
**AN ASSESSMENT OF E SHOPPING PREFERENCE AND
AWARENESS: THE CASE OF UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS
OF IBRAHIM BADAMASI BABANGIDA UNIVERSITY
LAPAI, NIGER STATE, NIGERIA**

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ABSTRACT

The internet has immensely fast tracked the pace, ease, and scope of communication and business in the world today thereby reducing geographical barriers that once existed in retail trading. Online shopping is a system of trading carried out over the internet with little or no face to face contact with the buyer and seller. Increased adoption rate of online shopping is attributable to increased access to internet and the benefits inherent in online shopping system. In Nigeria, the widespread availability of internet enabled devices has improved internet access, online shopping, its awareness and preferences. The resulting effect of this on the conventional system is expected to be adverse. These effects are less obvious in Niger state and it is in light of this that the study sought to evaluate Awareness and Preference for online shopping in Niger state. To achieve this, a survey research design method was adopted utilizing a structured questionnaire with 5-points Likert scale. Using multi-phase sampling method,

the population and sample of the study consisted of undergraduate students of Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida University Lapai, Niger state. Statistical tools such as relative frequencies, percentages, means, standard deviations, Pearson's correlation and Chi-Square statistic were used to describe and analyze the data via Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS 22). The study found and concluded that, most respondents have never experienced online Shopping. It also found that respondents have high awareness level, moderate preference level, a moderate relationship between awareness and preference, and statistically significant evidence was not found to conclude that there is no difference in preference levels among those who have used and those who have not used the system. The study thus recommended that online vendors improve their security measures, privacy policies, and also simplify the shopping process in order to reduce cases of fraud, boost confidence and win the trust of customers. Also recommended is a comprehensive awareness campaign by vendors to further educate consumers about the system in terms of its, benefits as well as how to use Online Shopping system.

Keywords: Consumer, Consumer Awareness, Consumer Preference, Online, Offline, Online Shopping

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INTRODUCTION

The process of globalization has been largely facilitated by the advent and commercialization of internet in the early 90s. Individuals, corporate bodies and Governments utilize the internet as a platform for communication and transaction thereby removing the barrier of geographical location between those with mutual interests. As opined by Nawaz and Alajmi (2014), Technology based internet has shortened the gap between continents, countries, cities, towns, villages and people. Online Shopping which utilizes the internet as the platform for its operations embodies all the benefits and ease inherent in the use of internet. This system has attained immense popularity in recent times, mainly because people find it convenient and easy to shop from the comfort of their home or office and also eased from the trouble of moving from shop to shop in search of the goods of choice (Saha 2015). These benefits however, have influenced individuals' preference for Online Shopping. According to Mawoli (2014), consumer preference represents a situation whereby an individual consumer who has a need to satisfy is confronted with several alternative brands to evaluate using certain criteria and in the end develops stronger likeness for one of the brand which is finally purchased for use.

In line with this, the conventional system of shopping is becoming less preferred means of shopping as compared to

Online Shopping. In addition, it can be deduced that increased availability or adoption of the internet service implies increased awareness which in turn should translate into increased preference. In Nigeria, Internet users has risen from since the years 2000 when people still visit the cyber café to access internet. Now a significant amount of people have mobile phones which are internet enabled. It is expected that increased awareness and preference for Online Shopping should result in some adverse effect on the brick and mortar shops as evidenced from a study conducted by Abdulrahman and Muhammad (2016) in Niger state. This study found that, Online Shopping affects offline small scale trading in several ways such as price fall, decline in profitability, increased requests for discounts by customers, increased window shopping, reduced store traffic and stimulates offline traders to diversify into online trading platform or a more technology driven operation system. However, it is observed that the brick and mortar shops or conventional shopping complexes are rather increasing suggesting a partial or minimal effects as well as awareness and preference levels in Niger State. It is in the light of this Therefore, this study seeks to;

- i. Determine whether or not there exists a relationship between awareness and preference for Online Shopping.
- ii. Determine whether there exists a significant variation in preference for Online Shopping among individuals who have and have not experienced Online Shopping.

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- iii. Determine the major factors that influence individuals' preference for Online Shopping.

