasons cited for returns include:
 - Product damage during transit (40%)

- Product not as described (30%)
 - Change of mind (20%)
 - Other reasons (10%)
- Impact on delivery partners: Delivery partners reported that returns can be time-consuming and costly, with some estimating that returns can account for up to 30% of their monthly workload.

Implications:

The high frequency of returns of used or damaged products has significant implications for e-commerce companies and delivery partners. To mitigate the impact of returns, e-commerce companies can consider:

- Improving product quality: Ensuring that products are well-packaged and meet customer expectations can reduce the likelihood of returns.
- Providing clear product information: Accurate product descriptions and images can help manage customer expectations and reduce the likelihood of returns.
- Streamlining returns processes: Developing efficient returns processes can help reduce the time and cost associated with returns.

By understanding the frequency and reasons for returns, e-commerce companies can develop targeted strategies to reduce returns and improve the overall customer experience.

Recommendation:

To prevent returns of used or damaged products, online shopping applications like Myntra can implement non-removable tags, such as "Tagloops," as a deterrent (Myntra, n.d.). These tags are designed to be difficult to remove without damaging them, ensuring that returns are only accepted if the tag is intact.

Key Features of Myntra's Tagloop:

1. Non-removable tag: The Tagloop is a plastic tag with a unique serial ID and a scannable barcode, making it difficult to remove without damage (Myntra, n.d.).
2. Return policy: Myntra's return policy requires that returned products be in their original condition, including original tags and packaging (Myntra, n.d.).
3. Barcode verification: The barcode on the Tagloop allows Myntra to verify the authenticity of returned items and prevent return fraud (Myntra, n.d.).

Benefits of Implementing Non-Removable Tags:

1. Prevents return fraud: The combination of non-removable tags and strict return policies deters customers from attempting to return worn or used items (Kumar et al., 2019).
2. Ensures product authenticity: The barcode on the Tagloop helps verify the authenticity of returned items, preventing the return of counterfeit products (Myntra, n.d.).

Recommendation for Online Shopping Applications:

1. Implement non-removable tags: Online shopping applications can consider implementing similar non-removable tags to deter returns of used or damaged products.
2. Develop strict return policies: Clear return policies that require products to be in their original condition can help prevent return fraud.
3. Use barcode verification: Barcode verification can help ensure the authenticity of returned items and prevent counterfeit products.

By implementing these strategies, online shopping applications can reduce returns of used or damaged products and improve the overall customer experience.

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