AN EMPIRICAL EXPLORATION OF THE PERCEPTION OF SELECTED STORE-BASED RETAILERS ON ONLINE RETAILING

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Abstract

Online-shopping has brought producers and suppliers with critical assess to millions of final consumers through the distribution channels. It also offers customers access to assortment of products, as well as information on all those products. The present study is an attempt to explore the factors perceived by brick and motor retailers (traditional retailers) regarding the effect of online retailing in their business by employing the data obtained from selected stored based retailers in Aizawl (Mizoram). The data were collected from 70 store based traditional retailers in Aizawl selling different products such as garments, footwear, electronics and accessories etc. The study shows that suppliers, customers, competitions and product attributes are the significant factors perceived by the traditional retailers about online retailing.

Key words: online retailing, perception, store-based retailers, factor analysis.
JEL Classification: L81, M10

Introduction

Major development has been taking place in the forms of retailing all over the world. Many smaller retail firms have become bigger and major retail firms have expanded their market share because of the adoption of new technology. Internet which primarily is a source of communication, information and entertainment has increasingly become a vehicle for commercial transactions. Internet commerce involves the sales and purchases of products and services over the Internet. This new type of shopping mode has been called online shopping, e-shopping, internet shopping, electronic shopping and web based shopping. With the advent of internet and online-shopping, increasing innovation can be observed across the product categories. A new balance of the relationship between the suppliers and modern retailers are also witnessed. This online-shopping has brought producers and suppliers with critical assess to millions of final consumers through the distribution channels. It also offers customers access to assortment

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of products, as well as information on all those products. The choice available to modern customers have increased manifold both in terms of number of brands and range of prices of the products. It is predicted that the size of the e-retail industry in India is poised to be 10 to 20 billion USD by 2017-2020. This growth is expected to be led by increased consumer-led purchases in durables and electronics, apparels and accessories, besides traditional products such as books and audio-visuals (PwC, 2014). More and more consumers are attracted to shop online because of increased internet penetration, improved security measures, convenience of shopping in lives pressed for time, and, of course, dozens of retailers to choose from (Joshi & Upadhay, 2014).

Significance of the study:

Identifying the effect of online shopping on consumer behaviour is challenging because it involves many confounding factors. Similarly identifying the impact of online shopping on store based retailers is challenging. However, exploring the perception of the store-based retailer is significant and crucial as it may give some insight into the how much online shopping have impact on their business and changes on consumers' behaviour. North East India is quietly becoming one of the fastest-growing markets for online retailers with an increasing number of youngsters from the region logging on to buy mobiles, accessories and much more. In the recent past decade, the rapid development of e-commerce in Mizoram, a state in the Northeastern part of India, has become a major trend. Mizoram's retail industry has undergone tremendous changes. From the original traditional retail to the current e-commerce, Mizoram's logistics system is improving. It is making the network of traditional retail caused a huge impact. The present study is an attempt to explore the factors perceived by brick & motor retailers (traditional retailers) regarding the effect of online retailing in their business by employing the data obtained from selected stored based retailers in Aizawl (Mizoram).

Literature Review:

Numerous literature are available on the study of consumer behaviour related to online shopping and its related aspects. Most of the studies attempted to explore and analyse the behaviour of online buyers.

Online stores differ primarily on the three dimensions: size, service offerings, and interface quality (Spiller & Lohse, 1997). A great deal of variation in online stores can be observed either on the Internet or on proprietary online services. In a study of 137 Internet stores selling women's apparel, Spiller & Lohse (1997) categorized different online sales approaches, user interface styles, and services used in online stores. Novak, Hoffman, & Yung (2000) found that a compelling online customer experience is positively correlated with fun, recreational and experiential uses of the Web, expected use of the Web in the future, and the amount of time consumers spend online, but negatively associated with using the Web for work-related

activities. They have used a two-stage structural modeling approach to test what makes for a compelling online experience for consumers. Brynjolfsson & Smith (2000) found that prices on the Internet are 9-16% lower than prices in conventional outlets. They also found that Internet retailers charge lower prices than conventional retailers-whether one considers prices alone or "prices" including the costs of getting the item to the users' homes (e.g., shipping and handling, taxes, mileage). The study was based on price data, product characteristics, and retailer characteristics for CDs and books sold through Internet and conventional retail outlets from all U.S.-based book and CD retailers. They have observed that a substantially larger fraction of the U.S. (and world) population will gain access to the Internet in the next decade. They concluded that conventional retailers will find it increasingly difficult to compete on price so long as the substantial differences between channels persist.

