Research Paper

"Examining Gender-specific Variances in Consumer Preferences: Investigating the Impact of Quality, Pricing, and Brand Loyalty in the B2C E-commerce Landscape"

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Abstract:
In the rapidly evolving landscape of B2C e-commerce, understanding consumer behaviour is crucial for online retailers aiming to optimize marketing strategies and enhance customer satisfaction. This study, titled "Examining Gender-specific Variances in Consumer Preferences: Investigating the Impact of Quality, Pricing, and Brand Loyalty in the B2C E-commerce Landscape," delves into the intricate relationship between gender and consumer preferences across three key dimensions: price sensitivity, quality assessment, and brand loyaltyUtilizing a non-probability convenience sampling method, data was collected from students enrolled at Mangalore University engaged in online shopping activities. With 337 participants, the survey sought to record a range of viewpoints from male and female students. The data were examined using statistical techniques, such as descriptive statistics and Kruskal-Wallis tests, to find patterns and correlations between the variables. The results show that genders differ significantly in a number of areas related to consumer behaviour. Compared to men, women are more likely to buy from reputable brands, to place a higher value on product quality, to depend more heavily on product reviews, and to have more faith in well-known brands. On the other hand, men tend to value price more highly than quality and are more prepared to forgo quality in favor of cheaper cost, Discounts and promotions are valued by both sexes equally, and they both compare prices to a same degree. These results highlight how crucial it is to comprehend gender-specific preferences in customer behaviour in order to provide personalized marketing campaigns and product offerings in the e-commerce space.

Keywords: B2C e-commerce, consumer preferences, gender-specific, quality, pricing, brand loyalty, online shopping, trust, product reviews, marketing strategies.

I. Introduction

Online commerce has completely changed the way that people behave as consumers by providing a means for people to transact a wide range of activities without being constrained by physical locations. Understanding the intricacies of consumer preferences is essential for businesses striving for success in a cutthroat market in this digital age. Examining how these preferences differ based on gender in the business-to-consumer (B2C) internet commerce space is particularly interesting. It has long been recognized that gender plays a major role in shaping consumer behaviour (Segal & Podoshen, 2013). Studies have shown that consumers have different preferences when it comes to product quality, pricing tactics, and brand loyalty (Ulbrich et al., 2011).

Given the complexity of the online commerce environment, it is imperative for businesses to investigate how gender influences consumer preferences, since this can yield important information for tailored marketing campaigns and increased customer satisfaction (Davis et al., 2017). Through an examination of the ways in which gender influences B2C online commerce quality perceptions, pricing tactics, and brand loyalty, businesses can modify their strategies to better connect with a variety of consumer segments and foster stronger

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brand-consumer relationships that will drive organizational success. Because of this, this study aims to shed light on the ramifications for businesses functioning in this digital environment by investigating and analyzing the complex dynamics of gender-specific variations in consumer preferences within the B2C online commerce arena.

II.   Literatures

A variety of academic works have been looked at in order to investigate the issue of "Examining Gender-specific Variances in Consumer Preferences: Investigating the Impact of Quality, Pricing, and Brand Loyalty in the B2C E-commerce Landscape." Numerous research works explore different facets of online consumer preferences, illuminating vital elements impacting customer loyalty, trust, perceived value, buying decisions, and demographic traits. Román (2010) examines how pleasure and loyalty are negatively impacted by what customers perceive to be deceitful online sellers, and how product type and demographics moderate these impacts.

