

Understanding E-Marketing as a Firm's Promotional tool: It's Impact on Consumer Perception

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Abstract

The rapid adoption of internet and related technologies as a promotional tool has made it imperative for firm's marketing plan. As internet presence is essential for a firm survival, so it has changed the way of doing businesses altogether. In this study, we empirically checked the four dimensions of electronic marketing (electronic mail marketing, web marketing, mobile marketing and marketing through internet) impact on consumer perception to make a buying decision. A total of 250 questionnaires were distributed, out of which 226 returned representing a response rate of 90%. Five point likert scales used to measure the response from respondents. Multiple Regression analysis has been applied to check the impact of e-marketing and its dimensions on consumer perception. We have tested five hypotheses for validating the result of study. ANOVA Table represents a model is good fit and predictors which showed positive and significant impact with consumer perception, were e-marketing, mobile marketing,

e-mail marketing and web marketing. Results supported the analysis that positive consumer perception can be derived through e-marketing and its dimensions.

Keywords: E-marketing, consumer perception, internet marketing, email marketing, mobile marketing, web marketing

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1. Introduction

Electronic marketing is a new concept used by modern businesses. The firms are increasingly using this newborn medium to market their product and services and sharing new products ideas and information. Firms and businesses are adopting information technology and internet to market their products and adoption has gained the attention of researchers, practitioners and policy makers (Gohary, 2012). Businesses are using internet and electronic media as support to their marketing efforts and as a result e-marketing is growing at very rapid pace. In other way we can say that IT revolution has changed the way of doing businesses altogether. Different authors have defined e-marketing differently. Smith & Chaffey (2005) defined it as *"Achieving marketing objectives through applying digital technologies"*

While Strauss and Frost (2001) defined it as *"The use of electronic data and applications for planning and executing the conception, distribution and pricing of ideas, goods and services to create exchanges that satisfy individual and organizational goals."* While reviewing related literature many researchers seem to confuse the term e-marketing with e-commerce, e-business and internet marketing. All the terms are used interchangeably, describing almost the same concept. While e-marketing is a term which is broader in scope. All above mentioned concepts come under the umbrella of e-marketing and it also includes mobile marketing, intranet and extranet etc (Dehkordi et al., 2012).

As we enter into 21st century, we can see that way of doing businesses has been changed completely and internet is responsible for such change (Ainin and Ismawati, 2003). It has provided numerous opportunities to both individuals and companies, like now consumers can purchase from a wide variety of goods and services and they can compare the prices offered by different suppliers for same product or service. So, now consumers can choose and buy more easily and readily. On the other hand, firms are having opportunity to expand their current markets and enter into new ones, introduce new product & services and compete even in global environments. Success stories of those companies who have gained a big market share through internet presence emphasized over the fact that companies should have online presence. We cannot ignore success story of Amazon.com. The company gained a lion's share of market through internet presence (Ya-Ping, 2012). Nowadays, internet and other related computer devices like smart phones, mobile phones and emails are in the reach of most of the people and even people log on to social networking sites on daily basis (Raad et al., 2010). The phenomenon has unfolded an important fact that Internet presence is essential for firm's progress and even for its survival (Ya-Ping, 2012). Against traditional marketing channels, e-marketing gives economy of businesses resources. All firms cannot spend on their marketing

efforts & advertisements in same way. Mostly firms which are smaller in size have budget limitations specified for marketing, moreover they are also facing human resource and time constrains. So e-marketing is dramatically cheaper as compared to T.V marketing (Makesh, 2013). Makesh (2013) described the following advantages of electronic marketing:-

- It provides unique segmentation opportunities.
- Easy & cheap segmentation of customers on the basis of geographical areas, preferences and purchase behaviors etc.
- It allows the firms to directly contact with its customers.
- Last but not the least, its global as companies can reach globally.

