

SOURCES OF INFORMATION SEARCH USED BY ONLINE CONSUMERS' IN PURCHASE DECISION MAKING PROCESS

Dr. Oly Mishra

Department of Management Studies, Gayatri Vidya Parishad College for Degree and PG courses,
Rushikonda, Visakhapatnam, Andhra Pradesh

Abstract

There has been a rapid increase in the tendency of customers to shop online. The change in the socio-economic conditions and the lifestyle of people has led to this change. The online shopping process has some pros and cons. The major advantage of online shopping is that there are a wide variety of products from which the online consumers can choose. The availability of wide variety makes it difficult for the consumers to choose. The buying decision process includes five stages i.e. need recognition, information search, evaluation of alternatives, purchase decision and post-purchase behavior. Among these five stages, Information Search stage is a crucial stage. This paper makes an attempt to understand the different sources that are used by the online consumers for buying online. A survey was conducted on 856 young Indian consumers of Visakhapatnam who have been purchasing durable products through online shopping websites. The responses to the survey were used to find out frequency of using the various sources of information search and its relationship with Motive of the consumer. The study provides the suggestions to the e-tailers so that they can understand the information search behavior of the consumers.

Introduction

The pre-purchase stages of online consumers' decision making process i.e. Need Recognition, Information Search and Evaluation of Alternatives, have been studied. Once the consumer has passed through these stages, he/she develops a purchase intention or predisposition to buy a certain product. The purchase decision is different from making an actual purchase. The search of information is one of the important steps in the pre-purchase stages of online evaluation of alternatives helps to rank the various choices of the consumer which leads to forming the purchase intention in their minds. Finally the consumer chooses the product that he/she has ranked the highest after evaluation of alternatives. Once the consumer has chosen the product, he/she must implement the decision and purchase the product. There has been a rise in the online purchases over the last few years. This is because online shopping provides many advantages

that traditional or offline shopping does not provide. Some of the major advantages of online shopping are the wide variety of products offered, home delivery, offers and discounts etc. The popularity of online shopping is mainly due to the fact that internet has become easily accessible. It also provides a common platform for comparing different varieties of products, their features, prices etc. The online shopping websites have become a platform for comparison of prices and acts as a source of information that is used by consumers before they buy the product.

This may lead to delay in implementing the purchase decision as the consumer may have to decide about other concerns like where to buy from, when to buy or how much amount should be spent in buying the product etc. In the online shopping environment, the decision to purchase a product is even more difficult as the consumers are often unable to evaluate all available alternatives. So, they tend to follow two-stage processes when purchasing online (Gerald & Valerie, 2000). In the first stage, consumers screen a large set of available products and create a subset of the most promising alternatives. In the second stage, they evaluate the alternatives and perform relative comparisons among the products based on important attributes, and make a purchase decision. Thus, taking the decision to purchase a product on the Internet is very complicated as it comprises various aspects and is influenced by many factors. Consumer information search is a critically important part of consumer decision making (Bettman, Luce and Payne, 1998).

Online purchase decisions are shaped through the interactions of consumers in the online environment. Internet purchase behavior does not necessarily follow traditional consumer purchase behavior (Koufaris, 2003). Online purchase decision-making is a dynamic and highly flexible process. This kind of flexibility has been defined as “the ability to adapt the process flow on demand through adding, skipping, or sequence reordering of process steps” (Dorn et. al, 2010). Hence, understanding the online decision-making processes can enhance our knowledge of online consumers to a great extent.

Objectives of the paper

The objectives of the paper are:

- To understand the different sources of information search of the consumers’ in online consumers’ purchase decision making process.

- To analyze the relationship between the information search and the motive of consumers.

Methodology

For the purpose of the study, Primary data and Secondary data was collected. Primary data was collected through a questionnaire. The questionnaire was distributed among 1000 people of Visakhapatnam city of Andhra Pradesh through e-mail and also by meeting them personally. Among them only 870, responses were complete and 856 responses were found suitable for the study. The age group of the respondents varies from 18 – 40 years. Judgmental sampling approach has been followed to select the respondents of the study and the criterion for selecting the respondents was that they must shop for durable products online frequently. The internal consistency and reliability of the scales used in the questionnaire were checked by calculating the Cronbach Alpha. The Cronbach Alpha value is 0.773 which implies that the variables taken for the study are reliable.