Through the lens of perceived value, George et al. (2016) investigates the ways in which age and gender impact online repurchase intentions, emphasizing the significance of customizing methods according to client attributes. Chu et al. (2010) examines how household and product attributes influence price sensitivity and brand loyalty in both online and offline channels. They discover that loyalty and sensitivity vary depending on the kind of product and how frequently a person shops. Pradhana & Sastiono (2019) identify trust as a critical component influencing men's purchase behaviour as they concentrate on gender variations in online shopping preferences. In their 2019 study, Chawla et al. investigate the demographic traits of Indian university students and how they affect consumers' online purchasing decisions. They place special emphasis on the roles played by gender, education, and pocket money. The impact of consumers' perceptions of gendered behaviour, both offline and online, on online utilitarian purchasing motivation and purchase intentions is examined by Davis et al. (2017), and the results show that gendered behaviour has a significant impact on these outcomes differently for males and females. Huseynov & Özkan Yıldırım (2019) delineate four separate customer segments and underscore the necessity of customized marketing strategies in their analysis of the market segmentation analysis as a means of comprehending online consumer behaviour. Negahdari (2014) investigates how gender influences consumers' online purchasing decisions. She finds that men are more likely than women to give priority on characteristics such as security and merchandising, with disparities found across 13 criteria. Girard et al. (2003) examine how consumers' shopping orientations, demographic traits, and preferences for online purchases are related. They discover that, depending on the kind of product, factors like convenience and a preference for recreational shopping have a significant impact on consumers' preferences for online shopping. Last but not least, Segal & Podoshen (2013) investigate how gender differs in materialism, conspicuous consumption, impulse buying, and brand loyalty. They find that there are notable differences between the sexes in these areas, but not in brand loyalty. All of these studies show how gender, psychographics, and demographic traits interact in complex ways to shape online consumer behaviour. This information is helpful for marketers who want to customize their approaches to target certain customer segments. In their exploration of the future of business-to-consumer (B2C) commerce in India, Singh & Ajmani (2016) highlight critical aspects for online buyers, including service quality, security and privacy, content and design, and customer delight. Major detractors include security difficulties and confusing policies. They discover that the majority of Indian internet shoppers are youthful, well-educated, and affluent, with books, gadgets, clothing, and computer accessories being the most popular items.
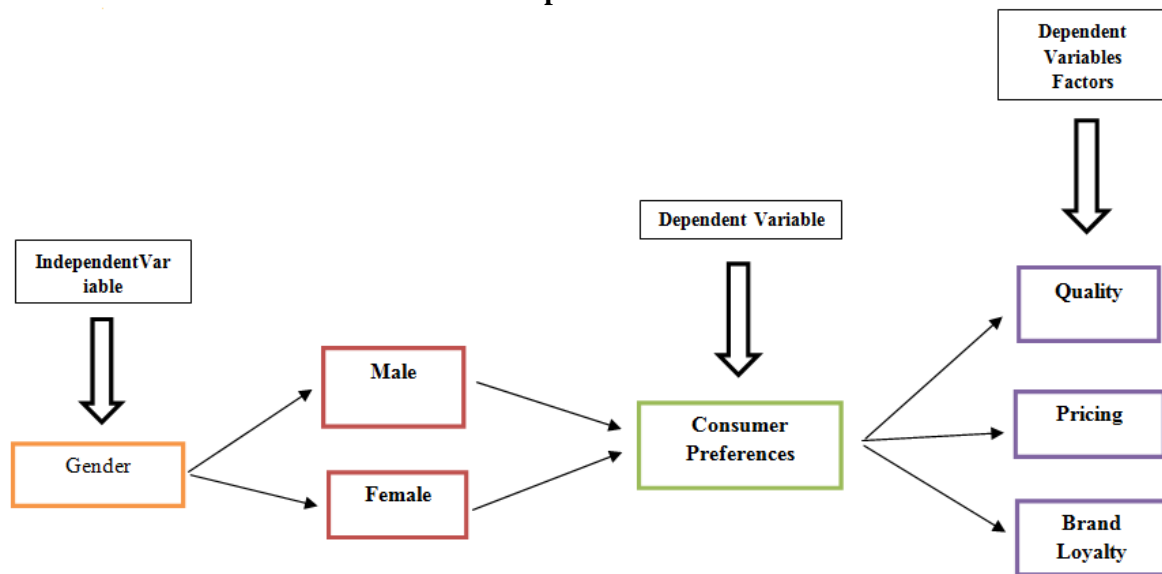
III.   Conceptual framework

Fig.1. The Framework developed by researcher

IV.   Objective of the study

❖ To study gender-specific differences in consumer preferences within the B2C e-commerce landscape, specifically focusing on quality, pricing, and brand loyalty, to determine variations between male and female consumers in online shopping behavior.

