

Cybershopping: concerns of the South African consumer

EJ North, PG Mostert and PJ du Plessis

OPSOMMING

Meeste outeurs wat oor verbruikersbesluitneming skryf, impliseer dat die verbruiker se besluit om 'n sekere produk of diens te koop ook insluit waar of by watter afsetpunt gekoop sal word. Weinig inligting is beskikbaar insake die faktore wat 'n invloed kan hê op die verbruiker se besluit om eerder die produk of diens oor die Internet as by 'n tradisionele afsetpunt te koop.

Die doel van hierdie artikel is om die resultate weer te gee van 'n studie waarin Suid-Afrikaanse verbruikers aandui watter faktore hulle in ag neem wanneer oorweeg word om aankope oor die Internet te doen. Die resultate van die studie toon dat die volgende aspekte vir verbruikers van belang is wanneer die Internet as 'n afsetpunt oorweeg word: die aankoopssituasie (wat onder andere die produk self en die prys insluit); besorgheid oor sekuriteit; en die gemak en gerief om van die huis af aankope te kan doen.

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INTRODUCTION

Consumers in the 21st century have more products and brands to choose from, and also a wide variety of outlets to purchase from. These outlets include the traditional ones (bricks-and-mortar stores), in-home shopping sources such as direct mail, catalogues and online buying via the Internet. Although the latter sources currently represent a small portion of retail sales, Hawkins *et al* (2001:592) are of the opinion that they will increase rapidly in years to come. Varadarajan and Yadav (2002) concur with this prediction and postulate that consumer buying behaviour is likely to be affected as the role and influence of Internet buying increases. Richardson (2001:137) and Reibstein (2002) predict that the Internet will have a significant impact on how consumers make buying decisions by allowing them to become more efficient in their buying processes. The time and cost required to search for and evaluate alternatives and to negotiate terms are being driven down.

A major advantage of the Internet for cybershoppers is the access to free information (Smith, 2002; Sinha, 2000). The search for information is reduced to a few effortless keystrokes, whereas collecting the same information by traditional means would require considerably more time and energy. The Internet offers a wealth of information on product features, quality of products and reliability of different suppliers. The prices of products are available from various outlets and can be compared in real time at various online price comparison sites. Prospective buyers can access testimonials or criticisms by previous shoppers about their purchasing experiences. The product choices are discussed, and the online seller often provides information that gives the consumer peace of mind about the intended purchase. Probably one of the biggest disadvantages to buying on the Internet is that the prospective customer has no opportunity to feel and touch the product before making a final purchasing decision.

Clearly marketers need to have a thorough understanding of the Internet consumer if they are to be successful on the Internet. For example, care must be taken not to stereotype consumers according to demographic characteristics such as age. Peter and Olson (2002:2) report that the majority of senior cybershoppers in the USA are attracted to sites that have nothing to do with their age. Although the marketing opportunities offered by the Internet almost seem to be unlimited, marketers do need to understand that thorough research is essential to assure that this "glamour child of direct marketing" is utilised efficiently (Blackwell *et al*, 2001:147). In this regard it is impor-

tant for marketers to research and determine the factors or attributes of the Internet that could sway consumers to use it as a buying channel or buying outlet. And also to find out what the reasons are why consumers prefer not to shop on the Internet.

The main aim of this article is to reflect and discuss the results obtained from a factor analysis that was designed to determine the factors that South African Internet shoppers take into account when they consider making purchases on the Internet. A broad overview of the South African Internet user market will be provided after which a theoretical overview of store-choice or outlet selection (including the Internet as an option) by consumers will be discussed. Suggestions for future studies are offered.

THE SOUTH AFRICAN INTERNET USER MARKET: AN OVERVIEW

According to Media Africa.com (2000:13), the Internet was introduced to South Africa during the late 1980s. The first commercial Internet Service Provider (ISP) emerged in 1993 (offering services to corporate clients). Services were offered to consumers in 1994. Aggressive marketing campaigns by several newcomers to the ISP market resulted in the Internet reaching a critical mass of consumers in South Africa, marked by rapid growth during the period October 1997 to December 1998. The following year was considered to be the maturity phase for the Internet in South Africa, followed by a year of consolidation in 2000.