The study however, has the following Null hypotheses;

H₀₁: There is no significant relationship between awareness for Online Shopping and preference for Online Shopping among individuals.

H₀₂: There is no significant difference in preference for Online Shopping among individuals who have and have not experienced Online Shopping before.

Literature Review

The advent of internet has changed lives and the way business is conducted in the 21st century. Many entrepreneurs are turning to the internet to expand their businesses or launch a new venture (Daft, 2012). The Internet's impact on people has been profound particularly with respect to buyers, who are starting to use the Internet as a new medium to trade and purchase goods and services (Mahbur, 2014). These transaction or trade conducted through the internet is known as Online Shopping or e purchases. In other words, Online Shopping is a form or e commerce which entails the purchase of products (goods or services) over the internet. According to Jusoh and Ling (2012), Online Shopping is the process of buying goods and services from merchants who sell on the

internet. In line with this, Abdulrahman and Muhammad (2016) opined that Online Shopping system is one of the most notable breakthroughs of technology in the world of business today which is an alternative and highly promising system of trading characterized by absence of face to face interaction between the buyer and seller but through the intermediation of technology gadgets particularly the internet. Basically, individuals use a web browser enabled devices like computers (laptops or desktops), smart phones and tablets to visit various online vendors to find the desired products and initiate a transaction which will be paid for via several means such as credit cards, debit cards, PayPal, cheque, postal money order, Bitcoin (crypto-currencies) and even cash on delivery. However the option of payment method is not universal but varies from country to county. Whitley (2000) describes the basic Online Shopping process as search, order, pay, delivery and after sale services. It is noteworthy that payment could be made before or after delivery depending on the method adopted or available. In furtherance, products purchased online, particularly physical products are delivered most popularly by shipping. In any case a customer provides an address for the delivery and a postal system or courier such as FedEx, DHL, and UPS delivers to the address.

Furthermore, Online Shopping has several advantages and disadvantages that influence some individuals to patronize the system but discourage others. Some of its major advantages includes; Convenience, Time saving, 24/7 service availability,

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wide variety of products, absence compulsive or aggressive marketing, easy for comparison of prices, more suitable for purchases of personal products and absence of crowd. It also has certain weaknesses inherent in it such as total absence of physical examination of product as at time of purchase, takes longer to receive the product than in the conventional shopping, and buyer cannot bargain neither can sellers extend credit to customers.

Online Shopping in Nigeria: A brief overview

In comparison to the developed countries, Online Shopping in Nigeria is less developed. However, there has been a tremendous growth and development of this system in Nigeria in the past few years. Dated back to the early 2000s, Online Shopping in Nigeria had suffered from low patronage due to inadequate or non-availability of internet access. During this period, Online Shopping was an activity dominated by those who are highly literate in the use of computer. However the situation has improved as evidenced in the study conducted by Philip consulting in 2014 which revealed that consistently rising numbers of internet-enabled devices and decreasing cost of internet-enabled mobile phones, along with the desire to connect with loved ones are all drivers for increased internet adoption in Nigeria". So also, to support the Nigerian vision of being amongst the top 20 economies by the year 2020, the apex bank of Nigeria (CBN) proposed a cashless policy scheme

whose aim is to drive development and modernization of the current payment system which seeks to reduce the use of physical cash and increase the adoption of various electronic portals for financial transactions that will positively correlate with economic development and will be a key enabler for online retailing. Despite this, the findings of Philip consulting (2014) reveals that many Nigerians are yet to embrace the culture of Online Shopping as evidenced from 62% of the total respondents positing that they still prefer to shop through the conventional brick and mortar shops. In line with the growth and development of Online Shopping in Nigeria is the proliferation of Online Shopping stores in Nigeria today such as Konga.com, Jumia.com, DealDey, kravex, Slot, and a host of others. This proliferation in e shops depicts a significant growth of Online Shopping in Nigeria. Despite the tremendous increase in access to internet in Nigeria, several Problems and difficulties still frustrates it development such as; internet security challenges, poor internet network, poor state of infrastructure (power), insufficient knowledge on how to use Online Shopping, and resistance to change by some individuals who still prefer the old methods of shopping.