Higher levels of Internet experience may lead to lower risk perceptions regarding online shopping and fewer specific concerns regarding system security and online retailer fraud yet more concerns regarding online privacy (Miyazaki & Fernandez, 2001). In a study based on data collected in April 1999 on the prices of 107 books in U.S.-based thirteen online and two bricks and mortar (physical) bookstores, Clay, Krishnan, Wolff, & Fernandes (2002) have found similar average prices in online and in physical stores. Danaher, Wilson, & Davis (2003) compared the consumer brand loyalty in online and traditional shopping environments by identifying for over 100 brands in 19 grocery product categories. They found that the observed brand loyalty for high market share brands bought online is significantly greater than expected, with the reverse result for small share brands. In contrast, in the traditional shopping environment, the difference between observed and predicted brand loyalty is not related to brand share. Fox, Montgomery, & Lodish (2004) in an empirical study of household shopping and packaged goods spending across retail formats—grocery stores, mass merchandisers, and drug stores using an econometric model found that consumer expenditures respond more to varying levels of assortment (in particular at grocery stores) and promotion than price. They also found that households that shop more at mass merchandisers also shop more in all other formats. They conclude that visits to mass merchandisers do not substitute for trips to the grocery store. King, Sen, & Xia (2004) opined that besides providing sellers with an opportunity to reach a wider audience, Web-based sales channels also give them better control of their sales and marketing activities. In a study to understand the impact of Web-based e-commerce on retailers' choices of distribution channel strategies, King, Sen, & Xia (2004) found that sellers adopt a dual-channel strategy because of competition and not because they will be economically better off by doing so. They adopted a game-theoretic approach in their study.

Mahmood, Bagchi, & Ford (2004) in their study using cross-country data from 26 nations and analyzes constructs with a structural equation model (SEM). The study found that the factors of trust and economic conditions, but not educational level and technological savvy make a significant positive contribution to online shopping behavior. The study found that

there is no significant relationship between technological savvy and on-line shopping behaviour. They opined that as traditional brick-and-mortar companies become more integrated with e businesses, managers need to know what factors influence on-line buying, both in general and in specific countries. Roman (2007) opined that Internet is fundamentally transforming the nature of the relationship that businesses have with consumers and the public. While e-commerce has witnessed extensive growth in recent years, consumers concerns regarding ethical issues surrounding online shopping also continue to increase. In his study, Roman (2007) develop a CPEOR scale which is a multidimensional construct composed of four dimensions: security, privacy, non-deception and fulfillment/reliability. In a study by Forman, Ghose, & Goldfarb (2009) observed that for offline retailers, online retailers are relevant competitors. Competition depends on more than the number of local stores; it also depends on product overlap and disutility costs associated with the online channel.

The rapid growth of e-commerce in India is being driven by greater customer choice and improved convenience. (Rao, 2011). Some of the key drivers for the growth of the e-commerce industry in India are increasing broadband and 3g penetration, rising standard of living, availability of a much wider product range compared to what is available at bricks and mortar retailers; busy life styles, urban traffic congestion and lack of time for offline shopping; lower prices compared to brick and mortar retail driven by disintermediation and reduced inventory and real estate costs (Rao, 2011). With consumers as the principal drivers of change in the retail industry, decision-making has become more complex than ever before. Retailers need to find out the mechanism for price offering to maximize the profits; selecting the type of campaign for the targeted customers; deciding the level of inventory to avoid out-of-stock or excess stocks, etc.