Information technology has affected almost every sphere of man's life. Internet provided the companies and individuals with useful means that help in decision making process. Now through internet consumers can get information regarding desired product from different vendors. Similarly, companies can get information regarding consumer's purchase patterns and habits that ultimately help them to form their marketing strategies (Lin and Hong, 2008). If we talk about consumer's behaviors on internet, it has been observed that the most preferred activities on internet are to purchase some goods or services and gather information (Joon moon, 2004) and look for services like investing, online banking and e-payment (Lain & Lin, 2007). The modern businesses are increasingly applying technology in its marketing activities. Its essential to understand that to what extent e-marketing is moderating the effect of market orientation on marketing competencies which ultimately correlated with firm's performance (Raoofti, 2012). As e-marketing has become an important part of marketing planning, so topic has gained special attention among researchers. Present study focuses on e-marketing and its importance as a promotional tool and its impact on consumer perceptions. In e-marketing four dimensions have been taken which are email marketing, web marketing, mobile marketing and internet marketing.

1.1 Rationale of the Study

Since the last decade, internet has captured special status in our lives. It has become an essential daily routine for most of the people and they cannot imagine life without internet. It has presented companies and marketers with opportunity to explore new ways of advertising their products or services to consumers. With the technology revolution and advent of internet, electronic marketing is considered an important marketing tool. Companies cannot ignore e-marketing while designing its marketing plan as it's a double edged sword which can create or destroy opportunities (Diola et al., 2008). The study is being conducted for understanding the role of e-marketing as a promotional tool and its impact on consumer perception.

1.2 Problem Statement

In recent years, e-marketing has emerged as a new philosophy and businesses are increasingly using internet and other such channels to support their marketing efforts. Most of the people can easily access internet and with the introduction of 3G services on mobile devices, internet is in access of every person who is using a mobile phone. This dynamic and dramatic growth of internet and information technology is signaling towards the dire need of using internet as a marketing tool. The paper serves the following objectives:-

- To investigate the importance of electronic marketing as a promotional tool
- To highlight how different medias of e-marketing like email marketing, mobile marketing, web marketing and internet marketing can support a company's marketing efforts
- To investigate e-marketing effect on consumer perception
- To suggest some recommendations for using e-marketing as a promotional tool

2. Literature Review

2.1 Electronic Marketing

Makash (2013) proposed that any showcasing action in the web ought to consider electronic marketing. E-marketing essentially contributes in the economy of business assets as contrast with conventional advertising channels. Numerous SME's can't manage the cost of the huge promoting Budget (especially in retreat), human assets and their time assets are restricted as well. E-marketing is fundamentally less expensive. Faisal et al., (2009) distinguished that e marketing incorporates utilization of showcasing standards and procedures through electronic media and all the more particularly web. Hatem (2011) highlighted, However Electronic Marketing (E-Marketing) is still a moderately new idea, especially for associations working in creating nations that have restricted assets, awful foundation, and solid rivalry and can't bear to settle on indiscreet speculations or wrong choices. In this manner, there is a need to have a much clearer understanding of E-Marketing issues and additionally its chances for such associations; and how these advances can be utilized to complete the association promoting exercises and techniques in a more viable and effective route than dependence on customary showcasing practices. E-Marketing can be seen as logic and a current business practice included with promoting of merchandise, administrations, data and thoughts through the Internet and other electronic means. By assessing the applicable writing it is recognized that meanings of E-Marketing fluctuate as indicated by each scientist's perspective, foundation and specialization. Sally et al., (2004) said that amid the most recent decade, numerous associations have added to some type of Internet vicinity. He consider electronic promoting, the most recent kind of advertising, utilizing the well known structure of the seven Ps of showcasing – product, price, promotion, place (distribution), process, physical proof, and persons – trying to assess electronic promoting and its potential commitment to promoting by and large. He presumes that whilst not every advertiser grasps the utilization of the Internet, this "new child on the square" has turned into an acknowledged piece of showcasing action. He additionally infers that electronic promoting does not yet can possibly supplant conventional advertising endeavors. It ought to be seen as an important and corresponding apparatus, and supervisors ought to grasp new innovation with a specific end goal to make more prominent worth for clients.

Shu et al., (2004) proposed that direct marketing is the utilization of the phone and non-individual media to convey item and authoritative data to clients, who then can buy items by means of mail, phone, or the Internet. Interestingly, inventory showcasing is a sort of promoting in which an association gives a list from which clients make determinations and spot requests via mail or phone. Nonetheless, most inventories for retailing firms are introduced to clients in the arrangement of paper indexes without key division configuration and usage. In

this respect, electronic list plan and advertising could be a system to incorporate the Internet and inventory promoting utilizing business division as a part of request to improve the viability of direct marketing and sale management in retail.