Review of Literature

The second stage in the consumer purchase decision making process is Information search. This stage takes place once the consumer recognizes the need to purchase a product online. There are several sources of information search that the consumers refer in order to collect information about the product that they want to purchase. Broadly these sources are classified into External and Internal sources. These are also known as Public and Personal sources respectively. These sources of information influence consumers' decision-making process (Ardnt, 1967; Duhan et al., 1997; Gilly et al., 1998; Olshavsky & Granbois, 1979; Price & Feick, 1984). The number of sources of information that the consumer refers to before making a purchase decision varies with the product that he/she intends to buy. In the context of online shopping, the consumers' need for information is large. This is due to the lack of real interaction with the seller. One of the most commonly used Public source of information is the Internet. Internet has huge capacity for information storage, search and retrieval, information customization, and interactive communication. This makes it an efficient medium for information search for online purchase (Peterson, Balasubramanian, and Bronnenberg 1997). Information search on Internet can significantly reduce pre-purchase anxiety among consumers (Ghose and Dou 1998). Thus,

information search helps the consumers to evaluate the products in a better manner and also carry out the purchase process conveniently (Zeng and Reinartz 2003).

The different sources of information search before purchasing a product online that have been considered in this study are: Information Search from Personal Experience, Information Search from Market Controlled Sources, Information Search from Personal Sources, Information search from Public Sources and Information search from Social Media. The respondents' frequency of using different sources of information search before purchasing a product online, are presented in Table 1.

Table: 1
Sources of Information Search

Sources of Information Search	Frequency	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Information Search from Personal Experience	Never	71	8.3
	Sometimes	262	30.6
	Occasionally	174	20.3
	Frequently	184	21.5
	Always	165	19.3
Information Search from Market Controlled Sources	Never	40	4.7
	Sometimes	236	27.6
	Occasionally	167	19.5
	Frequently	278	32.5
	Always	135	15.8
Information Search from Personal Sources	Never	39	4.6
	Sometimes	174	20.3
	Occasionally	198	23.1
	Frequently	287	33.5
	Always	158	18.5
Information search from Public Sources	Never	32	3.7
	Sometimes	251	29.3
	Occasionally	223	26.1
	Frequently	255	29.8
	Always	95	11.1
Information search from Social Media	Never	118	13.8
	Sometimes	229	26.8
	Occasionally	222	25.9
	Frequently	216	25.2
	Always	71	8.3

Source: Survey

Respondents' Information search from Personal Experience:

Many people prefer to search for information from personal experience. The personal experience consists of actually handling, examining and testing the product. The consumer may want to purchase a product online after being assured about it through his/her personal experience.

Table 1 shows that among 856 respondents, less than one-third of the respondents 'sometimes' search for information through *personal experience* before purchasing a product online, followed by almost one-fifth of respondents who 'occasionally' and 'frequently' search for information through personal experience.

Respondents' Information search from Market Controlled Sources:

Online consumers collect information from many market controlled sources like advertisements, sales people, internet etc. The information from these sources helps the consumers to get information about the product they wish to purchase online. The Market controlled sources are also known as commercial sources. Internet plays a vital role in the information search of consumers due to its interactive, information intensive and convenient nature (Peterson & Merino, 2003). It is a powerful information search medium (Mc Gaughey & Mason, 1998).

About one-third of the respondents 'frequently' search for information from *market controlled sources* while a meager percentage 'never' search for information from market controlled sources.

Respondents' Information search from Personal Sources:

One of the most common sources of information search is friends, family, relatives and co-workers. They are together termed as Personal sources. A consumer prefers to collect information from these sources as they are well-known to each other and are also comfortable to discuss matters with them. This is the most easily approachable for any consumer. Price and Feick (1984) found that consumers preferred to use the Personal information sources i.e. friends, relatives, acquaintances followed by Public information source i.e. reports, for their purchase.

One-third of the respondents 'frequently' search for information from their *personal sources* while a meager percentage of respondents 'never' search for information from personal sources.

