Influences of Social Media Marketing on Online Shopping Intention Among Shoppers (A Study on Customers Engagement of Online Shoppers in Coimbatore City)

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ABSTRACT

Aim and Purpose: This study investigates the impact of Consumer Engagement on online shoppers' behaviour across three key stages: pre-purchase, during purchase, and post-purchase. Specifically, it examines the demographic and socio-economic profiles of online shoppers, their social media usage patterns, and their perceptions of Consumer Engagement within the context of social media marketing. The research also explores how Consumer Engagement shapes shoppers' intentions throughout the buying journey.

Methodology: The study employs a descriptive research design and uses both qualitative and quantitative approaches. Primary data were collected through closed-ended questionnaires administered to 480 online shoppers residing in Coimbatore, India.

Findings: Respondents actively use social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp, and YouTube to discover and evaluate products and services. They value robust search functionalities on e-commerce sites and are significantly influenced by peer recommendations. The data supported all six hypotheses formulated for the study. Results indicate that Consumer Engagement exerts a strong positive influence during the pre-purchase stage (e.g., product discovery and research), with moderate but meaningful effects during and after the purchase process. Additionally, participants highlighted the importance of website features like ease of access and clarity.

Implication: The authors suggest that online retailers improve website quality, provide clear and helpful information especially for novice shoppers and regularly share updated, engaging video content on social media. Furthermore, influencers and brand advocates should expand their roles by providing credible pre- and post-purchase support and reviews to foster trust and engagement.

Original Value: This research addresses a notable gap in the literature: few studies have examined Indian consumers' attitudes, perceptions, satisfaction, or motivations regarding Consumer Engagement in online shopping. Moreover, there is limited integration of both Consumer Engagement and the design/functional aspects of retail websites (e.g., visual and cognitive aids). The study also contributes by applying the Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT) to understand consumer motivation in the context of online retail, a perspective underexplored in the Indian setting.

Key Words: Social Media, Social Media Platform, Consumer Engagement, Online Retail Sites, Uses and Gratification.

Introduction

India is tagged as the retailers 'destination. The country ranks second globally as the largest online shopping market, with a GMV (Gross Merchandise Value) of US$60 billion in 2024. In the next six years, i.e., by 2030, the GMV is projected to rise to US $170-US $190 billion. The average per capita spending of Indians on online shopping is valued at US$3,500–US$4,500, with spending on groceries, lifestyle, and general merchandise (Sheth et al., 2025). Drawing shoppers' attention with an effectively designed retail website and regularly updating it are very important for online retailers. Online retailers are adopting an integrated marketing approach that includes social media, micro-celebrities, retailers, and consumers. In this context, Consumer Engagement plays a pivotal role (Magesh and Balaji, 2018). SMP (Social-Media platforms such as YouTube, Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp, etc.) is the strongest medium for connecting and building relationships between online retail companies and their consumers (Trattner and Kappe, 2013). Consumer Engagement is a popular way for existing and potential online shoppers to review products or watch product reviews on

various social media platforms. Social Media users are actively engaging in Consumer Engagement activities, are emotionally influenced by interactions, and derive practical benefits. Through CE, consumers build relationships with the brand, the content creator, and the organisation (Thakur, 2018).

- **Theoretical Background of the Study**

In general, media studies aim to assess the outcomes of technology adoption and the application of the Uses and Gratification (U&G) theory. Applying the theory, both internal and external factors that motivate and drive an individual's activities are studied. In short, by applying U&G theory, marketers can study the behaviour and activities of audiences in digital media (Luo, 2020). The article's construct is based on UGT (User Gratification Theory). This theory is relevant to the concept, i.e., for what shoppers review on social media: fulfilment of their goals, in search of the right product, finding the expected product, and completing the shopping process online (Chuang, 2019). This theory is also discussed in the consumers' shopping intention cum motivation (Katz et al., 1974). Users' satisfaction and gratification with media use are determined by the frequency and amount of internet-based Social Media services used by individuals (Roy et al., 2009). This study aims to analyse the influence of Consumer Engagement on online shoppers' pre-, during-, and post-purchase behaviour. The article aimed to assess the demographic and socio-economic status of the online shoppers surveyed, Social Media usage among online shoppers, and to measure the perception of Consumer Engagement as part of Social Media Marketing, and to enumerate the influences of Consumer Engagement on the pre-, during, and post-shopping intentions of the shoppers.