According to BMI (2000:26), the reasons for the relative pessimistic view of the future of Internet access at that stage in South Africa were as follows: the telecommunications monopoly caused by the fact that Telkom was the only fixed line network provider, the population distribution over a relatively large geographical area, and the economic dichotomy due to the presence of both first and third world economies in South Africa. It is predicted, however, that the use of the Internet will grow in South Africa. This will occur as education levels rise and the younger generation is exposed to information technology in schools, and also as a result of the use of the Internet in the working environment.

Total South African Internet market by access method

Table 1 provides details of historic information on access methods together with predictions up to 2004 for corporate, academic and dial-up users. The total number of Internet users is also indicated, together with past and projected growth trends.

The table above clearly shows the declining growth rate of Internet users in South Africa since 1998, and the projected decline up to 2004. The introduction of a second Fixed Line Telecommunications Network Operator as an adjunct to Telkom will be responsible for the expected increased growth during 2004, as

indicated above. As this study focused on the use of the Internet by households, the predicted increase of 468 000 dial-up subscribers from 2003 to 2004 (30%) is a positive sign for marketers who want to attract buyers to use the Internet as a buying channel or outlet.

OUTLET SELECTION

Almost forty years ago, Britt (1966:573), who was acknowledged pioneer in the field of consumer behaviour, argued that no act of consumer behaviour is explained by one reason alone, but by a complexity of variables. The buying process takes place in the mind of the consumer, and is based on interactions between the "personality" of the consumer, the "personality" of the product, and the "personality" of the buying outlet. This article will refer to some variables or factors that might influence the consumer to use the Internet as a buying outlet.

Peter and Olson (2002:497) use the term "consumer purchase mode" when they refer to the method which a consumer uses to shop and purchase from a store or a non-store alternative. The non-store alternatives include TV home shopping, direct mail, catalogues, and electronic exchanges, such as purchasing on the Internet. According to Levy and Weitz (2003:87), purchasing on the Internet only accounts for about one percent of retail sales in the United States. Teenagers in the United States make less than one percent of their annual \$155 billion purchases online even though 80% have online access (Tedeschi in Levy & Weitz, 2003:87). However, the benefits of non-store retailing are very appealing to time-conscious consumers and consumers who find it difficult to visit shops, such as mothers with young children, the handicapped and elderly people.

Hawkins *et al* (2001:592, 597) assert that the selection of a retail outlet involves the same process as selecting a brand. That is, the consumer follows the phases of consumer decision-making (need recognition, search, evaluation of alternatives, purchase and post-purchase evaluation). However, these authors add an extra dimension regarding outlet selection, namely the sequences which the consumer could follow: (1) outlet first, brand second (2) brand first, outlet second (3) simultaneous selection (Hawkins *et al*, 2001:598). The marketing strategy of a retailer who sells through the Internet could, for example, target customers by using the outlet first approach, emphasising the advantages of safety and convenience when buying online.

Although authors and research companies (Schiffman & Kanuk, 2003:569; Levy & Weitz, 2003:87; McQuiverry *et al* in Hawkins *et al*, 2001:594) predict growing sales through the Internet in the future, the question may be asked: Why do many consumers still prefer other shopping outlets to the Internet? One study produced the following reasons:

TABLE 1: SOUTH AFRICAN INTERNET USERS BY ACCESS METHOD

Year	Corporate users	Academic users	Dial-up subscribers	Total	% growth
1994	25 000	60 000	15000	100 000	
1995	65 000	100 000	33 600	198 600	98
1996	150 000	125 000	79 700	354 700	78
1997	350 000	150 000	196 620	696 620	96
1998	700 000	200 000	366 235	1 266 235	81
1999	980 000	280 000	560 000	1 820 000	44
2000	1 274 000	360 000	782 000	2 416 000	33
2001	1 555 000	425 000	1 040 000	3 020 000	25
2002	1 788 000	470 000	1 300 000	3 558 000	18
2003	2 056 000	510 000	1 560 000	4 126 000	16
2004	2 467 000	540 000	2 028 000	5 035 000	22

(Adapted from Media Africa.com, 2000:42)

The results of this study indicate that females are less likely to shop online than males. This finding is supported by the findings of the Briones (1998:2) study. According to a study done by BMI (2000:75), some of the main reasons why South African Internet users do not shop, or intend to shop, online are: security concerns, users being comfortable with current shopping and banking methods, and privacy concerns.

