

## FACTORS INFLUENCING SUCCESSFUL ONLINE SHOPPING IN THE CONTEXT OF ONLINE COSMETICS STORES

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**Abstract:** *In this paper, we have analyzed how user behavior, and the technical parameters of a website can help to explain shopping success. We found that certain consumer buying behavior and website technical parameters can help explain successful shopping. Also, website traffic can define the success of an online channel if the technical aspects of the website work smoothly and satisfy the consumer. Using the EBM model to explain the consumer purchase decision process, we have identified how consumers behave and what decisions they make before they successfully purchase a product.*

**Key words:** *e-commerce, consumers, shopping.*

### 1. INTRODUCTION

**Relevance.** The 21th century is not for nothing the era of information and technology, which has led to transformations and upheavals in various industries, including business (Zumstein and Kotowski, 2020). The transformation of business from a classical to a digital model and the growing success of such business models has led to the exploration of the online environment, where the most intense business battles for customers take place. One of these battles is the customer acquisition activity on websites, also known as first conversion. In order to attract website users and drive traffic, it is not necessary to use all the tools of electronic marketing, but it is necessary to know the factors that can lead to successful traffic, which would identify the successful action of shopping (Madleak et al., 2015). According to a study conducted by Zumstein and Kotowski (2020), the advantage of analyzing success factors has been highlighted as essential for the economic success of a company as part of a business. Success factor analysis can help a company to achieve its goals by appropriate means. Although in their study Zumstein and Kotowski (2020) distinguished the static nature

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of success factors through the aspects of dynamism and uncertainty: success factors are static, where success factors can be determined by dynamic everyday problems and future developments that have a high degree of uncertainty, in this paper we will consider factors that reflect a positively defined successful shopping experience. The relevance of studying online shopping can be explained by Patro's (2023) idea that digital shopping is perhaps the most important aspect of e-retailing, which has become an essential part of consumers' lifestyles. Also based on the need of today's consumers to use digital tools due to their work productivity, lack of time, and multiple roles in their lives, Patro (2023) has encouraged us to go deeper into the virtual, online context rather than the physical stores. Given that online shopping in research has usually been analyzed without distinguishing the specifics and context of a particular industry (Davidavičius, 2023), in this paper we will analyze online shopping in the context of the operation of an online cosmetics store. Also, the relevance of studying e-shopping is due to the rarity of such research, as case studies have been focused on quantitative rather than qualitative parameters of online shopping (Davidavičius, 2023). Therefore, this paper chooses to analyze the problem of how user behavior and the technical parameters of a website can help to explain successful shopping? Research of the problem: In the scientific literature, the determinants of consumer behavior, purchase decision making, and purchase have been studied by Kokoi (2021); Benesevičienė (2010); Davidavičius (2023); Patro (2023); Baubonienė and Gulevičiūtė (2015); Vaitiekūnas (2021); Masiulė (2018); Mocevičius (2010).

Clear recommendations that would be useful in defining how to develop a successful website more effectively have been made by Patro (2023); Davidavičius (2023); Zumstein and Kotowski (2020); Jakimavičiūtė (2012). A model explaining the consumer purchase decision process was presented by Davidavičius (2023) in his dissertation.

The object of the study is the determinants of successful shopping in online cosmetics stores and the aim of the study is to investigate the determinants of successful online shopping in the context of online cosmetics stores. Objectives of the study:

1. To identify the determinants of consumer buying behavior in e-commerce.
2. Identify how website traffic can explain an element of the success of a website.
3. To make a comparison of the recommendations for successful website performance in order to add an element of explanation to the success of the website.

4. To define how consumers behave and what decisions they make before successfully purchasing a product, using the EBM model to explain the consumer purchase decision process.

Research methods. Theoretical methods of data collection: analysis of documents (scientific literature). Methods for theoretical data processing: comparison and generalization. Research methodology. The study chose to carry out an analysis of documents (scientific literature), which involved working with the text in order to identify the main features of the problem under study. Perhaps the most significant advantage of this method is its objectivity, representativeness, working with large volumes of texts and the possibility of comparison (Prakapas and Butvilas, 2011). The data obtained from the analysis of the documents were processed first by comparison and then by generalization: the comparison method was chosen because it helped to collate and evaluate the authors' ideas, while the generalization method allowed to move from narrower to broader statements, combining and grouping them together.