2.2 E-Mail Marketing

Electronic mail is an important medium for communication for marketers as it is low in cost and companies can contact their customers on regular basis. The cost factor is main reason for adoption of this media as marketing tool. Godin (1999) pointed out that e-mail has become an important activity among internet users. Due to effectiveness and efficiency of e-mail, companies are now considering its potential as a marketing tool. As per Merisavo and Raulas (2004), emails can serve numerous marketing purposes like, To inform customers about a company's products, To promote the products, To establish brands, To give information regarding the company websites, To alert the customers, and To update customers about the status of their orders. Through email marketing, purchase frequency of the customers may be increased and consumers may be compelled to respond and ultimately engaged in negotiation process with company. So it's a best marketing tool that can be used by the firms to market their products (Raad and Yeassen, 2010). E-mail marketing is some kind of direct marketing through which service quality can be enhanced and customer awareness and attention can be increased (Dehkordi et al., 2012). Pepper and Rodger (2000) state that email marketing is such tool which is low in cost and high in response and this thing has made email marketing the most useful term of electronic marketing. Rettie (2002) conducted a study in UK and proved following hypothesis:-

- *To increase consumer response, subject of email is very important. More attractive subject means high response.

- *There is negative relation between length of email and customer response.

- *Emails having more images get more response.

Above are the success factors of email marketing proved by Rettie (2002). Any company having internet existence can take guidance from above results and make email marketing more effective. Emails are significant channel for marketing as it can assist companies in building and maintaining relations with their customers (Chaffey et al., 2003). Companies are widely and rapidly adopting emails as a promotional tool because it has low distribution cost and even small and medium sized firms can afford the cost (Moustakas et al., 2000).

2.3 Consumer's perception

E-marketing for its ability of being lower in cost and great accessibility, has become an important marketing tool while designing a company strategic marketing plan. It has given raise to customer bargaining power and intense competition for companies in global markets. No doubt internet and e-marketing has great potential for both consumers and marketers but consumers may vary in their level of adoption of e-marketing and internet (Ab Hamid, 2008). The main reason for this varying adoption level is consumer perception regarding e-marketing and related technologies. Information technology has provided the companies and consumers with useful information whenever they desire which help in decision making process. Its essential to integrate overall e-marketing strategy with consumer perceive benefits, information on e-marketing, perceived convenience, security

and privacy, perceived enjoyment and quality of web site (Raad et al., 2010). Kim et al., (2003) pointed out that in order to build consumer perception regarding a specific website; e-marketing can play a major role.

From consumer perception, internet related services have the ability to reduce cost, it present a choice of vendors, deliver products or services which are lower in prices and increase consumer convenience (Ab Hamid, 2008). Yang and Lester (2004) pointed out that frequent online shoppers keep positive feelings regarding e-marketing as compared to non shoppers. Al Smadi (2000) examined possible factors that can influence attitude towards e-marketing. He found that in Jordan, consumers are having more knowledge and skills to use computers and internet so they have positive perception regarding e-marketing and company websites. It is imperative to understand consumer perception regarding e-marketing, as in online experience consumer perceptions are changing rapidly, so understanding it means marching towards online customer relationship management and generating profits for company. There are few studies focusing on consumer perception regarding e-marketing, so main purpose of this study is to investigate how e-marketing can effect consumer perception.

2.4 Internet Marketing

Internet has created new opportunities for marketers. Companies are developing sophisticated and modern e-marketing tools and this thing has made competition tougher than ever before (Ya-Ping, 2012). Companies are now exploring newer marketing channels which is a good strategic move. While marketing through internet, a special attention should be paid to product characteristics and way to promote a product. In recent decade, internet has made great progress and many companies are using internet for marketing their products as well as corporate activity (Kiang et al., 2000). In 1994, companies started using internet for commercial activities and supporting marketing efforts (Dehkordi et al., 2012). Most of the researchers argue in favor of e-marketing for its ability of being a cheaper media and capability of keeping customer data in digital form that facilitate the marketer in conducting market research (Fagerstorm and Ghinea, 2010). Internet marketing has made basic changes not only in businesses but also in individual behaviours. It provided the firms with information to understand the needs of customers and it has waived off the time and place limitations. It has also reduced the cost of product by omitting some unnecessary transaction and distribution cost (Sheth and Sharma, 2005).

