

EFFECT OF TECHNOPHOBIA ON ATTITUDE TOWARDS E-MARKETING AMONG UNDERGRADUATES IN ENUGU STATE, NIGERIA

Sunday O. Adiukwu*

Department of Business Education Federal College of Education, Eha Amufu

***Corresponding Author: -**

ABSTRACT

The contemporary society is increasingly overwhelmed by the growing trend of e-marketing concepts influenced by the increasing innovations in internet technologies. The e-marketing platforms have provided efficient opportunities for consumers to surf the Internet at their convenience while assessing products from numerous online retailers. Indeed, indications suggest that technological skills partly influence consumers' unrestrained passion for the digital marketplace. Therefore, internet anxieties and avoidance could pose a limitation to electronic commerce. Thus, the present study examines the effect of technophobia on attitude towards e-marketing. Two hundred and thirty-five undergraduates from three public tertiary institutions in Enugu state participated in the study. The respondents completed a self-report measure of attitude towards e-marketing and the technology anxiety scale. The simple regression analysis revealed that technophobia is a positive predictor of e-marketing. The implications of the study are discussed.

KEYWORDS: *Technophobia, attitudes, e-marketing, undergraduate*

BACKGROUND

The growing trend of Internet usage is continually influencing consumers' patterns of shopping and buying attitudes. Indeed, accessing goods and services over the Internet has rapidly evolved into a global phenomenon (Kanupriya & Kaur, 2016). The use of the Internet for commercial purposes gave rise to electronic commerce (Charumathi & Sheela Rani, 2017), which has leveraged the activities in electronic transactions, commonly referred to as e-commerce. The proliferation of Internet technology has forced many business entities to adopt an internet presence and has triggered online shopping, which is becoming increasingly popular among consumers (Sun, 2020). indeed, the innovations on the Internet allow firms and business enterprises to conduct their business activities and exchanges with high speed and flexibility (Tarighi et al., 2017).

Direct internet business has become an essential part of almost any business that addresses an end consumer (Fensel et al., 2020). Accordingly, Almahroos (2012) contends that shopping using the Internet infrastructures offers convenience and seamless experience to consumers and hugely impacts business enterprises. For instance, internet marketing has been implicated in marketing efficiencies, overall operational cost reduction, and increased profit margin. Online marketing has been the most efficient and valuable platform for reaching target markets and building customer relations (Ocampo et al., 2021). It is preferred by many consumers to satisfy their needs (Ghalawat & Mehla, 2020).

E-marketing entails buying and selling products or services over electronic systems such as the Internet and other computer networks (Charumathi & Sheela, 2017; Kanupriya & Kaur, 2016). It includes sharing business information, maintaining business relationships, and conducting business transactions utilizing telecommunication networks or processes (Azad et al., 2019). More so, e-marketing comprises the influential role of Information Communication Technology in uplifting an organization's business and marketing needs (Auma & Candidate, 2017). Over the past few decades, online shopping has become a ubiquitous part of consumer behavior implicated in the frequency of buying and selling goods and services through the Internet. E-marketing is a form of online marketing that describes a consumer's direct purchase of goods or services from a seller over the Internet. E-marketing is conducted through an online shop, e-shop, e-store, Internet shop, or online store. Thus, it entails a contactless transaction that eliminates the verbal variables in marketing.

Consumer products in online stores are commonly described through text, pictures, and multimedia files. Many online stores provide specific links to more information regarding their products. Electronic marketing is a flourishing phenomenon that is gaining intense concern because of its significant impact on organizational performance (Gao et al., 2021). The benefits of e-marketing have been observed in consumer behavior, corporate growth, advertisement, and the overall business ecosystem. E-marketing allows consumers to make immediate purchases and ensures more alternatives and reduced prices. Electronic commerce acts as a lifeline for small and medium-sized businesses that are struggling to compete in the market in today's globalizing settings (Batman & Saraç, 2020).

Accordingly, Coviello et al. (2003) noted that the level of e-marketing practice reflects the extent to which information technology plays either a reinforcing, enhancing, or transforming role in an organization. Considerably, e-marketing is known as an emerging practice and plays a vital strategic tool in bringing sellers and buyers on a digital platform (Sheikh et al., 2018). Researchers have underscored the impact of e-marketing on consumer behavior (Andrić & Ruzić, 2010; Babalola et al., 2020; Kaur et al., 2021; Kumar et al., 2017; Lodhi & Shoaib, 2017; Pulevska-Ivanovska & Karadakoska, 2015; Waheed et al., 2017), and organizational performance (Adede et al., 2017; Bernroider, 2008; Folasade et al., 2018; Lee & Ng, 2020; Obeidat, 2021; Shaltoni et al., 2018; Sheikh et al., 2017; Sheikh et al., 2017; Somjai et al., 2019). Thus, evidence applauds the strategic role of e-marketing in the business world. However, there is growing concern about the variations in consumers' attitudes towards e-marketing most commonly associated with the use of the Internet.