Respondents' Information Search from Public Sources:

Public sources of information are newspapers, television, magazines, reports etc. The public sources are easily available and they provide detailed information along with reviews and

opinions. According to Price and Feick (1984), these are the second most preferred source of information used by the consumers. Udo (2001) outlines that the Public Sources of information are believed to be impartial and unbiased sources of information. They are relied upon as they give the real picture about the product and also recommend whether one should purchase it or not.

About 30 per cent each, ‘frequently’ and ‘sometimes’ search for information about a product from *public sources* before they purchase it online.

Respondents’ Information Search from Social Media:

Social Media has become a source for collecting information. It is also known as electronic Word of Mouth or e-WOM. It has a powerful influence on behavior, especially on consumers’ information search, evaluation, and subsequent decision making (Cox,1963; Brown & Reingen, 1987; Money, Gilly, & Graham, 1998; G. Silverman, 2001). On Social Media, consumers become members of virtual communities which are similar to traditional communities (Fox & Roberts, 1999). It also serves as an important resource of information and knowledge (Kim et al., 2008; Wiertz & de Ruyter, 2007). Previous research shows that online shoppers tend to highly value the information that they receive from these virtual communities on social media (Valck et al., 2009). Thus, social media is an important source for collecting information.

The sum total of the percentage of respondents who ‘occasionally’ and ‘frequently’ search for information on *social media* before purchasing a product online, is one-half of the sample respondents.

Mean and Standard Deviation of Sources of Information Search:

To understand which sources of Information search are most frequently as well as least frequently used by the respondents, the Mean and the Standard Deviation of the sources of Information Search by online consumers is calculated and presented in Table 2.

Table 2
Mean and Standard deviation of Sources of Information search

Sources of Information Search	N	Mean	Standard Deviation
Personal Experience	856	3.13	1.269
Market controlled sources	856	3.27	1.160
Personal Sources	856	3.41	1.137

Public Sources	856	3.15	1.078
Social Media	856	2.88	1.179

It can be seen in the table that the highest mean is for Personal Sources i.e. information collected from one's friends, family, relatives etc, while the least mean is for information search through Social Media. This implies that most of the respondents collect information from their Personal Sources and least number of respondents collects information from Social Media. The highest Standard Deviation is for Personal Experience while the least Standard Deviation is for Public Sources. This implies that most of the respondents differ in their frequency of searching information from Personal Experience while least number of respondents differs in their frequency of searching information from Public Sources.

Types of Information Search:

In order to understand the relationship between the respondents' Personality type, Online shopping Involvement and Online shopping Motive with their Type of Information Search, the Information Search Score is calculated. This is done by considering the average of the responses given by each respondent for the different sources of Information Search. Thus, every respondent has an Information Search score that ranges between 1 and 5. A respondent who collects or searches information from many sources has given high rating to more than one source of Information Search. Hence, the Information Search score of that respondent is 4 or 5 i.e. **High Information Search**. On the other hand, if a respondent gives low rating to the sources of Information Search then he/she has a Information Search score of 1 or 2 i.e. **Low Information Search**. If the respondents' Information Search score is 3 then he/she has **Medium Information Search**. So, every respondent's Information Search score gives a clear picture about the type of Information search of that respondent. The number of respondents belonging to each type of Information Search is presented in table 3.

Table: 3
Respondents' Types of Information Search

Type of Information Search	Number of Respondents	Percentage
High Information Search	608	71.0

Medium Information Search	184	21.5
Low Information search	64	7.5
Total	856	100.0

Source: Survey

In this study, among the 856 respondents there are 608 respondents with High Information Search, 184 respondents with Medium Information Search and 64 respondents with Low Information Search. So, it is observed that 71 per cent of the respondents are of High Information Search type, about 22 per cent of the respondents are of Medium Information Search type and only a meager 8 per cent are of Low Information Search type while online shopping. Thus, it can be seen that the maximum percentage of respondents are of High Information Search type.