The period from 1995 to 2000 is famous for the internet boom. This time span changed the way; businesses are doing transactions with their customers. As a result of the internet revolution many companies which fail to keep up with technological advances, terminated their operations and others strived for their existence by adopting internet and related technologies. As per Dehkordi et al., (2012), internet presents many advantages but above all it serves as a place for selling goods and services, these advantages can be divided in three categories:-

- 1) It serves as a media for communication
- 2) Transactions are easily routed through this channel
- 3) It serves as a channel of distribution

In recent decade, internet marketing has made great progress and many companies are using internet to advertise their products and corporate activity (Kiang et al., 2000).

2.5 Mobile Marketing

Since the last decade, mobile phones and its related devices like cellular phones and tablet computers have become an important part of our lives. For most of the people it's difficult to imagine life without these devices (Kaplan, 2012). This rapid adoption of mobile phones pointed out the fact that people have accepted this technology and now it has become an important media for communication. As mobile phones allowed communication in entirely new form, so it has also effect on businesses. Businesses are using it as a tool for interaction between customers and advertisers. Now advertisers can easily and rapidly contact with consumers (Pavlou and Stewart, 2000). Marketers are building relations with customers by readily providing them with required information. Mobile phones are compelling media for marketing as it has potential to communicate its message one-to-one, one-to-many and mass communication (Watson et al., 2013). The usage of mobile phones has increased dramatically and this phenomenon has captured the attention of researchers as it presents great opportunity to marketers that they can use mobile phones as an independent marketing channel (Bigne et al., 2005). Mobile marketing can be utilized to make customers aware regarding company goods, services and brands and build customer engagement and this can be achieved through text messages, advertising, delivering of mobile content, user generated content and mobile commerce (Watson et al., 2013).

Besides presenting opportunities, mobile marketing has some challenges for companies, as studies proved that consumers find mobile marketing irritating (Makesh, 2007) and interference with their privacy (Windham and Orton, 2002). So it has been agreed that there should be permission based marketing on mobiles (Stewart and Pavlou, 2002). Privacy issues are related to mobile marketing as mobiles are personal in nature (Brown, 2006). Consumers may be reluctant to share their personal data and information for sake of safety and this may rise to the issue of trust related mobile marketing. Moreover, there may be customers who are not comfortable with the products, services, ideas etc being promoted via mobile marketing (Varnali and Toker, 2010).

Besides having above issues, mobile phone devices have great potential for marketers as many people rely upon their mobiles for communication and entertainment purposes (Watson et al., 2013). It presents the organizations with greatest opportunity as marketers can reach their customers anytime and anywhere (Persaud and Azhar, 2012).

2.6 Web Marketing

Internet marketing is all about developing a robust and attractive webpage which is scale in traffic because a firm planning to expand its business through online presence needs to pay special attention to deliver quality online experience. Dysfunctional and poorly designed websites are potential threats to company's online existence as well as physical activities (Constantinides, 2004). There is growing consensus about commercial websites of companies. As Hwang et al., (2003), in his study visited websites of 160 companies and found that most of them were functional like traditional marketing techniques. While Singh and

Dalal (1999) pointed out that ad on company homepages are just like other physical advertising messages on bill boards. Consumers incidentally come across pop-up or banner ads. Companies are required to design such websites that compel the consumers to access the site. Moreover it's suggested that processing of sites may be centralized so that information on site may be considered and evaluated. It is helpful for both individuals and advertisers as websites process unlimited amount of information and consumers select only that information which is related to their concerns (faber et al., 2004).

2.6.1 Banner Ads

Banner ads are graphical image of rectangular shape which is displayed on HTML page at top, bottom or sides of web page. Now days, banner ads are largely used for advertisement on internet. Attractive and misleading messages are used in these ads which compel the consumers to click the ad (faber et al., 2004). Base on the literature, banner ads have rarely positive effect. Like when users are looking for something important on internet these animated and colorful banners divert their attention and it is called banner blindness (Dehkordi et al., 2012). That's why most of the researchers are questioning over the effectiveness of banner ads (Cross, 1999).

On the other hand some researchers highlight the positive effect of this format. Brigg and Hollis (1997) state that banner ads may function like bill board in traditional marketing, it can be used to increase the brand awareness and reinforce the brand message to existing users. He further proved in his experimental study that static banner ads may help to enhance brand awareness, brand strength and customer loyalty.