The link between technology-induced phobia and technology avoidance is well established in the literature (Khasawneh, 2018). Technophobia describes the fear, dislike, and avoidance of new technology. It entails having adverse psychological reactions toward technology (Anthony et al., 2000). Accordingly, (Hogan, 2006) described technophobia as anxiousness about the present or future interactions with computers or computer-related technology, negative global attitudes about computers, their operation or societal impact, and specific negative cognitions during computer usage. The trend restricts the process of embracing and managing the numerous gains of digital interactions and relationships between buyers, sellers, and service providers. Internet use may help maintain shopping independence, marketing connectedness, and purchase quality. However, high levels of technophobia may constrain many consumers from accessing online products, thereby limiting their involvement in e-marketing. The advent of e-marketing has improved consumers' shopping satisfaction. However, it has also affected some consumers by engendering fear of complex technological skills. Feelings of anxiety and fear relative to internet usage led many people to avoid situations requiring internet use. Thus, technophobia could be a determining factor in consumers' attitudes toward e-marketing.

Attitude toward e-marketing refers to consumers' evaluative response to adopting the Internet-enabled purchasing platform. It entails a psychological state relative to the likes and dislikes of the online shopping context. Generally, attitudes describe a socio-psychological construct that emphasizes an individual favorable or unfavorable reaction towards any aspect of their environment. Attitudes have influenced consumer behavior in many domains (Bleidorn et al., 2021; Czarniecka-Skubina et al., 2020; Litvin & MacLaurin, 2001; Singh & Gupta, 2013; Tuhin et al., 2022; Vantomme et al., 2005). Indeed, consumers' attitude towards e-marketing reflects their evaluation, likeability, or activities relative to the

adaptation or rebuff of the e-marketing platforms. Accordingly, consumers' attitudes toward e-marketing describe an individual's positive or negative state of mind about buying a product using the internet platform (Chiu et al., 2005; Schlosser, 2003).

Several factors have been found to impact consumers' attitudes towards e-marketing. For instance, pricing, efficiency, product delivery, experience, websites interface, security, search engines, promotion, reliability, and trust are most likely to determine consumer's attitudes toward e-marketing (Alatawy, 2018; Dani, 2017; Datta & Acharjee, 2018; Gamage & Jayatilake, 2019; Gaudel, 2019; Kochar & Kaur, 2018; Narges et al., 2011; Reddymurali, 2014; Shah & Tiwari, 2021; Zuroni & Goh, 2012). However, the present study examines technophobia as a psychological variable that could explain the variation in attitude towards e-marketing among undergraduates in Nigeria.

A common consensus suggests that adolescents are more likely to engage in internet shopping (Choudhury & Dey, 2014). Indeed, Chris-Nnamchi et al. (2021) noted that young people are more likely than older adults to utilize the Internet for marketing purposes. For example, students in tertiary institutions are mostly connected to the Internet and possess the required skill relative to surfing the Internet. Notably, the tendency to adopt online marketing is most likely fueled by the ability to use the Internet and the availability of the technological device. Thus, undergraduates are mostly advantaged to adopt e-marketing. Literature abounds that underscores e-marketing behavior among undergraduates in Nigeria in the era of increasing internet trends (Abdulrahman & Muhammad, 2017; Ibrahim et al., 2017; Nwosu, 2017; Ojiaku et al., 2021; Oresanya & Oresanya, 2016; Salaudeen & Omotosho, 2020). However, anxieties relative to the use of technologies and their implication in the tendency to patronize the e-marketing platform have not received much research attention. Thus, the primary purpose of the present study is to examine technophobia as a factor that could determine the variance in attitude towards e-marketing among undergraduates.

Hypothesis: *Technophobia would significantly predict attitudes towards e-marketing among undergraduates*

Methods

Participants

This research aims to determine the role of technophobia on attitude towards e-marketing. The quantitative research method is used to investigate the relationships between the variables. Data was collected using a self-report measure. The analysis is based on 235 respondents from three public tertiary institutions in Enugu State, Nigeria. The population comprised male and female undergraduates between the ages of 18–30 years enrolled in different courses of study in the institutions. The rationale for choosing this population is based on the notion that they are the most active internet user group and are most likely to conduct online shopping. Research indicated that the highest technology readiness is observed in the young, more educated, and affluent population. More so, there are indications that most undergraduates do not benefit from the advantages of internet marketing.