## **2. CONSUMER BUYING BEHAVIOUR IN E-COMMERCE**

Kokoi (2021) conducted a study on Finnish women's purchasing behavior for facial skincare products. The aim of the study was to investigate similarities and differences in the purchasing behavior of young and middle-aged women when buying facial skin care products. Young (20-35 years old) and middle/older (40-60 years old) age groups were selected. The results showed that young women are influenced by the opinion of their friends when compared to older women. In terms of advertising, young women were influenced by the product packaging and the color scheme of the advertisement, while older women were influenced by the effectiveness of the product based on research results. When analyzing pricing, it was found that older women compared to younger women perceived expensive products as better than cheaper ones (Kokoi, 2011). In the decision-making process, young women searched for information on the Internet and from friends before deciding to buy a product, while older women were more likely to look for information from commercial sources about the naturalness and permanence of products (Kokoi, 2011).

When analyzing the places where the products were purchased, it was found that younger women were more likely than older women to purchase products from: grocery stores, specialty beauty or cosmetics stores. The results showed that more than half of all

women surveyed thought that facial skincare products containing natural ingredients were better for their skin than those without natural ingredients. Women with children were more likely to believe in the benefits of natural ingredients than those without children (Kokoi, 2011). When analyzing how natural ingredients in facial skincare products affect women's purchasing behavior, it was found that women were willing to pay more for products containing only natural ingredients, but less than 10% of the respondents indicated that the degree of naturalness of a facial skincare product did not influence their purchasing behavior (Kokoi, 2011). Perhaps the most important factors that motivated the purchase of a product were the affordability of the skincare product and sales. General observations highlighted in the study, which can be attributed to both young and middle/older aged women are: product samples encourage purchase, which was reported by more than half of the respondents in the study; purchase tends to be impulsive, which was also very high in the study (Kokoi, 2011).

In contrast to Kokoi (2011), Baubonienė and Gulevičiūtė (2015) analyzed a much larger number of specific factors that encourage consumers to shop online (such as website security, fast delivery, price comparability, convenience, cheaper prices, and a wider choice of products), and attempted to explain how online shopping can be influenced by factors such as age, gender, and occupation. According to the authors' analysis of the scientific literature, the factors influencing online shopping can be divided into 4 groups (Baubonienė and Gulevičiūtė, 2015):

- The first group is **technological factors**: good knowledge and use of information technology.
- The second group consists of **consumer-related factors**: attitudes towards online shopping, cultural types, loyalty, ease of use, consumer education and income, ease of use, risk and trust, supplier recommendations and customer feedback, age and previous online shopping experience.
- The third group is the **price factor** when shopping online.
- The fourth group is **product/service factors**: availability of product information on the website, type of product.

An analysis of the socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents showed that women prefer to shop online because of lower prices, while men prefer faster and more convenient shopping. The analysis of the most important factors for online shopping by age

group showed that people aged 25-34 are more likely to choose online shops because of lower prices and a wider variety of products. The study also showed that convenience and simplicity are the most common reasons for shopping online (Baubonienė and Gulevičiūtė, 2015).

According to Benesevičienė (2010), who analyzed the results of a study on the factors influencing the purchase process of Lithuanian e-consumers, it was found that the most important factors influencing the purchase process are: convenience 86%; reliability of the company 84%; the ability to shop from any place in the world 80%; delivery 83%; and a convenient website menu 77%. Also 90% of the survey respondents said that the security of personal data and 89% the security of financial data was important to them (Benesevičienė, 2010). Patro (2023) found that seven factors - website aesthetics, accessibility, trust, pricing, security, delivery, and quality - have a positive relationship with consumers' online purchase decision (Patro, 2023). However, the most influential factor in a consumer's shopping success is delivery, followed by all other factors (Patro, 2023).

Davidavičius (2023) in his dissertation investigated the characteristics of consumer behavior based on an extended five-stage model of purchase decision making, which represents the rational course of a consumer's purchase decision (Davidavičius, 2023). The most widely accepted model explaining the consumer purchase decision process is the **Engel, Blackwell and Miniard** (EBM) model, which consists of five stages: need recognition, information search, evaluation of alternatives, purchase, and post-purchase evaluation. **Need identification** - the user identifies a need to be met or a problem to be solved. Problems can be active, inactive, recognized or not recognized. Highlighting problems in practice and suggesting how to solve them is a sales driver. **In the information-seeking phase**, the consumer gathers information on how to satisfy the problem or need. In this phase it is important to identify the sources that have the greatest influence on the consumer: personal, commercial, public, or experiential. **Evaluation of alternatives** - assessing the user's options according to their needs. The most influential factors in this phase are online trust, risk perception and purchase intentions. In the purchase decision phase, the consumer makes the final purchase decision and buys the chosen product or service. Influencing factors during this stage are price, promotion, location. Positive influences on the purchase decision may include other people's attitudes (if attitudes do not coincide, this will undermine the consumer's need to buy) and the unexpected situation factor (reduced income, etc.). The **act of buying** is a real-time purchase by the consumer. **Post-purchase evaluation** - the