V.   Hypotheses of the study

1. Gender to Price:
- Null Hypothesis (H0): There is no significant difference between male and female consumers in their preferences for pricing in the B2C e-commerce landscape.
- Alternative Hypothesis (H1): There is a significant difference between male and female consumers in their preferences for pricing in the B2C e-commerce landscape.
2. Gender to Quality:
- Null Hypothesis (H0): There is no significant difference between male and female consumers in their preferences for quality in the B2C e-commerce landscape.
- Alternative Hypothesis (H1): There is a significant difference between male and female consumers in their preferences for quality in the B2C e-commerce landscape.
3. Gender to Brand Loyalty:
- Null Hypothesis (H0): There is no significant difference between male and female consumers in their preferences for brand loyalty in the B2C e-commerce landscape.
- Alternative Hypothesis (H1): There is a significant difference between male and female consumers in their preferences for brand loyalty in the B2C e-commerce landscape.

VI.   Research methodology

The research methodology used in this study collects data from Mangalore University students who actively participate in online purchasing using a non-probability sample technique called convenience sampling. This decision was chosen because it is workable and appropriate for a university setting, enabling the selection of study participants who are willing and able to participate. The study intends to gather a variety of viewpoints from male and female students using convenience sampling in order to offer insightful information about the preferences of each gender in online purchasing behaviors. The process of collecting data include distributing questionnaires intended to elicit details about the online buying habits, inclinations, and opinions of participants concerning brand loyalty, quality, and price.

Using the Yamane formula, a sample size of 337 was obtained, guaranteeing a 95% confidence level with a 5% margin of error, given an anticipated total student population of 3384 at Mangalore University, comprising PhD, postgraduate, and undergraduate students. The survey instrument will be carefully designed to gather pertinent demographic data, enabling a thorough examination of the material. After the data is collected, it will be analyzed using statistical techniques for non-parametric tests, such as the Kruskal-Walli test and

descriptive statistics, to find patterns and correlations between the variables. This analytical method will provide insightful information about the variables impacting university students' preferences for particular genders when it comes to their online buying behaviors.The study technique is expected to yield findings that will improve our comprehension of consumer behaviour in the e-commerce domain. These findings will then influence marketing and retail strategies that will enable them to effectively cater to the preferences of their target audience.

VII.   Scope of the study

In the business-to-consumer (B2C) e-commerce space, this study will look into gender-specific variations in consumer preferences, with an emphasis on the impact of quality, pricing, and brand loyalty. Surveys of male and female internet shoppers are used in this research to find gender differences in preferences and examine the connections between gender and the variables indicated above. The gathered data will be subjected to statistical analysis techniques in order to produce important findings that shed light on how gender affects consumer behaviour in online purchasing environments. The study will identify any possible drawbacks and provide suggestions on how companies should modify their marketing plans to improve client happiness in the context of B2C e-commerce.

VIII.   Research gap

The study's narrow focus on gender-specific variations in online purchasing preferences creates a research gap since it may oversimplify the intricate interactions between variables that affect consumer behaviour. Critical impacts including cultural, economic, and psychographic elements are not sufficiently explored. Furthermore, the study's small sample size and inadequate demographic representation may restrict how broadly the results may be applied, especially if some demographic groups are underrepresented. Furthermore, the cross-sectional design of the study makes it more difficult to determine the causal linkages between variables and may fail to account for changes in consumer preferences over time. Furthermore, because abstract conceptions like brand loyalty and quality perception are subjective and context-dependent, quantifying them effectively may provide difficulties for the study. The neglect of external elements, such as market changes, technology improvements, and competitive pressures, may result in an inadequate comprehension of consumer preferences. In order to address these complications and improve our understanding of online buying behaviors, it is imperative that these gaps be recognized in order to guide future research efforts.