Some papers proved that animated banners have positive effect and some argue in favor of large banners as compared to small one. There are studies which suggest that fast moving banners have better click rate and for some, task base banners have better response rate (Rossiter and Bellman, 1999).

2.6.2 Pop-Up Ads

Pop-ups are another type of online ads which appear in separate window and over the top of the content which is being viewed by user. These are not closed until user actively blocks it (faber et al., 2004). As compared to banner ads, pop-up ads capture more favorable consumer's behavior towards ads and brand and result in high purchase intention (Cho et al., 2001). Again pop-up ads are considered irritating as they divers user attention from their activity. On the other hand, Manchanda et al., (2006) investigated that pop-up promotions have some qualities which are helpful to improve customer response on internet. Anna (2006) described that pop-ups can be both mobile and event driven. Pop-ups promotions are like guerilla marketing. Edward et al., (2002) found that consumers perceive pop-ups less irritating when they provide value to them. The best time to use pop-up ads when a new product is launched, so customer can get information about product through pop-up (Bargqvist and Leinoff, 2011).

3. Hypotheses

H1: E-Marketing helps the consumer to build up positive perception.

H2: Web Marketing has significant impact on customer to make purchase decision

- H3:** Email Marketing has an association with consumer perception
- H4:** Internet Marketing has changed consumer perception
- H5:** Mobile Marketing has positive impact on consumer perception

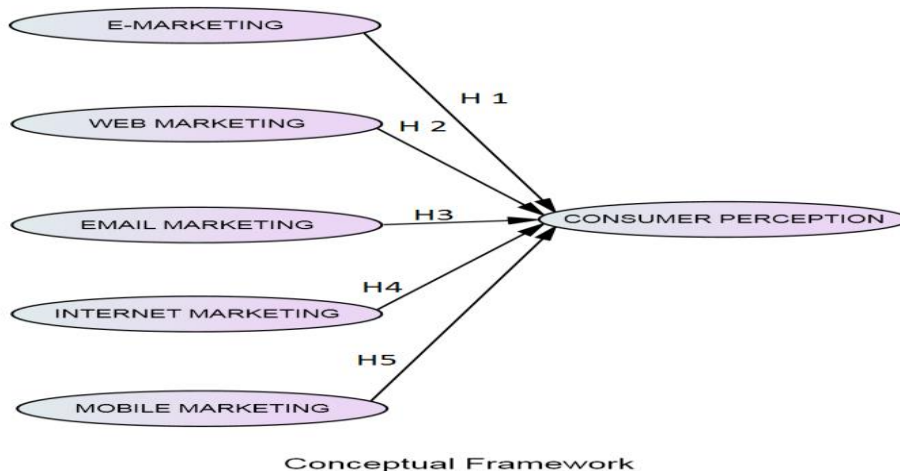
3.1 Conceptual Frame work

The present study formulated the following conceptual model on the basis of hypotheses for better understanding of E-marketing and its dimension’s effects on consumer perception to make buying decision of specific products and services.

Fig. 1 Conceptual Framework

4. Methodology

The nature of study is quantitative intended to develop better



understanding of customer perception regarding E-marketing and its dimensions. Individuals were the unit of analysis who belong to different fields of life and experienced E-marketing as building their perception. Sample size of present research was 226 respondents who are well aware of E-marketing and its dimensions. To test the hypothesis, data was collected from individuals through structured adapted questionnaire focusing on E-Marketing and Consumer perception and a total of 226 participants responded to the questions stated in the structured questionnaire. A total of 250 questionnaires were distributed to the individuals who have knowledge about e-marketing in Faisalabad. We received 226 fairly filled questionnaires with a response rate of 90%. Each construct was rated on five point likert scale stated 1= strongly disagree, 5= Strongly Agree.

Initially, questionnaire is checked by conducting a pilot survey of 50 respondents, who showed no confusion in answering the questions stated in structure questionnaire. The variables were measured as follows; E-Marketing was measured on 5 items (Cronbach’s $\alpha=.72$), Web Marketing was measured on 5 items (Cronbach’s $\alpha=.69$), Internet Marketing was measured on 5 items (Cronbach’s $\alpha=.71$), Email marketing was measured on 3 items

(Cronbach’s $\alpha=.80$), Consumer Perception was measured on 8 items (Cronbach’s $\alpha=.78$) and Mobile Marketing was measured on 6 items (Cronbach’s $\alpha=.819$). Statistical Package SPSS 20.0 was used for data analysis.