Review of Literature

In recent years, several studies have initiated efforts to understand online shopping behaviour and characteristics.

- **The Impact of Social Media Consumer Engagement on Online Shopping Behaviour**

A growing body of research affirms that social media significantly shapes the purchase intentions of online shoppers. However, scholars increasingly recognise that this influence arises not from isolated factors, but from a confluence of interrelated elements. For instance, while Kaur and Thakur (2019) underscore the roles of technological innovation, consumer preferences for novel products, and online brand availability, subsequent studies argue that these drivers are most effective when embedded within robust engagement and trust-building frameworks on social media platforms (Vohra & Bhardwaj, 2019; Chopra & Gupta, 2020).

Electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM), widely cited as a pivotal influence on purchasing decisions (Chopra & Gupta, 2020), gains credibility through users' active participation and their perceptions of influencer authenticity—highlighting that engagement encompasses both behavioural and psychological dimensions (Tandon, 2021). Moreover, among younger consumers, shopping behaviour is shaped not only by product quality, convenience, and accessibility (Maity & Sandhu, 2021) but also by enabling infrastructural features such as seamless return policies and secure digital payment systems, which collectively enhance user satisfaction and encourage continued engagement (Tandon, 2021).

Recent literature further reveals that social media's influence extends beyond passive information sharing to fostering interactive, trust-rich environments. Relatable content, authentic interactions with social media personalities, and the dual entertainment and informational value of video posts significantly bolster brand trust (Hanaysha, 2022). Nevertheless, trust alone is insufficient without strategic engagement. Effective platforms integrate targeted outreach, credible product demonstrations, and sustained relationship-building—an insight underscored by Bhagyalakshmi and Karthika (2023).

Platforms thus function as dual-purpose arenas: they empower marketers to guide purchase decisions while also enabling consumers to evaluate, share, and co-create brand narratives (Chahdi et al., 2024). Crucially, Sahaf and Siddiqi (2025) caution against conflating mere user presence with meaningful engagement; active involvement, not passive exposure, drives purchase intent. In sum, successful social media strategies must prioritize interactivity, community participation, and two-way communication over mere promotional visibility.

- **The Role of Online Retail Platforms in Shoping Consumer Experience**

Scholarship consistently demonstrates that consumer satisfaction, engagement, and loyalty in e-commerce emerge from a holistic synergy of website design, functional performance, and user experience—rather than from any single attribute in isolation. While visual aesthetics and emotional or cognitive appeal serve as key differentiators among retailers

(Prashar et al., 2017; Guo et al., 2023), these elements must be supported by robust functionality, including transparent product information, data security, and responsive customer service, to cultivate genuine trust (Dutt et al., 2020; Almugari et al., 2022).

Although younger demographics exhibit higher online engagement (Gangai et al., 2018), satisfaction is less a function of age and more a product of the quality of user–platform interaction. Seamless navigation, interactivity, and rewarding post-purchase experiences are critical to fostering long-term loyalty (Jaiswal & Singh, 2020; Mofokeng, 2021). Emerging studies, particularly those informed by the Uses and Gratifications (U&G) framework, further show that information richness, entertainment value, and interactive features deepen user involvement—especially in visually oriented sectors such as fashion retail (Ling et al., 2024; Sharma et al., 2025).