IX.   Data Analysis

This table present a comprehensive breakdown of participant distributions across three key variables: Age, Gender, and Degree of Study
Source: SPSS

Demographic Characteristic	Age	Gender	Degree of Study
Frequency			
18-24	152 (45.2%)		
25-34	99 (29.5%)		
35-44	52 (15.5%)		
45-54	28 (8.3%)		
55 or above	5 (1.5%)		
Gender			
Male		161 (47.9%)	
Female		175 (52.1%)	
Degree of Study			
Undergraduate			174 (51.8%)
Postgraduate			126 (37.5%)
Ph.D.			36 (10.7%)

➢ **Age Distribution:** The majority of respondents fall within the 18-24 age bracket, comprising 45.2% of the sample, followed by the 25-34 age group at 29.5%. As age increases, there is a decline in representation, with only 1.5% of respondents aged 55 or above.
➢ **Gender Representation:** The dataset shows a nearly equal split between male and female respondents, with males accounting for 47.9% and females for 52.1% of the sample.

- ➢ **Educational Attainment:** The breakdown of respondents based on their degree of study reveals that 51.8% are enrolled in undergraduate programs, 37.5% are graduates, and 10.7% hold Ph.D. degrees. This indicates a predominant presence of undergraduate and graduate-level education within the sample, with a smaller proportion holding Ph.D. degrees.

10.1. The Kruskal-Walli's test results table

Factor	H	df	p-value	Interpretation
Brand Loyalty				
Preference for Buying from Trusted Brands	7.810	1	0.005	Significant difference: Women (182.86) > Men (154.02)
Positive Purchase Experience with Previous Brands	5.235	1	0.022	Significant difference: Women (179.95) > Men (157.18)
Sense of Attachment to Certain Brands	3.700	1	0.054	Marginally significant difference: Women (178.31) > Men (158.94)
Recommendation of Trusted Online Brands	1.005	1	0.316	No significant difference between genders
Pricing				
Price Plays a Significant Role in Decisions	1.082	1	0.298	No significant difference between genders
Preference for Discounts or Promotions	2.379	1	0.123	No significant difference between genders
Comparison of Prices Across Different Retailers	1.432	1	0.231	No significant difference between genders
Willingness to Pay More for Higher-Quality Products	3.247	1	0.072	Marginally significant difference: Women (177.91) > Men (159.37)
Quality				
Willingness to Sacrifice Quality for Lower Prices	12.020	1	0.001	Significant difference: Men (187.48) > Women (151.89)
Importance of Product Quality	29.036	1	0.000	Significant difference: Women (194.73) > Men (141.21)
Preference for Checking Product Reviews	54.436	1	0.000	Significant difference: Women (203.86) > Men (131.35)
Trust in Well-Known Brands	21.982	1	0.000	Significant difference: Women (191.98) > Men (144.17)