Relationship between Online shopping Motive and Type of Information Search of Respondents:

Motive can be defined as the combination of facts and the emotional state of a person which generates a feeling within them that they need to purchase a product. It also includes the factors that influence their choice of a particular product. Previous studies propose that the major motives of the consumers during shopping are Hedonic Online Shopping Motive and Utilitarian Online Shopping Motive (Babin et al, 1994; Babin and Darden, 1995; Cardoso and Pinto, 2010). Moreover, they also suggest that both Utilitarian and Hedonic Online Shopping Motive should be considered together to understand the consumer behavior (Babin et al, 1994; Babin and Darden, 1995). In the context of online shopping both hedonic and utilitarian online shopping motives may co-exist. This is because consumers use internet for getting information i.e. Utilitarian Online Shopping Motive and also for entertainment purposes i.e. Hedonic Online Shopping Motive (Sigala, 2006).

Hedonic Online Shopping Motive is defined as the value obtained from the multisensory, fantasy and emotive aspects of the shopping experience (Babin et al., 1994). In other words, Hedonic Online Shopping Motive is the enjoyment in the shopping experience independent of the task-related activity (Babin and Attaway, 2000). Utilitarian Online Shopping Motive is defined as the value obtained from the acquisition of the product in an efficient manner. It is viewed as a more

task-oriented and cognitive aspect of the shopping experience (Holbrook and Hirschman, 1982). In other words, it is task related value in the shopping experience (Babin and Attaway, 2000).

Balanced Online Shopping Motive is the co-existence of both Hedonic and Utilitarian Online Shopping Motive simultaneously. This implies that they maintain a balance between the hedonic and utilitarian motive. In other words, their motive to purchase a product online is not only influenced by the utility of the product, but also influenced by the enjoyment involved in shopping online.

In the present study, the Online shopping Motive of the respondents have been identified as Hedonic Online shopping Motive, Utilitarian Online shopping Motive and Balanced Online shopping Motive, based on their responses. The average of the responses for the statements about Hedonic Online shopping Motive and for the statements of Utilitarian Online shopping Motive is calculated. This is the Hedonic Online shopping Motive score and Utilitarian Online shopping Motive score. The two scores are compared with each other. If the Hedonic Online shopping Motive score is higher, then the respondent is said to have Hedonic Online shopping Motive while shopping online. On the other hand, when the Utilitarian Online shopping Motive score of the respondent is higher, then the respondent is said to have Utilitarian Online shopping Motive. It is noticed that some of the respondents have equal Hedonic Online shopping Motive Score and Utilitarian Online shopping Motive Score. This implies that some respondents are neither too Hedonic nor too Utilitarian in the online shopping motive. They are believed to have a Balanced Online shopping Motive. Table 4 provides the number and percentage of respondents belonging to the different Motives.

Table: 4
Respondents' Online shopping Motives

Types of Motives	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Utilitarian Online shopping Motive	640	74.8
Hedonic Online shopping Motive	120	14.0
Balanced Online shopping Motive	96	11.2
Total	856	100.0

Source: Survey

In this study, among the 856 respondents there are 640 respondents with Utilitarian Online shopping Motive, 120 respondents with Hedonic Online shopping Motive and 96 respondents

with Balanced Online shopping Motive. So, it is observed that about 75 per cent of the respondents have Utilitarian Online shopping Motive, 14 per cent of the respondents have Hedonic Online shopping Motive and only 11 percent have Balanced Online shopping Motive. The Online shopping Motive of the respondents and their Type of Information Search is presented in table 5.

Table: 5
Online Shopping Motive and Type of Information Search

Online shopping Motive	Type of Information Search			Total
	High Information Search	Medium Information Search	Low Information Search	
Utilitarian Online shopping Motive	480 (75.0%)	120 (18.8%)	40 (6.2%)	640
Hedonic Online shopping Motive	72 (60.0%)	32 (26.7%)	16 (13.3%)	120
Balanced Online shopping Motive	56 (58.3%)	32 (33.3%)	8 (8.3%)	96
Total	608 (71.0%)	184 (21.5%)	64 (7.2%)	856

Source: Survey

Among the 640 respondents with Utilitarian Online shopping Motive, about 75 per cent are of High Information Search type, about 19 per cent are of Medium Information Search type and about 6 per cent are of Low Information Search type. Among the 120 respondents with Hedonic Online shopping Motive, about 60 per cent are of High Information Search type, about 27 per cent are of Medium Information Search type and about 13 per cent are of Low Information Search type. Among the 96 respondents with Balanced Online shopping Motive type, about 58 per cent are of High Information Search type, about 33 per cent are of Medium Information Search type and about 8 per cent are of Low Information Search type. Thus, it can be said that among the sample respondents with different types of Online shopping Motives, most of the respondents are of High Information Search type.