In a paper entitled "Shopping Cost and Brand Exploration in Online Grocery", Pozzi (2012) studied how the choice of the shopping channel (online or brick-and-mortar store) affects buyers' propensity to explore new brands. He highlighted that customers tend to try new products less often when they shop online. The study which adopted a structural model found that firms can exploit their customer base on the online channel, and that they also can minimize the threat of successful entry from outsiders. He has highlighted that brand exploration is more prominent in-store. He suggested that Web site features that reduce the time spent shopping (such as "favorites lists") play a major role in limiting online brand exploration. The fact that the Internet allows for such reductions in the cost of shopping is especially relevant in certain contexts, and leads customers to more repetitive behavior, lower search cost notwithstanding.

People shop online for convenience, range and availability of products, and lower prices (Joshi & Upadhay, 2014). The essence of e-retailing is in its ability to transcend physical boundaries and reach customers in a manner different from the traditional brick-and- mortar

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stores, to their very doorstep (PwC, 2014). Among the many consumer detriments in online shopping, the major ones include 'nature of delay in delivery', 'non-delivery', 'defective product', and 'poor response of customer care' besides other relatively less common reasons like product out of stock, problem in reaching the address for delivery (Joshi & Upadhay, 2014). E-retailers have been able to attract significant customers to online buying but these are still limited to very exclusive categories such as consumer electronics, apparels and lifestyle, books, music and video. In the future, other categories such as food and beverages, departmental store, home furnishings, auto parts, healthcare and office equipment will also see increased e-commerce activity (PwC, 2014).

Statement of the problem:

From the above literatures, it is found that the studies that have conducted are concentrated on the consumer behaviour related to online shopping. A few studies have been found on the studies related to the perception of store-based retailers on the online retailing. Store based retailers are faced with a range of different questions concerning the course of action for their business ranging from finding valuable customers to retaining them. Therefore, the present study attempts to explore the factors perceived by the traditional retailers of the online retailing.

Objectives

The objectives of the present study are as follows:

- To understand the perception of traditional retailers about the factors behind the increase of online sales.

- To explore factors perceived by the traditional retailer of the online retailing

- To identify the extent of variability in the retailers' perception on online retailing factors determined.

- To examine the effect of online retailers on traditional retailers

Methodology

The study is based on primary data and secondary data. The secondary data are mostly related to the literatures that have been reviewed. The primary data were collected from 70 store based traditional retailers in Aizawl selling different products such as garments, footwear, electronics and accessories etc. These retailers are the business entity that sells goods directly to the consumers. The study adopted convenience sampling method to elicit data from the respondents. The study used a structured schedule pertaining to demographic measures such as age, qualification, marital status, gender and income, etc. Respondents were asked to give their agreement on the fifteen item variables relating to the online retailing and their sales using the 5 points Likert scales ranging from strongly agree (5) to strongly disagree (1). The primary

data were collected during the period of April and May 2015.

Data analysis Tools

In order to extract the dimensions and to test validity and reliability of the analysis, the exploratory factor analysis and Cronbach's alpha were employed. Keiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) test and Barlett's test were used to assess the appropriateness of using factor analysis and identifying the perceptual factors of the traditional retailers. SPSS and MS Excel were used as application software tool for the analysis.

Results & Discussion

Table 1 shows the analysis of demographic variables of the study. As can be seen in Table 1, out of the total 70 respondents, 83 percent were female retailers numbering 58 while the other remaining 17 percent numbering 12 were male retailers. Majority of the retailers were married numbering 51 constituting 73 percent of the total retailers while 19 were single unmarried. Regarding educational qualifications 29 percents were graduates followed by below high school (27 percent), 21 percent were HSSLC, 17 percent were HSLC and mere 6 percent had their post graduate degrees. Maximum number of retailers were in the age group of 26 to 35 years constituting 44 percent followed by age group above 45 years constituting 24 percents; 21 percents of the retailers were from the age group of 36 to 45 years and another 10 percent of the retailers were in the age group less than or equal to 25 years. Thirty percent of the retailers was in the business since last 5 years or lesser while 28 percent of the retailers were in the business since the last 11 to 20 years; 24 percent of the retailers were in the business since the last 6 to 10 years and 13 retailers constituting 19 percent of the total retailers were in the business for more than 20 years.