Source: SPSS

- ❖ **Brand Loyalty:** Preference for Buying from Trusted Brands: The Kruskal-Walli's test reveals a significant difference (p = 0.005) between genders in their preference for buying from trusted brands. Women (M = 182.86) show a higher preference than men (M = 154.02) for purchasing from brands they trust, even if they are more expensive. This suggests that women may place a greater emphasis on brand trust and reliability when making purchasing decisions in the B2C e-commerce landscape.
- • Positive Purchase Experience with Previous Brands: There is a significant difference (p = 0.022) between genders regarding their positive purchase experiences with previous brands. Women (M = 179.95) report higher positive experiences compared to men (M = 157.18) when purchasing from brands they have previously bought from and had a positive experience with. This finding underscores the importance of building positive brand experiences to foster loyalty among female consumers.
- • Sense of Attachment to Certain Brands: The Kruskal-Wallis's test shows a marginally significant difference (p = 0.054) between genders in their sense of attachment to certain brands. Women (M = 178.31) tend to exhibit a stronger attachment than men (M = 158.94) to specific brands, although the difference is not statistically significant at the conventional level. This suggests that women may develop stronger emotional connections to brands, influencing their brand loyalty and repeat purchase behavior.
- • Recommendation of Trusted Online Brands: There is no significant difference (p = 0.316) between genders in their likelihood to recommend trusted online brands to friends and family. This implies that both men and women are equally inclined to recommend brands they trust, indicating a shared behavior in advocating for preferred brands within their social circles.
- ❖ **Price**: The Price Plays a Significant Role in Decisions: The Kruskal-Walli's test indicates no significant difference (p = 0.298) between genders regarding the significance of price in purchasing decisions. This suggests that both men and women consider price similarly important when making online purchases. It implies that factors other than price may play a more influential role in shaping purchasing decisions for both genders, such as product quality or brand reputation.
- • Preference for Discounts or Promotions: There is no significant difference (p = 0.123) between genders in their preference for discounts or promotions when shopping online. This finding implies that both men and

women are equally attracted to discounts and promotions offered by online retailers, indicating a shared interest in seeking value and savings in their purchases.

- Comparison of Prices Across Different Retailers: The Kruskal-Walli's test shows no significant difference (p = 0.231) between genders regarding the practice of comparing prices across different online retailers. This suggests that both men and women engage in price comparison activities to a similar extent when making online purchases, indicating a common behavior in seeking the best deals and value for their money.

- Willingness to Pay More for Higher-Quality Products: Although marginally significant (p = 0.072), women (M = 177.91) tend to exhibit a higher willingness than men (M = 159.37) to pay more for higher-quality products. This finding suggests that while both genders value product quality, women may be slightly more inclined to invest in higher-quality products even at a higher price, emphasizing their prioritization of quality over price in certain contexts.
  Quality: Willingness to Sacrifice Quality for Lower Prices: The Kruskal-Walli's test reveals a significant difference (p = 0.001) between genders regarding the willingness to sacrifice quality for lower prices. Men (M = 187.48) exhibit a higher tendency than women (M = 151.89) to prioritize price over quality. This finding suggests that men may be more inclined to make purchasing decisions based on price considerations rather than quality when shopping online.
- Importance of Product Quality: There is a significant difference (p = 0.000) between genders in terms of the importance placed on product quality. Women (M = 194.73) express a stronger preference for high-quality products compared to men (M = 141.21). This indicates that women are more likely to prioritize quality when making online purchases, emphasizing the significance of product quality in their decision-making process.
- Preference for Checking Product Reviews: The Kruskal-Wallis's test reveals a significant difference (p = 0.000) between genders in their preference for checking product reviews before making a purchase. Women (M = 203.86) show a higher inclination than men (M = 131.35) to rely on product reviews for assessing quality. This highlights the importance of social proof and peer recommendations in influencing the purchasing decisions of female consumers.
- Trust in Well-Known Brands: There is a significant difference (p = 0.000) between genders regarding trust in well-known brands. Women (M = 191.98) demonstrate greater trust in established brands compared to men (M = 144.17). This suggests that women may perceive well-known brands as more reliable and trustworthy, influencing their brand choices in the B2C e-commerce landscape.