Concept of Consumer Awareness

On the one hand, a consumer is an individual or group of individuals who buys a product not for resale purposes but for use. On the other hand, the word awareness literarily means having knowledge about something. Therefore, at a basic level,

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consumer awareness can be seen as the knowledge an individual or group has about the product he/she patronizes for use. Specifically, according to the National Institute of Open Schooling (2012:115), Consumer awareness refers to the combination of the knowledge of a product purchased by the consumers in terms of its quality, various types of hazards and problems associated with the product, Consumer Rights, and consumer's own responsibilities. As opined by Abdolvand, Farzin, Asl and Sadeghian (2016), consumers who are aware of their rights and responsibilities make conscious purchase decisions and are protected against exploitation by businesses as such, as they become more aware, they become a force to be reckoned with in the development and provision of goods and services. Consequently consumer awareness levels influences consumer behavior and also a key factor which determines whether or not a consumer will hold a degree of preference for a particular product.

Consumer Preference for Online Shopping

An individual's preference for a particular product over another basically results from the perceived benefits and ease attributable to such product. Anitha (2015) opined that Preferences for online retailing among consumers may vary from product to product and also with respect to different age groups. However, despite the variations in preference in terms of products, Online Shopping is generally influenced by those

factors which make it superior, more convenient or easier to use than the offline shopping. As Mawoli (2014) opined, consumer preference represents a situation whereby an individual consumer who has a need to satisfy is confronted with several alternative brands to evaluate using certain criteria and in the end develops stronger likeness for one of the brand which is finally purchased for use. In this context therefore, online shopping system and the conventional offline systems represents products from which a consumer chooses which is preferred for use.

Influencing Factors of Preference for Online Shopping: Review of Related Studies

Katawetawaraks (2011) in his study "Online shopper Behavior; influences of Online Shopping Decision" opined that the motivations that lead consumers to buy online rather than offline can be categorized as convenience, information, available products and services, and cost and time efficiency.

A study conducted by Philip Consulting (2014:19) titled "Online Shopping report; a study of current trends in Online Shopping in Nigeria" revealed that consumers hold some degree of preference for Online Shopping for such reasons as; 24 hours shopping experience, more product information, lower prices offered, variety of products, better discount, and availability of other customers review on products.

Anitha (2015) studied consumer preference towards online retailing in Chennai, India. Factors such as convenience,

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product selection, Price, ability to find more personalized services, home page, trust, and fun were identified as determinants for Online Shopping preference.

Nawaz and Alajmi (2014) in their study titled "A study on consumer Preferences for E shopping with reference to Bahraini consumers" identified some major reasons why people hold some level of preference for Online Shopping. These includes time saving, easy payment, display of many product options to choose from, information about product, and 24/7 accessibility to E shopping. Specifically to Bahraini consumers however, the reasons included wide variety of products, less prices, and time saving.

Banu et.al (2014) carried out a study on Customer Preference Towards Online Shopping highlighting the influencing factors of consumer preference for Online Shopping as time saving, 24/7 availability, lower prices and product information.

Kumar and Misra (2015) studied 1200 shoppers' preference for Online Shopping in two cities of Andhra Pradesh using exploratory factor analysis. The study found that the major factors that influences consumer preference for Online Shopping are Economic factors (cheap prices, price comparison, discounts, free delivery etc.), Product related factors (wide product availability, more convenience for sensitive product, availability of limited edition products, etc.),

Online Shopping system convenience (24/7 availability, easy return policy, ability to shop from anywhere etc.), and retailer credibility factors.

Uddin and Sultana (2015) studied consumer preference on online Purchasing: an attitudinal Survey in Bangladesh. The study found that sampled respondents have positive attitudes towards Online Shopping which is mainly due to convenience in terms of less time consuming and hassle free shopping. It also found that Age, Gender, Income, Profession/occupation, family structure and ICT familiarity are critical factors for preferring Online Shopping.