Table 1: Sample Characteristics of the Respondents

Basis	Category	Frequency	Percent
Gender	Male	12	17.14
	Female	58	82.86
Marital status	Married	51	72.86
	Single	19	27.14
Educational Qualification	Below high school	19	27.14
	HSLC	12	17.14
	HSSLC	15	21.43
	Graduate	20	28.57
	Post Graduate	4	5.71

Basis	Category	Frequency	Percent
Age group	Less than or equal to 25	7	10.00
	26 to 35	31	44.29
	36 to 45	15	21.43
	Above 45	17	24.29
No of Years since established	5 or less	21	30.00
	6 to 10	17	24.29
	11 to 20	19	27.14
	Above 20	13	18.57

Source: Field Survey

Table 2 shows the number of persons employed in the respective stores. As can be seen from the Table, fifty percent of retailers do not employ any employees and shops are run by them only without any employees; a single employee were employed by 26 percent of the retailers; 7 percent of the shop had 2 employees; 9 percent of the employees had 3 employees; One retailer were having a total of as much as 15 number of employees.

Table 2: Number of persons employed in the store

No. of Employees	Frequency	Percent
0	35	50.00
1	18	25.71
2	5	7.14
3	6	8.57
4	1	1.43
5	3	4.29
6	1	1.43
15	1	1.43

Source: Field Survey

Table 3 shows the level of understanding of online-shopping. Regarding the level of understanding of the online shopping, majority of the respondents comprising 69 percent were having a medium level followed by 27 percent of the respondent having low level of understanding about the online shopping and only 4 percent of the respondents perceived themselves to have high level of understanding of online shopping as revealed by Table 3.

Table 3: Level of understanding of online-shopping

Category	Frequency	Percent
High	3	4.29
Medium	48	68.57
Low	19	27.14

Source: Field Survey

Pertaining to the question regarding any plan to convert online business in the near future, 98 percent do not have any plan to convert it to online while the two numbers of respondents were uncertain and only 1 respondent plans to convert to online business.

Table 4 : Plan to convert online business in the near future

Category	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	1	1.43
No	67	95.71
Can't say	2	2.86

Source: Field Survey

Factor analysis:

The factor analysis was performed using Principal component analysis (PCA) as the method for extracting factors to establish components of the perception of the store based retailers on online retailing. To determine the suitability of the data size before factor analysis, both the KMO (Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin) measure of sampling adequacy Index and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity were used to check the adequacy of sample size. The value of KMO is found to be 0.670 which is greater than 0.5 and found that the sample is adequate and good for testing. Bartlett's Test of Sphericity demonstrated that it is a highly significant with $p < 0.000$. The fifteen items schedule when put to test for reliability shows a Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.765.

Table 5: KMO and Bartlett's Test

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		0.670
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	672.738
	df	105
	Sig.	0.000

Source: Compiled from the data collected

The Table 6 gives the initial and extracted communalities. The extracted communalities are obtained using the extracted factors. Extraction communalities for a variable give the total amount of variance of that variable, explained by all the factors. Principal component analysis works on the initial assumption that all variation are common, therefore before extraction, the communalities are all 1.

Table 6: Communalities

Statements	S1	S2	S3	S4	S5	S6	S7	S8	S9	S10	S11	S12	S13	S14	S15
Initial	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Extraction	.89	.92	.74	.68	.67	.82	.66	.57	.71	.74	.60	.70	.62	.72	.74

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

The Table 7 summarises the total variance explained by the factor analysis solution. It lists the eigen values associated with each factor before extraction, after extraction and after rotation. The first column under initial eigen values gives the eigen values for all the factors in a decreasing order. This is followed by the variance as a percentage of all the variance and cumulative variance. For example, factor 1 explains 31.1 percent of variance followed by factor 2 which explains 15.4 percent of the total variance while the factor 15 explains only 0.03 percent of the total variance. Then, it extracts all factors with eigen value greater than 1, which indicates that there are four useful factors. The figure under the column of extracted sum of squares loading with cumulative percentage indicates that the four extracted factors explain 71.79 percent of the variance. In the third part of the table titled, Rotated sum of squared loadings gives the information for the extracted factors after rotation. Rotation has the effect of optimisng the factor structure and because of these data the relative importance of these four factors is equalized. Before rotation, factor 1 accounted for considerably more variance (31.1%) than after rotation (21.68%). The other three factors 2 , 3 and 4 increased their eigen values after rotation (15.43, 13.47 and 11.79 before rotation increased to 18.6, 18.6 and 12.91 after rotation respectively)