11.1 Key Findings by Factor:
Quality:
- Men exhibit a higher tendency to prioritize price over quality compared to women, indicating potential differences in purchasing decisions between genders.
- Women express a stronger preference for high-quality products and rely more on product reviews for assessing quality, underscoring the importance of product quality and peer recommendations for female consumers.
- Women also demonstrate greater trust in well-known brands, suggesting a preference for reliability and brand reputation in their purchasing decisions.
  Price:
- Both genders consider price similarly important in purchasing decisions, suggesting that factors other than price may play a more influential role in shaping decisions.
- Both men and women are equally attracted to discounts and promotions, indicating a shared interest in seeking value and savings.
- There is no significant difference between genders in the practice of comparing prices across different online retailers, suggesting a common behavior in seeking the best deals.
  Brand Loyalty:
- Women exhibit a higher preference for buying from trusted brands and report more positive purchase experiences with previous brands compared to men, highlighting the importance of brand trust and positive experiences for female consumers.
- Although not statistically significant, women tend to show a stronger attachment to specific brands, suggesting potential differences in emotional connections to brands between genders.
- Both men and women are equally inclined to recommend trusted online brands to others, indicating a shared behavior in advocating for preferred brands within their social circles.

12.1 **Suggestions of the study**

1. Segmentation and targeting: It is advised that online merchants use a segmented approach in their marketing tactics, given the clear gender-specific differences in consumer preferences for price, quality, and brand loyalty. Retailers may better meet the unique demands and preferences of male and female consumers by segmenting their target audience based on gender and then customizing their product offerings, pricing tactics, and promotional activities accordingly. Retailers might create gender-specific marketing efforts, for instance, focusing on value and affordability for male consumers and quality and brand trust for female consumers.

2. Personalization and Customizations: The report emphasizes how important these elements are to the online shopping experience. It is recommended that online retailers utilize customer data to tailor marketing messages, promotional offers, and product recommendations based on gender preferences. Retailers can enhance customer engagement and encourage loyalty by personalizing shopping experiences that cater to the distinct preferences of both male and female consumers, thanks to the application of modern analytics and machine learning algorithms.

3. Quality Assurance and Brand Reputation: Online merchants should give priority to quality assurance and brand reputation in their product offerings, given the importance that female consumers place on these two factors. To gain the trust and credibility of female customers, retailers should make significant investments in thorough quality testing, obtain certifications, and promote user evaluations. Retailers should also use storytelling and open communication to emphasize the legitimacy and dependability of their businesses in order to build closer relationships with female customers and increase brand loyalty.

4. Educational and Informative Content: Online retailers should offer educational and informative content to help customers make well-informed purchasing decisions. Retailers can inform customers about product quality, pricing possibilities, and brand qualities by producing blog entries, buying guides, and comparison tools. Retailers can boost customer satisfaction and loyalty by providing important information and recommendations to enable consumers to make confident purchasing decisions. Retailers can also work with influencers and social media platforms to distribute instructional content and have meaningful discussions with customers about product quality and brand trust.

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Appendix:

Questioner:Section 1: **Personal Information:**

1: **Age**: Please indicate your age range:
I.   18-24
II.   25-34
III. 35-44
IV.   45-54
V.   55 and above

2: **Gender**: Please select your gender:
I.   Male
II.   Female

3:**Degree of Study**: Please specify your current level of education:
I.   Undergraduate
II.   Postgraduate
III. Ph.D.

Section 2: **Likert Scale Questions**
On a scale of 1 to 5, please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements:

1:**Quality:**
❖   The quality of products available online is important to me.

❖ I am willing to pay more for higher-quality products.
❖ I often check product reviews to assess quality before making a purchase.
❖ I trust products from well-known brands more than generic alternatives.

2:Pricing:
❖ Price plays a significant role in my online purchasing decisions.
❖ I tend to look for discounts or promotions when shopping online.
❖ I am willing to sacrifice quality for lower prices.
❖ I compare prices across different online retailers before making a purchase.

3:Brand Loyalty:
❖ I prefer to buy from brands I trust, even if they are more expensive.
❖ I am more likely to purchase from a brand I have previously bought from and had a positive experience with.
❖ I recommend brands I trust to friends and family.
❖ I feel a sense of attachment to certain brands and choose them over others whenever possible.