Collectively, the literature suggests that sustained loyalty arises from an integrated, user-centred experience that harmonises aesthetics, usability, security, and service excellence—dimensions often examined in silos in earlier work. This underscores the need for online retailers to adopt cohesive design philosophies that merge form and function to thrive in a competitive digital marketplace.

- **Application of Uses and Gratifications (U&G) Theory in Consumer Behaviour**

The Uses and Gratifications (U&G) theory offers a valuable lens for understanding how digital media motivate consumer behavior in ways distinct from traditional media (Luo, 2020). Ayodele et al. (2021) observe that online retailers strategically leverage consumer engagement across digital channels—television, radio, and particularly social media—to reach broad audiences effectively.

Krasonikolakis (2022) applied U&G to identify strong linkages between media usage habits, information-seeking behavior, and actual purchase execution. Similarly, Priya and Annapoorni (2022) demonstrated that consumer engagement mediates the relationship between media interaction and purchase intention, confirming a positive association between the two. Gao (2023) extended this perspective to smart mobile learning (SML), identifying five hedonic gratifications—ranging from technological appeal to social utility—that sustain user engagement.

More recently, Sachdeva and Goel (2024) emphasized that retailers actively enhance both physical and digital environments—through layout design, virtual interactivity, and social features—to ensure long-term business resilience. Biswas et al. (2025), using U&G, found that key drivers of online shopping include intuitive interfaces, reliable product availability (across sizes and qualities), timely search functionality, and dynamic promotional offers.

Despite these advances, a significant research gap persists—particularly in the Indian context. Few studies have jointly examined how consumer engagement and online retail platform design jointly influence purchase behavior. Moreover, the application of U&G theory to explore Indian shoppers' motivations, attitudes, and satisfaction with digital retail experiences is limited. This study addresses these gaps by integrating both dimensions within a U&G framework, offering a nuanced understanding of contemporary e-commerce dynamics.

Methodology

The article is descriptive in nature. In drafting this research work, the authors used both qualitative and quantitative techniques. Researchers collected the required data from primary sources by administering closed-ended questionnaires to 480 online shoppers residing in Coimbatore city. The city has 15.65 lakh voters (adult population) across 100 wards (The Hindu, 2022). These 15.65 lakh adults are considered the surveyable population, as data from the 2021 census is unavailable due to various bureaucratic issues. Since the surveyable population exceeds 15.65 lakh, the author applied the Gooden sampling formula to determine the sample size. Gooden's (2004) formula is used because the surveyable population exceeds 50,000, i.e., is infinite (as the city's total online shoppers' data was unavailable, samples were computed from the total population). Sampling techniques were applied to determine the sample size required for the construct of this article (Siew and Siaw, 2013).

$$SS = \frac{Z^2 \times (p) \times (1-p)}{c^2}$$

Population - 1565000

SS = Sample Size (480)

Z = Z-values for confidence levels at 95 per cent (1.96)

P = Percentage of population picking a choice, expressed as a decimal

C = Confidence interval, expressed as decimal 4.10 (e.g., .04 = +/-4 percentage points)

Based on a Margin of Error of 4.10 per cent of the city's total adult population, it was determined that this study needs a sample of 480 online shoppers to have a 95 per cent confidence that the actual value is within ±4.10% of the surveyed value. The proper selection of the right samples is crucial for deriving a satisfactory conclusion from a research study (Sekaran and Bougie, 2010). Sample size is determined based on the statistical tools to be applied, rather than considering the criterion of fixing a large sample. Guidelines for selecting samples were derived from previous literature surveys (Bacchetti et al., 2011). The investigative study adopted non-probability sampling, i.e., convenience sampling, as it facilitates data collection and aligns with the ethical reasons stated by the authors for selecting this sampling method (Elfil and Negida, 2014). The sample size for the study was computed using the sample calculator (Calculator.net) (Menon et al., 2020).