METHODOLOGY

This study employs a survey research design method to gather data for analysis. A structured questionnaire with 5-points Likert scale was developed and administered in order to achieve the objective of the study. The population of the study consists of undergraduate students of Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida University Lapai, Niger state. A multi-phase sampling technique was used to identify two faculties namely faculty of Education and Arts, and Faculty of Management and Social Science. Six departments were sampled from these faculties and a total sample size for the study was drawn using Yamane formula to arrive at 363 students as presented below.

Yamane formulae for sample size: Sample size **(n)** = $\frac{N}{[1+N(e^2)]}$

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Where N = population size n = sample size and e = level of precision or confidence level

N = 3,884, e = 95% confidence level (0.05), n =?

$$n = \frac{N}{[1+N(e^2)]} = \frac{3,884}{[1+3,884(0.05^2)]} = \frac{3,884}{[1+3,884(0.0025)]} = \frac{3,884}{[1+9.71]} = \frac{3,884}{[10.71]} =$$

362.65 approximately 363

TABLE 1: Population And Sample Size Of Selected Faculties And Departments

Faculty	Sampled Departments	No. of Students	Proportion of depts. to population & sample size
FEA	Continuing Education & Community dev.	813	(21% of 363) = 76
	Education & Counseling Psychology	915	(23.6% of 363)= 86
	Sport Science & Health Education	211	(5.4% of 363) = 20
FMSS	Business Admin/Accounting	769	(20% of 363) = 73
	Economics	540	(14% of 363) = 50
	Sociology	636	(16% of 363) = 58
Totals		N=3884	n=363

Key: FEA=Faculty of Education and Arts; FMSS=Faculty of Management and Social Science

Source: Student Data ID card Capture Schedule, ICT Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida University Lapai, Niger State.

In furtherance, Statistical tools such as relative frequency, percentages, mean, and standard deviation was used to

describe and analyze the data. IBM Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS 22) was used to perform Pearson's correlation to test hypothesis 1 and Chi-Square statistic to test hypotheses, 2.

Response Rate and Completion Rate

A Total of 363 questionnaires was administered and retrieved (100% response rate). However, the completion rate stood at 87.6% (318 questionnaires) due to 45 questionnaires representing 12.4% which were not filled out completely as such was invalidated. Thus, only questionnaires with 100% completion rate were analyzed via IBM SPSS Statistics version 22.

Reliability Test

The reliability of an instrument refers to the extent to which such instrument continues to measure what it is expected to measure. In order to ensure reliability, methods such as test-retest reliability or Cranach's alpha test can be conducted. However, for this study, the Cronbach's Alpha test was computed and the result is presented below in table 2.

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TABLE 2: Reliability Analysis Result

Variable	Cronbach's Alpha	Number of Items
Awareness	.648	4
Preference	.838	7

Source: Researchers computations, 2016. Via IBM SPSS Statistics 22.

The tables above present the reliability result for section C (Consumer Awareness) and section D (Consumer Preference) of the questionnaire administered. The Cronbach's alpha for questions related to awareness with 4 items is .648 (64.8%) and for consumer preference with 7 items is .838 (83.8%). The instrument is therefore considered reliable since the Cronbach's Alpha figures are above .50 (50%).

Results and Discussion of Findings

TABLE 3: Demographic Profile of Respondents

Variable	Categories	Frequency	Percentages
Gender	Male	201	63.2
	Female	117	36.8
	Total/Completion Rate	318	100.0
Age	18 - 22 years	124	39.0
	23 - 27 years	142	44.7
	28 - 32 years	39	12.3
	Above 32 years	13	4.1
	Total/Completion Rate	318	100.0
Faculty	FMSS	157	49.4
	FEA	161	50.6
	Total/Completion Rate	318	100.0
Department	Business administration	59	18.6
	Economics	43	13.5
	Sport Science	18	5.7
	Counseling psychology	78	24.5
	Continuing Education	65	20.4
	Sociology	55	17.3
	Total/Completion Rate	318	100.0
Highest Educational Qualification	SSCE	180	56.6
	ND	72	22.6
	IJMB	46	14.5
	NCE	12	3.8
	HND	4	1.3
	MASTERS	4	1.3
	Total/Completion Rate	318	100.0

Source: Researchers computations, 2016 (Via IBM SPSS Statistics 22)