Table 7: Total Variance Explained

Component	Initial Eigen values			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings			Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	4.66	31.088	31.088	4.66	31.088	31.088	3.25	21.684	21.684
2	2.32	15.431	46.52	2.32	15.431	46.52	2.79	18.595	40.279
3	2.02	13.473	59.993	2.02	13.473	59.993	2.79	18.595	58.873
4	1.77	11.794	71.787	1.77	11.794	71.787	1.94	12.914	71.787
5	0.81	5.367	77.155						
6	0.76	5.091	82.246						
7	0.64	4.264	86.51						

Component	Initial Eigen values			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings			Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
8	0.53	3.521	90.031						
9	0.42	2.796	92.826						
10	0.35	2.331	95.158						
11	0.25	1.696	96.854						
12	0.19	1.239	98.093						
13	0.13	0.882	98.975						
14	0.13	0.858	99.833						
15	0.03	0.167	100						

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

The scree plot given in the figure 1 shows a sharp break in sizes of eigen values which results in a change in the slope of the plot from steep to shallow. After the four factors the slope of the scree plot changes from steep to shallow. The eigen value also drops from 3 to less than 1 when the plot moves from 4 to5, thus suggesting a four factor solution.
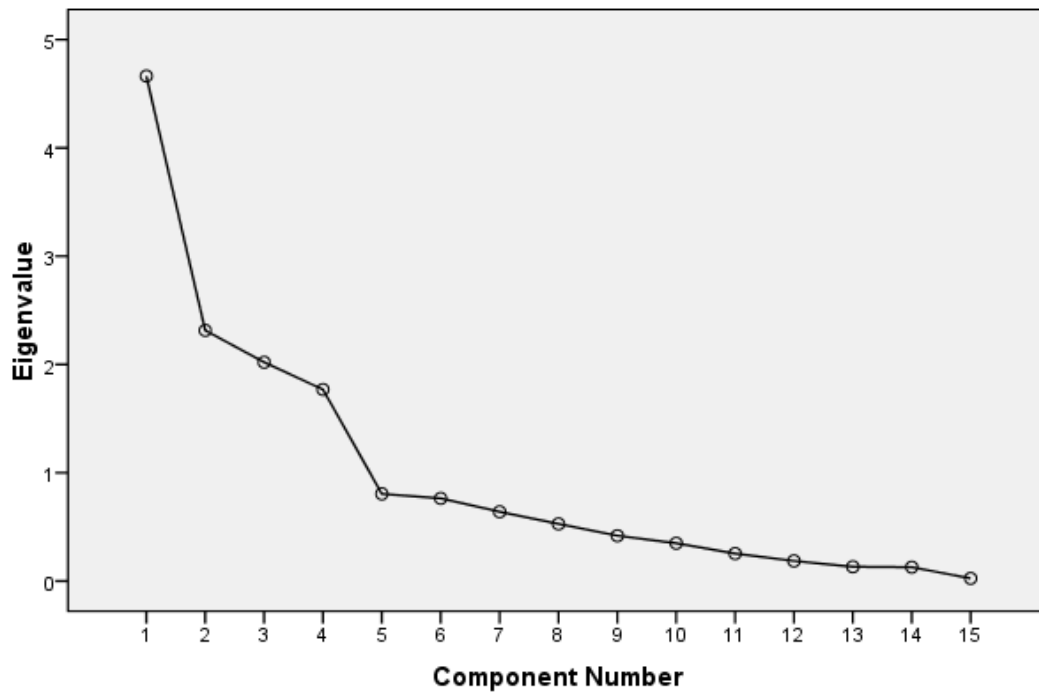
Scree Plot

Fig-1: Scree plot

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In Table 8, component matrix before rotation is displayed. For each of the variables, loadings of each variable into each factor are displayed. All loadings less than absolute of 0.40 are suppressed from the table to make the interpretations of the factors easier. Similarly, in the next table, rotated factor matrix is given. Here also, factor loadings less than 0.40 are not displayed. Rotation solves the problem of variables with high loadings on more than one factor in the factor matrix.