Design of the Study

As stated previously, this investigative study is constructed around three dimensions that influence Consumer Engagement across pre-, during-, and post-purchase behaviour. At the first level, support is extended by consumer engagement. Consumer engagement during pre, during and post-shopping was assessed with the support of six variables (tested on Likert's five-point scale from "Very High to Very Low). The variables were named as: Pre-Purchase (two variables, i.e., PSSO (Product/Service Search Options available on online retail sites) and BDIN (Buying Decisions Influencers, i.e., Consumer Engagement through micro-celebrities)). During-Purchase (two variables-DSSS (During Shopping Support Services) and OFDI (influences of Offers and Discounts on the shopper)). Post-Purchase (two variables -PPSE (Post-Purchase Services offered by the online retailers) and RECO- Recommendation by Others). Online retail store features that influence shoppers' shopping intention are assessed using a 13-item construct, scored on a 5-point Likert scale from "Excellent to Very Poor". The variables are broadly divided into four heads, i.e., (two variables- EOAC (Ease of Access and Clarity of information shared by the influencer), four variables- QINF (Quality of Information and videos shared), two variables- PRFA (Price Factor payment option and EFCO - efficiency and consistency of information shared by the influencer)).

EXHIBIT: CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK
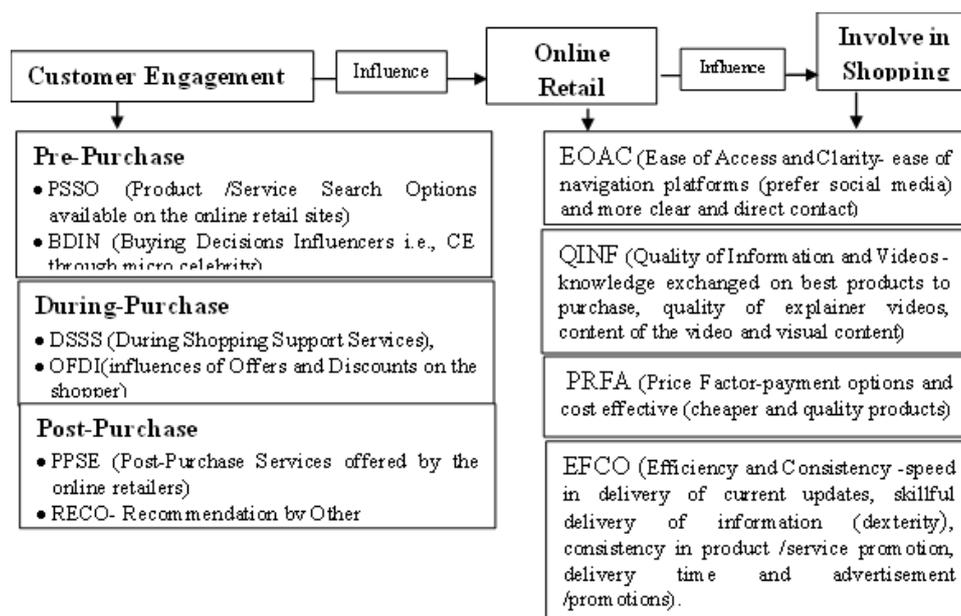
Profile of the Respondents

- **Profile of the Respondents**

The demographic status of the online shoppers was assessed, and the sample subjects were distributed as 55.98 per cent men, 43.16 per cent women, and 0.86 per cent transgender. It was observed that shoppers of all age segments shop on online retail stores, of which consumers aged 21-25 years from 29.70 per cent and proportionately distributed at the age categories of 21-25 years, 26-30 years, 21-35 years, 36-40 years and 41-45 years, i.e., 15.81 per cent each. Almost 77.57 per cent of the sample's subjects are well-educated (48.50 per cent of the sample are undergraduates, and 29.07 per cent are post-graduates). Shoppers' occupation is segmented as professionals (25.43 per cent), businessmen/women (19.23 per cent) and homemakers (12.82 per cent). Around 30.13 per cent of consumers earn between ₹.3,60,000 and ₹.4,80,000 per annum, and 27.35 per cent of samples earn between ₹.1,20,000 and ₹.2,40,000 per annum. Investigators found that 57.69 per cent of shoppers are married, 42.31 per cent are unmarried, and 58.12 per cent of the respondents live in nuclear families.