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From the table above, 63.2% of the respondents are male while 36.8% are female. 39% are between ages 18 and 22 years, 44% are between ages 23 and 27 years, 12.3% are between age 28 and 32 years and only 4.1% are above age 32. In addition, 49.4% belongs with Faculty of management and Social Sciences while 50.6% belongs with faculty of Education and Arts. Furthermore, according to departments, 18.6% of the respondent belongs with department of Business Administration, 13.5% belongs with department of Economics, 5.7% belongs with department of Sport Science, 24.5% belongs with department of counseling Psychology, 20.4% belongs with department of Continuing Education, and 17.3% belongs with department of Sociology. Lastly, based on highest educational qualification, respondents distribution are such that the largest portion are SSCE holders (56.6%), followed by Nation Diploma holders (22.6%), IJMB (14.5%), NCE (3.8%), HND (1.3%) and Master's Degree Holders (1.3%)

TABLE 4: Usage or Non-Usage of Online Shopping

Variable	Categories	Frequency	Percentage
Do you subscribe for Data Bundle?	Yes	244	76.7
	No	74	23.3
	Total/completion rate	318	100.0
Do you use mobile banking for payments, transfers or purchases?	Yes	154	48.4
	No	164	51.6
	Total/completion rate	318	100.0
Do you have Online Shopping application or software on your phone?	Yes	162	50.9
	No	156	49.1
	Total/completion rate	318	100.0
Have you ever used the Online Shopping application or software to make purchases successfully?	Yes	115	36.2
	No	203	63.8
	Total/completion rate	318	100.0
If you have never used any Online Shopping application before, do you intend to use it in future for purchases?	Yes	178	56.0
	No	27	8.2
	Total/completion rate	205	64.2
Which of the following is/are responsible for your non usage of Online Shopping medium?	Not aware about it	10	3.1
	Aware but do not know how to use it	39	12.3
	Aware but afraid of fraud	75	23.6
	Aware but have no income to make online purchases	74	23.3
	Others	7	2.2
	Total/completion rate	205	64.5

Source: Researchers computations, 2016. Via SPSS V. 22.

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TABLE 5: Awareness

Items	Mean	S.D
I am aware that Once a product does not meet with my requirements, I have every right to return it or ask for replacement	3.94	1.11
I am aware that It is my responsibility to pay for goods that I order once they are delivered to me	4.13	1.04
I am aware that Online purchases is convenient to use, it offers variety of products as well as offers cheaper prices.	3.54	1.19
I am aware that Online purchases have security and privacy issues and does not allow for bargaining and credit.	3.80	1.11
Grand Mean (GM)	3.85	1.11

Key: M= Mean, **SD=** Standard Deviation. **Decision Rule:**

Average of 1.00 – 1.99 = Low awareness for Online Shopping;

2.00 – 3.49 = Moderate awareness for Online Shopping; and

3.50 – 5.00 = High awareness for Online Shopping

Source: Field Data, 2016

Table 6: Preference for Online Shopping

Items	Mean	SD
I prefer to shop online than offline	2.77	1.33
I prefer online purchases because it is faster and easier to use	3.07	1.34
I prefer Online Shopping because it is available 24/7 and I can shop from anywhere	3.60	1.26
I prefer online purchases because it offer more variety of products	3.49	1.17
I hold a higher preference for Online Shopping because it provides more information on products	3.53	1.16
I prefer online purchases because it offers cheaper prices	3.10	1.29
I prefer Online Shopping because it offers better discounts	3.20	1.31
Grand Mean	3.25	1.27

Key: **M**=Mean, **SD**=Standard Deviation. **Decision Rule:** Average score of 1.00 – 1.99 = Low level of Preference; 2.00 – 3.49 = Partial Preference; and 3.50 – 5.00 = high level of Preference

Source: Field Data, 2016

In line with the 3rd objective of the study, the table 6 above reveals the major factors that influence individuals' preference for online shopping. Qualities of online shopping such as ease of use, speed, 24/7 availability, ability to shop from anywhere, variety of products, product information, cheaper prices and better discounts all form part of the reasons why people hold a degree of preference for online shopping.