Chart 1

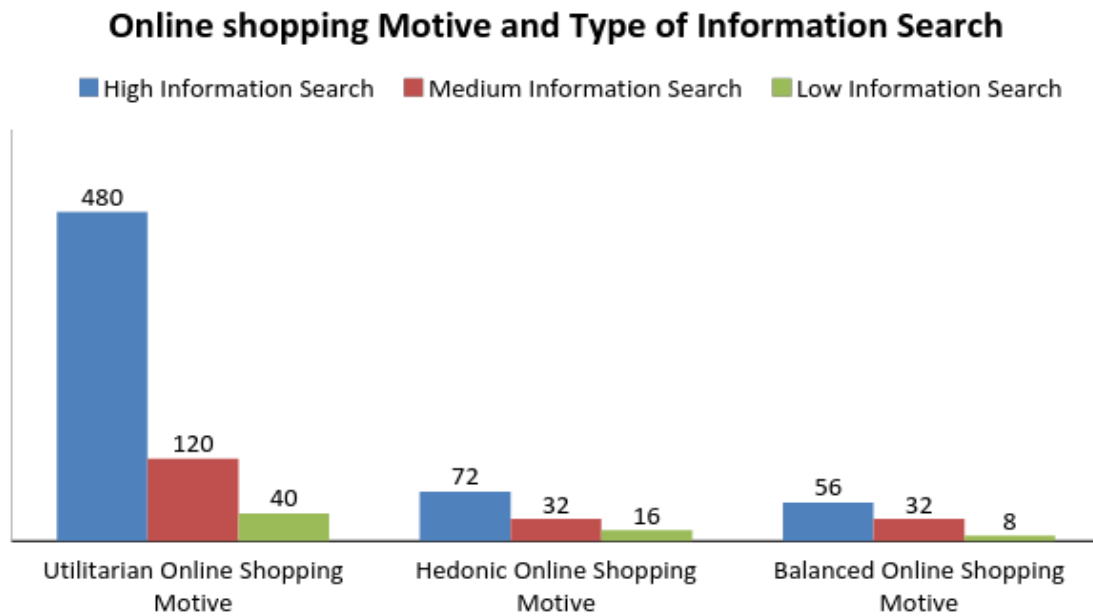


Chart 1 represents the Online Shopping Motive and Type of Information Search of respondents. From the chart it is clear that, the highest number of respondents belong to High Information Search type across all the three types of Online Shopping Motives.

The following hypothesis is proposed for understanding the relationship between the respondents' Online shopping Motive and their Type of Information Search.

H₀: There is no significant relationship between the respondents' Online Shopping Motive and their Type of Information Search.

H₁: There is a significant relationship between the respondents' Online Shopping Motive and their Type of Information Search.

To test this hypothesis, Chi-Square test is applied and the results of the test are presented as follows.

Table 6
Chi-Square Test between Online Shopping Motive and Type of Information Search

Particulars	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	22.538 ^a	4	0.000
Likelihood Ratio	20.879	4	0.000

Linear-by-Linear Association	14.381	1	0.000
N of Valid Cases	856		

a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 7.18.

Table 6 shows the results of the chi-square test of independence conducted to examine the relation between respondents’ Online Shopping Motive and their type of Information search. The relation between these variables is significant, $\chi^2 (4, N = 856) = 22.538, p < 0.05$. Thus, it is concluded that there is a significant relationship between the respondents’ Online shopping Motive and their type of Information search.

Since there is a significant relationship between respondents’ Online Shopping Motive and their Type of Information Search, there is a possibility that the Type of Information Search may vary with the Online Shopping Motive.

To test this, the following is hypothesized:

H₀: The Type of Information Search of the respondents is equal across all types of Online Shopping Motives.

H₁: The Type of Information Search of the respondents is not equal across all types of Online Shopping Motives.