consumer's satisfaction with the purchased good or service (Davidavičius, 2023). In his dissertation, Davidavičius (2023) formulated the assumption that at each stage of the purchase decision, the consumer experiencing a content deficit demonstrates specific content needs expressed through the content's theme, purpose, and forms.

Summarizing consumer purchasing behavior in online stores, we can observe the scarcity of scientific papers that analyze not the general concept of online stores, but the specific field of online cosmetics stores: Kokoi (2011) studied women's purchasing behavior in relation to facial skin care products, while other authors have analyzed generic factors of consumer purchasing behavior in online stores, the results of which are also important because they can help to identify consumer purchasing behavior regardless of the field, as the business objective must remain focused on the existing and new customer and consumer and the ways to meet their needs in the most efficient way (Stankaitis, 2018). Considering that women are the largest group of cosmetics consumers (Čapkauskienė et al., 2022), we can highlight aspects of consumers' purchasing behavior in online cosmetics stores through the differences in purchasing behavior between young and older women. The analysis of differences showed that both younger and older women tended to pay more for products containing only natural ingredients. Purchases were made mostly on impulse. Samples of products were the motivation to buy the product, while affordability and sales were the factors that encouraged the purchase. Comparing the factors highlighted by the authors, we can see that the most recurrent factor was delivery and website usability/accessibility. Consumers will successfully shop in a store because of the attractive price, the attractive design of the e-shop and the attractive content placed in the e-shop. Factors that encouraged both women and men to choose e-shopping were lower prices, wider choice of products, convenience and ease of shopping. Men valued speed and convenience more than women, while women valued lower prices. The following key elements would describe the image of a potential e-shopper: the shopper should be familiar with and use information technology; the shopper should have a positive attitude and experience of online shopping; the price factor is important to the e-shopper; the shopper should find information and products easily in the e-shop.

### 3. WEBSITE TRAFFIC - AN INDICATOR OF THE SUCCESS OF AN ONLINE CHANNEL

In the thesis of Davidavičius (2023), website traffic is understood as the number of visits to a website, and successful website traffic is identified by three main aspects: the *purpose* or goals of, the *techniques used to promote traffic* and the *temporal arrangement*. *The goal/objectives* would be defined by the specific number of visitors to be achieved, as well as the quality of the website's traffic and the price that the website operator will be willing to pay to achieve the goal (attract visitors). The quality of the traffic is defined by the relevance of the visitors to the characteristics of the target audience and the response of the audience to the communication objectives of the website. Traffic quality is the true indicator of the success of an online channel. *Traffic promotion - building techniques* consist of communication through online channels (Seo) and traditional channels (social media). The *temporal arrangement* is interpreted as an element that describes the temporal arrangement of traffic generation, for example: the timing of the communication of the introduction of a new product and its launch; the duration and timing of the launch of promotional companies (Davidavičius, 2023).

According to Vaitiekūnas analysis, the traffic of website is a very important indicator with a positive characteristic, as it can show the loyalty of visitors and identify a higher ranking in the search engine (Vaitiekūnas, 2021). According to the author Masiulės (2018), the description of website performance indicators is also closely related to website visitors, these indicators describe what exactly should be considered for the effective development of online marketing: the number of total visits to the e-shop; the number of new users who visited the e-shop; the channel through which the visitors entered the e-shop; the number of visitors who left the e-shop as soon as they entered the e-shop; the percentage of users who made a successful purchase i.e. what is the number of conversions; what is the return rate of users to (Masiulė, 2018). The author also identified in her findings the main indicators of effective e-commerce: frequent consumer traffic and visitation, increasing sales, popularity and market awareness of the e-shop, and a similarly higher level of competitiveness of the e-shop (Masiulė, 2018). According to the results of the study conducted by Mocevičius (2010) on the evaluation of the quality of a website, we can observe that the quality of website is closely related to the users, their interface with the website, as well as the technical aspects of

the website, such as software, network, design, and the services provided by the (Mocevičius, 2010).