Measures

Attitude towards e-marketing

Attitude towards e-marketing was measured using a developed 10-item scale instrument designed to measure consumers' attitudes towards electronic purchases in four dimensions: convenience, time-saving, website design, and security. The Likert-type scale is scored on a 5-point scale ranging from (1 strongly agree to 5 strongly disagree). The score on the scale ranged between 10 and 50, with a higher score indicating a positive attitude. The scale's reliability was ascertained after a pilot study, and a Cronbach alpha $r = .091$ coefficient was recorded on the scale.

Technophobia

Technophobia was measured using the Abbreviated Technology Anxiety Scale (ATAS), designed to measure individuals' emotions towards an adverse effect leading to the avoidance of information and communication technology. This study used the scale to ascertain participants' anxiousness about the electronic marketplace and the associated behavioral outcomes. The instrument consists of 10 items on a 5-points Linkert-type. The instrument contains questions such as "shopping online is very reliable" and "people can lose their money through online shopping." A higher score indicates distrust in using the internet platform for shopping. Cronbach's alpha $.82$ was recorded for the instrument following a pilot study in this study.

Procedure

With the aid of research assistants, students from three different tertiary institutions were recruited for the study. The participants were mainly pooled from the student's lodges and classrooms. A total of 263 students were approached and asked to partake in a survey to better understand their attitudes towards online shopping. In all, 251 students out of the 263 approached agreed to participate in the study. Hence, the questionnaires were administered to them. In particular, only two hundred and thirty-five (235) copies of the questionnaires given to the respondents were adequately completed and retrieved immediately and were used for the study.

Result

A cross-sectional research design was adopted in the present study. A simple regression analysis was conducted to test the hypothesis that technophobia would significantly predict attitudes towards e-marketing among undergraduates. The

investigation revealed that technophobia statistically significantly predicted the respondent's attitudes toward e-marketing $F(1,233), 37.56, P<.000$. More so, digital distrust contributed 23.2% of the variance in the undergraduate's attitudes toward online shopping.

Table 1:

Table showing the simple regression result for technophobia and attitude towards e-marketing.

	B	SEB	β	t	Sig
Constant	1.73	.034		56.58	.000
Digital distrust	-.72	.048	-.79	-15.73	.000
R^2	.232				

Note. B = Unstandardized regression coefficient; SEB = Standardized error of the coefficient; β = Standardized coefficient; R^2 = Coefficient of determination. * $P<.000$.

Discussion

The primary objective of the present study was to investigate the role of technophobia on attitude towards e-marketing among undergraduates. Two hundred and thirty-five respondents were recruited, and a simple regression model was employed to analyze the data. Results of the study suggest that technophobia is a significant psychological antecedent of attitude towards e-marketing, which is a new path in online behavioral studies. Explanation of this correlation describes the critical contribution of the present study since the growing complication of human interactions with the Internet triggers a sufficient amount of anxiousness in many individuals. Accordingly, people surf the Internet in search of products, pay various bills and assess numerous personal needs online. However, concerns relative to the variations in e-marketing, the inability of most people to fully patronize the e-commerce platform, the underdevelopment in internet marketing, and the challenges of e-marketing in the contemporary business world have motivated researchers to explore various intervening variables in the promotion of e-marketing in the developing economies. Thus, the current finding broadens the previous knowledge that those more anxious about using the Internet used the Internet less (Joiner et al., 2007). The study presupposes those consumers who are technologically compliant are more likely to adopt e-marketing in their transactions. In contrast, those who reported anxiousness in technology usage are more prone to avoiding the application of e-marketing in their purchases. The finding is significant in the growing trend of e-marketing in Nigeria. It expands our understanding of the probable explanation for the variations in consumers' online shopping adaptation.

The implication of the study

The findings have some practical contributions. First, the study results revealed that technophobia correlated with attitude toward e-marketing among undergraduates. Thus, understanding IT anxiousness in consumers' attitudes towards online transactions helps online firms evaluate and redesign strategies relating to inclusivity in the online shopping context. Although, this study was not without limitations. First, the participants were undergraduates enrolled in an institution of higher learning in one state, thereby do not represent a broader population of online shoppers. Thus, a larger sample size will be needed for further research. Second, the study could not establish a cause-effect relationship due to the cross-sectional design used. Future research should adopt an experimental approach to identify the cause-effect mechanisms.

Conclusion

The study examined technophobia as a factor that could determine consumers' attitudes towards e-marketing in a sample of undergraduates. The result indicated a positive relationship between technophobia and attitude towards e-marketing. Therefore, it was concluded that technophobia is a positive predictor of attitude towards e-marketing. Thus, the study recommends that the teachers, educators, school managements, and the governments create a robust simulation e-commerce platform using the domiciled IT departments to acquaint the students with the technological framework. In so doing, schools will create a digitally simulated online marketplace that allows the students to shop freely and eliminate the anxieties associated with working with technologies.

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