To test this hypothesis, One-way Analysis of Variance is applied. The results of the test are as follows:

Table 7

One-way Analysis of Variance between Type of Information Search and Online shopping Motive

Particulars	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	6.914	2	3.457	9.233	0.000
Within Groups	319.367	853	0.374		
Total	326.280	855			

The results of One-way Analysis of variance given in Table 7, shows that the *effect of Online Shopping Motive of respondents on their Type of Information search* is statistically insignificant, $F (2, 853) = 3.457, p = 0.000$. Thus, Type of Information Search of the respondents is not equal across all Online Shopping Motives.

Findings and Suggestions

Concerning the Online Shopping Motive of the respondents, about 75 per cent of the respondents are of Utilitarian Online shopping Motive, 14 per cent are of Hedonic Online shopping Motive and only 11 per cent belong to Balanced Online shopping Motive.

The respondents have given their opinion about the Frequency of using different sources of Information Search before purchasing a product online. The sources of Information considered in this study are Personal Experience, Market Controlled Sources, Personal Sources, Public Sources and Social Media.

Among the 856 respondents selected for the study, about 31 percent of the respondents 'sometimes' search for information through *Personal Experience*, about 22 per cent 'frequently', about 20 per cent 'occasionally', about 19 per cent 'always', and about 8 per cent of the respondents 'always' search for information through their Personal Experience before purchasing product online.

About one-third of the respondents 'frequently' search for information from *Market controlled Sources* while a meager percentage 'never' search for information from Market Controlled Sources.

One-third of the respondents 'frequently' search for information from their *Personal Sources* while a meager percentage of respondents 'never' search for information from Personal Sources.

About 30 per cent of the respondents 'frequently' search for information about a product from *Public Sources* before they purchase it online.

The sum total of the respondents who 'occasionally' and 'frequently' search for information on *Social Media* before purchasing a product online is equal to half of the total number of respondents.

Based on the *Means and Standard Deviations of the various Sources of Information Search*, it is observed that most of the respondents search for information from their Personal Sources i.e. from one's friends, family, relatives etc., and least proportion of respondents collect information from Social Media. Moreover, most of the respondents differ in their frequency of searching

information from Personal Experience while least number of respondents differs in their frequency of searching information from Public Sources.

The respondents' *Online Shopping Motive and their Type of Information Search* presents that most of the respondents belonging to different Online Shopping Motives are of 'High Information Search' and 'Utilitarian Online Shopping Motive'. There is a significant relationship between Online Shopping Motive of the respondents and their Type of Information Search. The Type of Information Search of the respondents is not equal across all Online Shopping Motives.

Conclusion

In conclusion, it can be said that with the rapid change in the online retail scenario, analyzing the consumers' information search behavior will play a crucial role in becoming successful in the market. The study shows that significant relationship between the respondents' Online shopping Motive and their type of Information search and that the Type of Information Search of the respondents is not equal across all Online Shopping Motives. The e-tailers will have to understand the motives of the online consumers and then plan their strategies accordingly.

References

- Ardnt, J., (1967). "Role of product-related conversations in the diffusion of a new product", *Journal of Marketing Research*, Vol. 4, Issue 3, P. 291 - 295.
- Babin, B. J., and Attaway, J. S., (2000). "Atmospheric affect as a tool for creating value and gaining share of customer", *Journal of Business Research*, Vol. 49, Issue 2, P. 91 – 99.
- Babin, B.J., & Darden, W.R. (1995). "Consumer self-regulation in a retail environment", *Journal of Retailing*, Vol. 71, Issue 1, P. 47 – 70.
- Babin, B.J., Darden, W.R., & Griffin, M. (1994). "Work and/or Fun: Measuring Hedonic and Utilitarian Shopping Value", *Journal of Consumer Research*, Vol. 20, Issue: March, P. 644 – 656.
- Bettman, J.R., Luce, M.F., and Payne, J.W., (1988) "Constructive Consumer Choice Process", *Journal of Consumer Research*, Vol. 25, Issue 3, P. 187-217.
- Brown, J. J., & Reingen, P. H. (1987). "Social Ties and Word-of-Mouth Referral Behavior", *Journal of Consumer Research*, Vol. 14, P. 350– 362.
- Cardoso, P.R., & Pinto, S.C. (2010). "Hedonic and Utilitarian shopping motivations among Portuguese young adult consumers", *International Journal of Academy of Retail & Distribution Management*, Vol. 38, Issue 7, P. 538 – 558.