To summarize, the authors correlate: the number of users visiting a website with the quality of the website, i.e. the higher the number of users visiting a website, the higher the ranking of the website in search engines. Also, given that website traffic is an important positive indicator that can show the loyalty of visitors and identify a higher ranking in the search engine, it is important for website owners to follow the application of traffic-promoting measures in practice: to set targets (specific number of visitors) based on the available budget; to apply traffic-promotion techniques through Seo or traditional channels; and to have a clear timeline for implementing measures. Based on the authors' thoughts, the positive side of website traffic can define the success of an online channel if the technical aspects of the website, i.e. software, network, design, services, are working smoothly and satisfy the user. Although the website traffic indicator is probably the most important indicator to identify the success of an online channel, it is still necessary to determine how to develop a successful website to achieve high traffic as a result.

#### **4. COMPARISON OF RECOMMENDATIONS FOR DEVELOPING A SUCCESSFUL WEBSITE**

The author Patro (2023) recommends that e-retail website operators should take into account the following aspects to contribute to the success of the website: direct communication and conversation with the website's customers, providing them with trustworthy and authentic knowledge; a secure payment system on the website; product information in regional languages to allow the customer to place an order quickly and easily; and the security of user information and not sharing it with unauthorized persons for any other purpose (Patro, 2023). Davidavičius (2023) in his dissertation stressed that the key to developing successful online marketing is to choose between one of the main types of marketing services (paid search marketing) provided by search engine providers and search engine optimization (SEO) provided by third parties. The core aspect is to create keyword relevance, which must be reflected in the content, as search engines try to match the combination of keywords entered in the search with the content landing page (Davidavičius, 2023).

According to Zumstein and Kotowski (2020), the following recommendations should be taken into account in order to achieve consumer satisfaction during online shopping and to make it a successful shopping experience: (Zumstein and Kotowski, 2020): free shipping and free returns; discount codes that can contribute to attracting new customers and retaining existing ones; and attractive offers on relevant occasions, such as Black Friday, Valentine's Day, Women's Day, etc. product reviews to increase customer confidence and sales; certificates, awards, customer satisfaction labels and other validation imprints to prove the value and credibility of the web shop; personalized information related to the content of the web shop, such as newsletters, product offers, etc.; different sales and marketing channels; the use of a recommendation system; and the continuous analysis of the web shop data.

According to the insights of Jakimavičiūtė (2012), it is important for e-shops to pay attention to the determinants of consumers' purchase decisions, as this can lead to successful shopping, i.e. (Jakimavičiūtė, 2012):

- *Internal or psychological factors*: perceptions, attitudes, knowledge, personalities, lifestyles, engagement, values, understanding, motivation.
- *External factors*: environment, culture, influence groups, family, social class marketing (product, price, location, sponsorship) and situational factors (purchase purpose, timing, situational condition).

Consumers' purchasing decisions also depend on demographic criteria (age, gender, education, income, marital status). The choice to buy can also be explained rationally, as the purchase is usually made considering all the alternatives, but we cannot exclude the situation of reckless purchases, where the process is influenced by a variety of factors that manifest themselves differently in different situations (Jakimavičiūtė, 2012).

Thus, to determine how to develop a successful website to achieve a high level of traffic as an end result, the authors of the studies have identified recommendations that should be followed. When analyzing them, we can see that the only one formulated by a few authors, which should be followed in the development of a website, is to keep an attractive pricing policy, as this can lead to a higher level of user traffic. It is also worth noting the recommendations that may indicate the quality to be achieved in the operation of the website: providing quality communication with customers; meeting the high technical requirements of the website (secure payment system, product information in regional languages, website security and data protection); choosing paid search marketing, which will help to match the

combination of the keywords entered in the search with the content of the landing page; choosing different types of promotional activities such as: product reviews, different marketing channels; personalizing e-shop content, personalizing information, offering recommendation systems. In conclusion, there is no single recommendation for the development of a successful website, as each author of the study formulates it based on his/her own research angle. Moreover, the user traffic that would lead to a successful online shopping experience is constantly influenced by both internal/psychological and external factors that cannot be determined by the store manager.

## **5. SUMMARISING THE RESULTS OF THE STUDY USING THE ENGEL, BLACKWELL AND MINIARD MODEL TO EXPLAIN THE CONSUMER PURCHASE DECISION PROCESS (EBM)**

Given that we have extracted several different ideas from different authors, we will explain the results of this study based on one of the most prominent models explaining the process of consumer purchase decision making - the Engel, Blackwell and Miniard (EBM). This model can best reflect the characteristics of consumer behavior based on the five-step principle, which represents the rational course of a consumer's purchase decision. This model will help to structure the information and answer the question of how e-shop users behave and what decisions they make to successfully purchase:

**Need recognition:** The problem of acquiring a product is active and recognized. The following aspects would best describe an e-shopper: knowledge and use of information technology; positive attitudes and experiences of online shopping; ease of finding information about products in the e-shop; clear pricing policy.