Table 8: Component Matrixa

Variable	Component			
	1	2	3	4
S3	0.721			
S12	0.72			
S15	0.659			
S4	0.641		-0.512	
S10	0.598	-0.514		
S7	0.594			-0.469
S9	0.553	-0.501		
S1	0.549	0.705		
S2	0.568	0.693		
S11		0.595		
S6	0.55		-0.677	
S5	0.499		-0.638	
S8	-0.484		0.547	
S13				0.755
S14	0.556			0.639

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

a. 4 components extracted.

Table 9: Rotated Component Matrixa

	Component			
	Suppliers	Customer	Competition	Product attributes
S10:Supplier now have higher bargaining power after the rise of online business	0.857			
S9: Suppliers benefit more from supply to online retailers	0.837			
S12: Suppliers have better control over their marketing activities in online shopping	0.758			
S7: Suppliers have become more powerful due to options to supply to online retailers	0.669			
S15: There is an increase of online sales because of wider range of product	0.666			
S6: Due to online retailers customers bargain more		0.865		
S5: Customers now want everything in the cheapest possible because of online availability of goods.		0.806		
S4: Customers behaviour changed due to online availability of products		0.775		
S8: Customers are loss to online retailers because of stock out		-0.725		
S2: The overall sales of traditional shop has decreased because of online retailers			0.950	
S1: Business of online retailers my business is affected			0.939	
S3: Online retailers have taken away some of my market share			0.751	
S13: There is increase of online sales because of availability of goods				0.787
S14: There is increase of online sales because of availability of colours				0.733
S11: There is increase of online sales because of price factor				0.536

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.
Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.
a. Rotation converged in 5 iterations.

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Thus, from the factor analysis, the fifteen variables are now reduced to four factors named given as factor 1- Supplier, factor 2 - Customer, factor 3 – competition, and factor 4 - product attributes. The first factor of supplier contains five items. The second factor of customer contains four items, the third factor competition contains three items and the fourth factor product attributes contain three items.

Conclusions

Online shopping is becoming more popular day by day with the increase in the usage of World Wide Web known as www. Today is the age of smartphone and consumers are self-empowered. Electronic retailing created a huge scope for the store-based retailer to reach out to a large customer base, overcoming the physical distance, by using technologically driven formats. Understanding the cause of gap between online business and traditional business has become a must for retailers especially understanding the consumer's purchasing intention about online shopping. Making improvement in the factors that influence consumers to shop online and working on factors that affect consumers to shop online will help retailers to gain the competitive edge over others.

Thus, the present study investigated the factors perceived by traditional retailers regarding the effect of online retailing in their business. It shows that suppliers, customers, competitions and product attributes are the significant factors perceived by the traditional retailers. This research offers some insights into the links between e-shopping and the effect of e-shopping on traditional retailers. This information can help offline marketers and retailers to develop appropriate market strategies, make technological advancements, and make the correct marketing decisions in order to retain current customers and attract new customers. Given the various advantages and disadvantages of online retailing, it is necessary to address questions: Under what conditions should traditional sellers (retailers) incorporate web-based channels in their overall channel strategy? Or should a new channel strategy consist exclusively of on-line channels, or would a dual-channel strategy that combines on-line and off line channels be more desirable? The sellers can explore choices such as to continue selling via their traditional off-line channels or to switch completely to web-based channels or even to sell via both the on-line and off-line channels. Indeed Internet has added a new dimension to the traditional nature of retail shopping. Globally, consumers are rapidly adopting Internet shopping and shopping online. The internet offers many advantages over traditional shopping channels and the medium is a competitive threat to traditional retail outlets. However, how ably a retailers pursue the strategy in meeting the business objectives is best put to test through its understanding the appropriate marketing decisions.

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