- Cox, D. F., (1963) “The Audiences as Communicators” *Proceedings of American Marketing Association*, Chicago.
- Dorn, C., Burkhart, T., Werth, D., and Dustdar, S., (2010). “Self-adjusting recommendations for people-driven ad-hoc processes”, *Business Process Management*, Vol. 12, P. 327 – 342.
- Duhan, D. F., Johnson, S. D., Wilcox, J. B., & Harell, G. D.,(1997). “Influences on consumer use of word-of-mouth recommendation sources”, *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, Vol. 25, Issue 4, P. 283 – 295.
- Fox, N., & Roberts, C., (1999). “GPs in cyberspace: The sociology of a 'virtual community.'” *Sociological Review*, Vol. 47, Issue 4, P. 227 – 250.
- Gerald, H. and Valerie. T., (2000) “Consumer Decision Making in Online Shopping Environments: The Effects of Interactive Decision Aids”, *Marketing Science*; Vol. 19, Issue 1, P. 4 – 21.
- Gilly, M. C., Graham, J. L., Wolfinbarger, M. F., & Yale, L. J., (1998). “A dyadic study of personal information search”, *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, Vol. 26, Issue 2, P. 83 – 108.
- Holbrook, M.B. and Hirschman E.C., (1982). “The Experiential Aspects of Consumption: Consumer Fantasies, Feelings, and Fun”, *Journal of Consumer Research*, Vol. 9, Issue 2, P. 132 – 140.
- Kim, H. S., Park, J. Y., & Jin, B. B., (2008) “Dimensions of online community attributes: Examination of online communities hosted by companies in Korea.”, *International Journal of Retail and Distribution Management*, Vol. 36, Issue 10, P. 812 – 830.
- Koufaris, M., (2003) “Applying the technology acceptance model and flow theory to online consumer behavior”, *Information Systems Research*, Vol. 13, Issue 2, P. 205-223.
- Mc Gaughey, R. E. & Mason, K. H., (1998) “The Internet as a marketing tool”, *Journal of Marketing Theory & Practice*, Vol. 6, Issue 3, P. 1 – 11.
- Money, R. B., Gilly, M. C., & Graham, J. L., (1998). “Explorations of National Culture and Word-of-Mouth Referral Behavior in the Purchase of Industrial Services in the United States and Japan”, *Journal of Marketing*, Vol. 62, P. 76 – 87.
- Olshavsky, R.W., & Granbois, D. H., (1979). “Consumer decision-making—fact or fiction.” *Journal of Consumer Research*, Vol. 6, Issue 2, P. 93 – 100.
- Peterson, R. A. & Merino, M. C., (2003). “Consumer information search behavior and the Internet”, *Psychology & Marketing*, Vol. 20, Issue 2, P. 99 - 121.
- Price, L. L., & Feick, L. F., (1984). “The role of recommendation sources in external search: An informational perspective.” *Advances in Consumer Research*, Vol. 11, Issue 1, P. 250 - 255.
- Price, L. L., & Feick, L. F., (1984). “The role of recommendation sources in external search: An informational perspective”, *Advances in consumer research*, Vol. 11, P. 250–255.
- Sigala, M., (2006). A framework for developing and evaluating mass customization strategies for online travel companies, paper presented at the paper presented at the *13th ENTER Annual Conference*, organized by IFITT, Lausanne.

- Silverman, G. (2001). *The Secrets of Word-of-Mouth Marketing: How to Trigger Exponential Sales through Runaway Word-of-Mouth*. New York: American Marketing Association.
- Udo, G. J., (2001). "Privacy and security concerns as major barriers for e-commerce: a survey study", *Information Management & Computer Security*, Vol. 9, Issue 4, P. 165 – 174.
- Valck, K. K., Van Bruggen, G. H., & Wierenga, B. B. (2009). "Virtual communities: A marketing perspective", *Decision Support Systems*, Vol. 47, Issue 3, P. 185 – 203.
- Wiertz, C., & de Ruyter, K., (2007). "Beyond the call of duty: Why customers contribute to firm hosted commercial online communities", *Organization Studies*, Vol. 28, Issue 3. P. 347 – 376.