**Information search:** consumers have gathered information about a cosmetic product from both personal and commercial sources. The commercial sources have provided information on the efficacy of the product and the personal sources have formed an opinion on the product to be purchased. A consumer may also have a personal experience of a product if they have tried it using a sample of the product, seen the product in a physical store, paid attention to the packaging of the product, the color range, analyzed the ingredients of the product and considered whether it contains natural ingredients.

**Evaluation of alternatives:** At this stage, the consumer has already evaluated the possibilities of purchasing his/her product, considering key factors such as: wider choice of

products; convenience and ease of shopping; delivery of goods; user-friendliness/accessibility of the website; format of the website; content posted. At this stage, the consumer's purchase decision has been formed, which is influenced by: a good price, a sale.

**Purchase action:** on , the consumer successfully purchases in real time the desired cosmetic product in real time, which can help them solve a personal problem, and which meets all the positive criteria of the information search, the purchase decision criterion of the price, and the other criteria of the purchase decision, such as: fast delivery of the products, the user-friendliness of the website and the performance, the price of the products to be attracted by the products, the sales, the natural ingredients, and the possibility of obtaining a sample of the product to test it.

**Post-purchase evaluation:** the consumer has experienced positive satisfaction factors after purchasing a cosmetic product (user-friendly website access, sufficient product information, fast delivery) and would consider purchasing the product again because of the quality of the communication in the e-shop; the payment system of the e-shop is secure; the product information is provided in the user's regional language; the e-shop takes care of the user's security and ensures data protection; the e-shop is easy and fast to find online; product reviews are available online; the e-shop has personalized content about the product; and offers an attractive recommendation system.

## 6. CONCLUSIONS

1. Analyzing consumer buying behavior in the context of e-commerce can help to identify the specific factors that lead to a successful shopping experience. The document analysis, collation and aggregation of data revealed that consumers seek information from both close and commercial sources about the effectiveness of a product before purchasing it. The main factors that most often motivated consumers to purchase a product were: fast delivery, convenience, and attractiveness of the e-shop both in terms of visual and content, attractive prices, sales, natural ingredients, the possibility to get a sample of the product and try it out, a wider choice of products, and the convenience and simplicity of the shopping experience.
2. A well-developed technical specification of the website can contribute to a more successful shopping experience for the user. Through document analysis, we have found that the traffic of can determine the success of an online channel if the technical aspects of the website, such as software, network, design, and services, work smoothly and satisfy the user.

It is important for website owners to follow the application of traffic promotion measures in practice: to set targets (specific number of visitors) based on the available budget; to apply traffic promotion techniques through Seo or traditional channels; and to have a clear timeframe for implementing the measures. Although the website traffic indicator is probably the most important indicator to identify the success of an online channel, there may be other elements that can make a website more successful in order to achieve high traffic as a final result.

3. To complete the explanation of how to develop a successful website in order to have high traffic as an end result, it is to keep an attractive pricing policy, as this can lead to increased user traffic. The following recommendations should also be noted, which can describe the technical parameters of a website, explaining the success of a shopping experience: provide quality communication with customers; fulfil high technical requirements of the website (secure payment system, product information in regional languages, website security and data protection); opt for paid search marketing, which will help to match the combination of the keywords entered in the search with the content on the landing page; choose different types of promotional activities, such as: product reviews, different marketing channels; personalize the content of the e-shop by personalizing information, offering recommendation systems.

4. Using the EBM model to explain the consumer purchase decision process, we have aggregated the data from the document analysis and specifically identified the behavior and decision-making processes that consumers undertake prior to a successful product purchase. The application of this model allows us to explain that relevant consumer behavior and certain technical parameters of a website can be interlinked and complementary. Thus, to make a successful purchase, the consumer has to go through five steps: recognizing the need, searching for information, evaluating alternatives, performing the purchase action and finally post-purchase evaluation. At each stage of the purchase decision, the consumer experiences a content deficit and demonstrates specific content needs expressed through the theme, purpose, and formats of the content. Thus, based on the results obtained from the applicability of this model, we can imagine what a consumer's path to a successful shopping experience looks like. The user behavior and the technical requirements of the website will lead to a successful shopping experience.

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