Following is the table for Demographic Statistics.

Demographics	Frequency	Percentage*
Gender		
Male	145	64.2
Female	81	35.8
Age		
16.....25	146	64.6
26.....35	69	30.5
36.....45	11	4.9
Above 45		
Education		
Matriculation	4	1.8
Intermediate	21	9.3
Graduation	141	62.4
Masters	60	26.5
Total Sample Size	226	100

Note:* Percentages based on totals of each characteristic

Table I. Summary of the characteristics of respondents

5. Finding & Results

First, data was checked for normality, outliers and multicollinearity, however no such discrepancy observed. Multiple linear Regressions were implied to see what factors influence consumer perceptions of what makes an effective E-marketing. Therefore, multiple linear regressions were performed with Consumer perception as the criterion variable. Predictor of research was E-Marketing and its dimensions. The results indicated a significant regression model ($p<.001$) and explained that 31% variation by the predictors on criterion variable. As shown in Table II, Variables that has a statistically positive association with Consumer Perception were: E-marketing ($p<.01$), Web Marketing ($p<.01$), Email Marketing ($p<.01$), Mobile Marketing ($p<.05$) and age ($p<.05$).

Factor	Consumer perception beta
E-Marketing	.247*
Web Marketing	.201*
Email Marketing	.263*
Mobile Marketing	.20**
Age	.18**
Diagnostics	
R Square	.31
Adjusted R Square	.28

Std. Error of the Estimate

2.83

Note: * Beta Significant at p value < 0.01

** Beta Significant at p value < 0.05

Table II. Multiple linear Regression results

For age, a positive relationship was revealed with consumer perception that suggested consumer in age bracket (16.....25) viewed as E-marketing create a positive impact on consumer's perception as compare to other age categories.

6. Conclusion & Recommendation

The research has provided a deep insight into the concept of e-marketing. Four dimensions of e-marketing can be used to provide better quality, product and services to their customers. The research has thoroughly described the importance of e-marketing and its dimensions e-mail marketing, mobile marketing and web marketing for stimulating positive consumer perception. The research supported the view that marketing efforts should be switched from traditional marketing channels to e-marketing. The research results show that e-marketing has an important significant role as a firm's promotional tool and different modes of e-marketing play a role of helping hand for the fulfillment of this objective.

Basically traditional marketing is in practice from many years so companies would have to work harder to switch the marketing efforts from traditional to e-marketing. Consumer perception regarding the e-marketing can be converted into positive way if companies and consumers connected on continuous basis to share their information and solve all ambiguities.

- Due to the widespread use of mobiles, smart phones and tablets, it's necessary for companies to create content that's accessible & user friendly to mobile users. Otherwise, it's easy to lose customers to competitors who have already adapted this trend. According to recent reports, 40% of the users go online through mobile devices. From this, we can say that mobile is the future of marketing, but the era of mobile has already arrived. We can expect this trend to continue even further in the future.
- As the majority of the consumers value comfort and convenience. So companies can effectively use this tool to facilitate their consumers at home by maintaining up to date information on their websites.
- Online Surveys should be conducted by the companies to know about the preferences of the consumers. Brand preference can be created by e-marketing and discounts & free gifts will enhance the sale of the product.
- Availability of electronic media is necessary so that companies can get accurate data regarding their consumers. "YOU Must Message Customers as Thoughtfully as You Do Friends". This concept should be considered by the organizations to take a complete advantage of e-marketing.
- E-marketing is considered the best communication tool that works as bridge between companies and the consumers. Companies are using this tool but to a limited extent i.e. one way communication with the customers. Companies can improve the efficiency and effectiveness of this strong tool with little effort and ease by getting consumers feedback. This two-way communication process will ultimately help for enhancing the

capability of this media.

Future research will be done to explore more dimensions of E-marketing and Convenience sampling technique applied to get response from customer. Other technique can also be applied for future research. Future study of this research could be analyzing the preferences of people of specific region or country to have better understanding of perception of people of that specific area to utilize the electronic business according to their preference and taste.

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