- **Reliability and Validity of Data**

Computed Reliability 0.893 and 0.842, and Composite Reliability values: 0.865, and 0.847 and AFL: 0.807 and 0.841 are greater than 0.700 (threshold mark). Indicates the prevalence of Convergent Validity. The measure of AVE values is greater than the square of R values: 0.832>0.765 and 0.8852>0.729, which indicates the prevalence of discriminant validity. Thus, it has been concluded that Composite Reliability, Convergent and Divergent Reliability exist among the variables and data tested. Similarly, the sample adequacy is recorded as 0.898 (Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy), which is satisfactory.

- **Results and Discussion**

Online shoppers stated that they widely subscribe to and source information on various products/services from different social media platforms, such as Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp, and YouTube, with more shopping happening through Instagram (59.19 per cent). Found that 79.49 per cent of the samples shop regularly online, and 20.51 per cent are sporadic shoppers. Inferred that 83.55 per cent of shoppers shop on smartphones, 13 per cent on laptops, and the remaining 2.56 per cent on tablets (2.13 per cent) or desktops (0.43 per cent). About 63.24 per cent of the samples either shop online frequently (39.96 per cent) or very often (23.29 per cent). Online shoppers appreciate the product /service search options available on retail sites (86.40 per cent), provision of offers and discounts by the retailers (82.80 per cent), influenced by recommendation made by other (78 per cent), buying decisions influencers (76.80 per cent), during shopping support services (75.80 per cent) and post-purchase services (74.80 per cent). As per the sample's opinion Consumer Engagement support them in ease of navigation platforms (Prefer Social Media) (83.20 per cent), knowledge exchanged on payment options (81.20 per cent), product delivery time (81 per cent), information on cost effective (cheaper and quality products) (80 per cent), knowledge exchanged on best products to purchase (79.60 per cent), more clear and direct contact (79.60 per cent), visual content (79.40 per cent), advertisement /promotions (78.60 per cent), speed in delivery of current updates (78.20 per cent), quality of explainer videos (77.60 per cent), consistency in product /service promotion (77 per cent), content of the video (76.80 per cent) and skillful delivery of information (dexterity) (75.60 per cent).

Hypotheses Findings

Through the act of attracting, i.e., Consumer Engagement in Social Media activities (like Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, Twitter, WhatsApp, etc), marketers can effectively promote their product, popularise, create an interest and leverage the viewers cum consumers to buy their product /services in addition to tracking their sales cum performance. Social Media marketers or sellers can collect consumer feedback and make necessary changes, improvements, or modifications to their products or services offered to end consumers. The ultimate aim is to retain consumers/customers who are more satisfied and loyal (TOI, 2023). This study aims to analyse the influence of Consumer Engagement on online shoppers' pre-, during-, and post-purchase behaviour. SEM is used to assess the association between Consumer Engagement and factors influencing consumers' shopping intentions, pre-, during-, and post-purchase behaviour.