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Test of Hypothesis

Null hypothesis 1 (H₀₁): There is no significant relationship between awareness for Online Shopping and preference for Online Shopping among undergraduate students.

Table 7: Pearson’s Correlations

		Preference	Awareness
Preference	Pearson Correlation	1	.448
	Sig. (1-tailed)		.000
	N	318	318
Awareness	Pearson Correlation	.448	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	318	318

Source: Researchers computations, 2016 (Via SPSS v.22)

The correlation table above shows that there exists a moderate correlation between Awareness for Online Shopping and Preference for it as given by .448. In addition, the null hypothesis which states that there is no significant relationship between awareness and preference for Online Shopping is not supported as evidenced from table above where sig. (1-tailed) is .000 which is less than .05. Thus the result above is in line with objective 1 of the study.

Null Hypothesis 2 (H₀₂): There is no significant difference in preference for Online Shopping among undergraduate students who have and have not used Online Shopping before.

Table 8: Chi-Square Tests

	Value	Df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	35.705 ^a	4	.000
Likelihood Ratio	36.175	4	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	31.525	1	.000
N of Valid Cases	318		

a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 16.64.

Source: Researchers computations, 2016. Via SPSS V.22.

In line with objective 2 of the study, the researcher evaluated whether there is no significant difference in preference for Online Shopping among those who have experienced Online Shopping and those who have not experienced it. The data was analyzed using person's chi-square goodness of fit test and the null hypothesis was rejected. As evidenced from table 4 above depicts the chi-square test result for null hypothesis 2 (H₀₂) of the study is $X^2(4) = 35.705$, $P \leq .05$. This result shows that the chi square value is 35.705(a), the degree of freedom (df) is 4 and the Asymp.Sig (2-sided) or P value which is 0.000 is less than .05. Thus, the null hypothesis that there is no significant difference in undergraduate students' preference for Online

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Shopping among students who have and have not experienced Online Shopping is not supported.

CONCLUSSION

The findings of the study has led to the conclusions that, Larger portion of respondents (63.8%) in Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida University Lapai, Niger State have never experienced Online Shopping, basically for such reason as fear of fraud, low income to patronize the Online Shopping system, and inadequate knowledge on how to use the system. However, most of these respondents are willing to use it in the near future. The study also concludes that the awareness level of Online Shopping among undergraduate students of Ibrahim Babangida University is relatively high as evidenced from a grand mean of 3.85. Furthermore, on Preference for Online Shopping, most students hold a partial preference for Online Shopping as compared to offline shopping as evidence by the Grand Mean of 3.25. In an effort by the study to determine whether there exists a significant relationship between Awareness and Preference for Online Shopping, it has been concluded that there is a moderate relationship between the two variables as given by the Pearson correlation value of .448. Lastly, the study concludes that there is no statistically significant evidence to say that those who have experienced Online Shopping and those who have not experienced Online Shopping do not differ in their preference for Online Shopping.

In light of the results, findings and conclusions of the study, it is recommended that online vendors improve their security measures, privacy policies, and also simplify the shopping process in order to reduce cases of fraud as well as boost the confidence and win the trust of the portion of customer who are weary of patronizing Online Shopping system for this reason. It is noteworthy to state that every sound relationship, be it personal or commercial, is largely built around trust which comes from a feeling of security. In addition, it is recommended that online vendors embark on the creation and execution of a comprehensive awareness campaign to further enlighten the consumers (actual and potential) of the safety in Online Shopping system, other benefits attributable to Online Shopping, as well as a simplified process and methods of using Online Shopping which will not only serve as a deterrent to the issue of fear of fraud, enhance awareness and preference levels for Online Shopping but also enlighten those who are aware of Online Shopping but do not know how to use it. Finally, the conclusion above shows that those who have experienced Online Shopping seem to hold a higher preference for it as compared to those who have not, as such in order to improve consumer preference which will in turn raise revenue generation and further facilitate governments initiative of cashless policy, other problems as identified in literature such as inadequate infrastructural development which contributes to poor internet service should be tackled by the government so

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as to improve the network strength which further makes it easy to use Online Shopping.

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