EXHIBIT: 1

**ASSOCIATION BETWEEN FACTORS INFLUENCING BY
CONSUMER SHOPPING INTENTION AND CUSTOMER ENGAGEMENT**
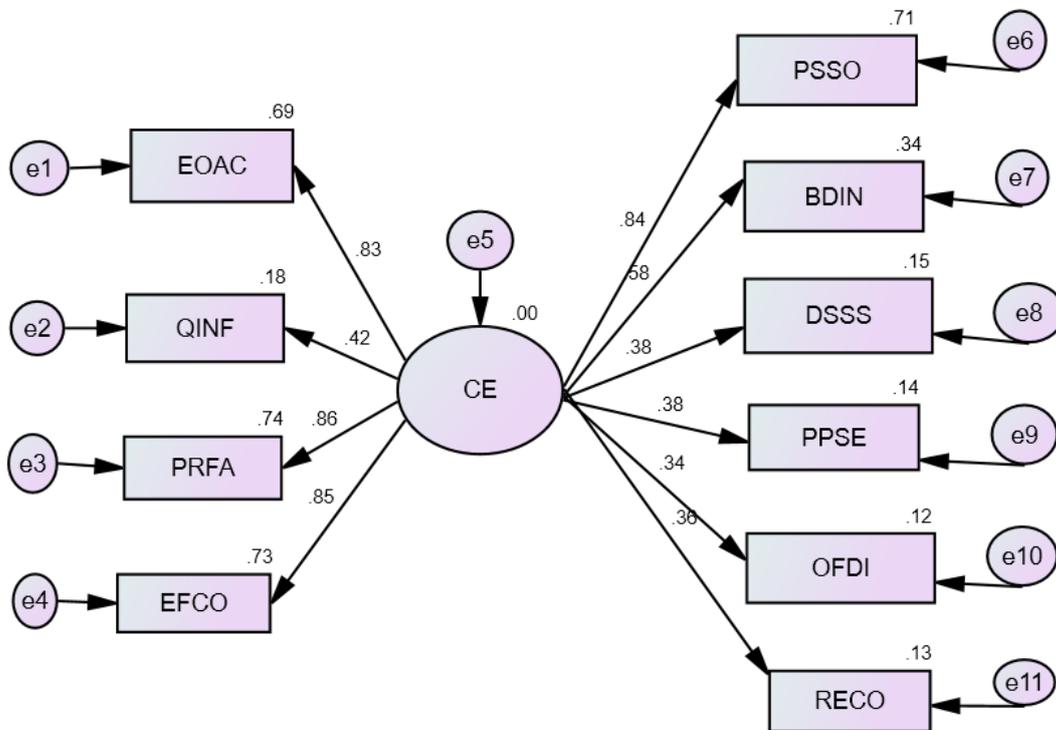
Note: PSSO- Product /Service Search Options, BDIN- Buying Decisions Influencers, DSSS- During Shopping Support Services, PPSE- Post-Purchase Services, OFDI- Offers and Discounts, RECO- Recommendation by Other, EOAC- Ease of Access and Clarity, QINF- Quality of Information and Videos, PRFA- Price Factor, EFCO- Efficiency and Consistency. and CE-Customer Engagement.

TABLE: 1
GOODNESS OF FIT STATISTICS

Goodness of Fit Statistics		Results
Absolute fit	Chi-square ($\chi2$) of the estimated model	103.709
Incremental fit	RMSEA	.004
	TLI	.993
	IFI	.952
	CFI	.950
Parsimonious fit	Parsimony fit ($\chi2$ /df)	2.963

Level of Significance: 5 per cent

For hypothesis testing, the proposed model, including all measurement items from the CFA, was estimated. The results in Table 1 revealed acceptable fit indices of the model; $\chi2 = 103.709$, $p < 0.001$, degrees of freedom =35; parsimony fit ($\chi2/df$) = 2.963; GFI = 0.955; AGFI = 0.958; CFI =0.950; IFI = 0.952; RMSEA = 0.004.

TABLE: 2
STRUCTURAL MODEL RESULTS

Hypothesis	Path			Standardized Estimates (β)	C.R	Relationship
Association between factors influencing by consumer shopping intention and customer engagement	PSSO	<---	CE	.842	13.039	Significant
	BDIN	<---	CE	.582	8.154	Significant
	DSSS	<---	CE	.383	8.038	Significant
	PPSE	<---	CE	.377	7.225	Significant
	OFDI	<---	CE	.340	7.576	Significant
	RECO	<---	CE	.357	8.452	Significant
The intercorrelation of customer engagement	EFCO	<---	CE	.853	23.723	Significant
	PRFA	<---	CE	.858	8.965	Significant
	QINF	<---	CE	.420	22.402	Significant
	EOAC	<---	CE	.830	21.975	Significant

Based on the standardized estimation (Beta β) revealed the association between factors influencing consumer shopping intention and customer engagement as PSSO vs CE (β=.842, p=.000), BDIN vs CE (β=.582, p=.000), DSSS vs CE (β=.383, p=.000), PPSE vs CE (β=.377, p=.000), OFDI vs CE (β=.340, p=.000) and RECO vs CE (β=.357, p=.000) are found to be positively correlated and significant. The intercorrelations of customer engagement are: EFCO vs CE (β=.853, p=.000), PRFA vs CE (β=.858, p=.000), QINF vs CE (β=.420, p=.000), and EOAC vs CE (β=.830, p=.000).

- **Hypotheses**

Six hypotheses were framed and accepted, and all six remain accepted. It has been concluded that there exists an association between Consumer Engagement and (i) its influence on product /service search options accessed by the online shoppers, (ii) its influence on buying decision made by the online shoppers, (iii) support extended by it during the online shopping, (iv) post-purchase services it offers to the online shoppers, (v) its recommendation of offers and discounts to the online shoppers and (vi) its influence on recommendation of retail sites made to the future online shoppers. Some studies by Chopra and Gupta (2020), Dutt et al. (2020), Maity and Sandhu (2021), Priya and Annapoorni (2022), Sahaf and Siddiqi (2025), and Jaiswal and Singh (2020) are relevant to the hypothesis's conclusion.

Conclusion and Future Scope for the Study

In the era of virtual marketing, Consumer Engagement is the foundation for successful business growth. According to PwC survey results, 73 per cent of shoppers face challenges when making critical buying decisions or selecting a more suitable brand. In this context, Consumer Engagement is considered a guiding medium that facilitates hassle-free shopping, from gathering information about a product and its sources of purchase to selecting a specific brand and making a purchase. In addition to these dimensions, online retailers' webpage design and facilities offered to the shopper during shopping and in the pre-shopping process (Kamath, 2024). Findings on the correlation and association between the variables tested, the study established an association between Consumer Engagement and its influence on the product/service search options accessed by online shoppers (84 per cent). Consumer Engagement influences on buying decision made by the online shoppers (58 per cent), support extended by it during the online shopping (38 per cent), post-purchase services it offers to the online shoppers (38 per cent), influencers recommendation of offers and discounts to the online shoppers (34 per cent) and shoppers' recommendation of retail sites made to the future online shoppers (36 per cent). The study concluded that Consumer Engagement has positive influences on potential shoppers at the first stage of shopping, i.e., finding /searching for the right product, and moderate influences during and post-purchase support

extension. At the same time, online shoppers appreciate the EOAC feature of the online retail website (83 per cent), EFCO (85 per cent) and PRFA (86 per cent). QINF is identified as a moderately influencing variable (42 per cent). Thus, the authors suggest that online retailers enhance their webpage quality, provide information for entry-level shoppers, and post recently updated videos on social media. Similarly, Consumer Engagement celebrities have strengthened their capacity to offer reviews and support before and after purchase to their subscribers, as the investigators found that there were not enough studies conducted in the past that assessed Indian online shoppers' attitudes, perceptions, satisfaction, or motivations towards Consumer Engagement, or the influences of online retail sites on shoppers (visual and cognitive aids). There is a dearth of studies that combine both dimensions. Similarly, there are few studies available on the influence or adoption of UGT theory for assessing consumer motivation in Consumer Engagement and retail sites' purchase intention, especially in the Indian consumer context. The identified research gap provided the needed scope for future researchers to continue this topic with new dimensions and add newer criteria.

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