It can be deduced from the foregoing that there is a lack of information, certainly in South Africa, regarding knowledge about potential and active Internet buyers, and specifically their concerns when they consider buying via the Internet. The aim of this study was to address this issue.

APPROACH AND RESEARCH DESIGN

A pluralistic research approach was followed for this study. First a qualitative research technique was used (pre-test group), and this was followed by a quantitative technique (survey). The main objective of conducting an interview with the participants in the pre-test group was to serve as a foundation for the quantitative phase of the study and to use the results to serve as input for the second phase. During the quantitative stage of the study, Internet users were required to complete a self-administered questionnaire. The questionnaire comprised four sections with 31 questions in total. Section A contained screening questions (the aim being to separate the respondents who have purchased products and services on the Internet before from those who have not engaged in online buying before). Section B was addressed to non-Internet buyers, Section C targeted consumers who use the Internet as a buying outlet, and Section D contained questions pertaining to the demographic details of the respondents. This article will mainly report the findings that pertain to the questions that were answered by Internet buyers (Sections C and D).

Phase 1: Pre-test group In this study, 94 Internet users participated in the pre-test group. The objectives set for this discussion group were the fol-

lowing: First, to test the questionnaire to be used during phase 2 of the study, and specifically to use the inputs and comments from the respondents to refine or rephrase the questions or statements in the questionnaire. Second, to refine the objectives set for the study. The discussion (interview) took place in a movie theatre where the respondents were requested to complete the first draft of the questionnaire. This was followed by a discussion during which respondents mentioned some concerns and made suggestions about altering and refining the questionnaire and including more statements.

Based on previous studies, a list of 17 statements were compiled to determine the level of concerns of cybershoppers when considering buying on the Internet. One of the major outcomes of this exercise was the fact that the respondents suggested that seven more factors be included in the existing list of 17 statements for one specific question in Section C. In this question Internet buyers were requested to indicate on a 7-point Likert scale how important certain factors (the statements listed in the questionnaire) are when they decide to buy via the Internet. See Table 4 for the final list of 24 statements.

Phase 2: Survey A self-administered survey, hosted on a dedicated website, was used as the data collection method for this study. The website was designed in such a manner that respondents would automatically be directed to the next question applicable to them, based on their input to the questionnaire. The responses were captured in a database only once respondents had completed the entire questionnaire.

Sample

The population for this study was defined as all Internet users in South Africa who access the Internet from home (at the end of 2000 the figure was 782 000 users- see Table 1). Users from all the geographic regions (provinces) in South Africa were included in the sample. A strata sampling procedure was followed which resulted in the formation of a sample frame of 20 000 users (5 000 users from four different strata)

who joined an ISP between 1 January 1997 and 25 November 2001. An e-mail message was distributed to the 20 000 South African Internet users, inviting them to participate in the study. The e-mail letter briefly described the purpose of the study and contained a link that would, if clicked on, route interested Internet users directly to the website where the questionnaire was hosted.

A total of 1 005 respondents (aged between 18 and 65) completed the questionnaire. Although the study considered factors that Internet shoppers and non-shoppers take into account when deciding to purchase via the Internet, this article will only report on the findings related to shoppers who have purchased on the Internet before. The next section will therefore report on some demographic aspects as well as on the product and service categories cybershoppers purchase online. Special attention will then be given to the results that indicate cybershoppers' attitudes towards the factors they take into account when considering buying on the Internet and also the presentation of the results of the factor analysis.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Of the 1 005 respondents who completed the questionnaire, 543 (54%) indicated that they had made purchases via the Internet before while 462 (46%) indicated that they had never purchased online. Internet shoppers comprised 415 (76%) male and 128 (24%) female respondents. Of the 543 cybershoppers in this sample, 507 were whites and only 36 were from other ethnic backgrounds; 428 resided in metropolitan cities while 115 were from smaller towns. Information regarding the qualifications of the respondents in the study who had made purchases online before revealed the following: 266 had obtained a university degree or further qualification; 135 had obtained post-matriculation diplomas and 142 had matriculation certificates only. This finding is in agreement with the findings of a study in the USA that reported among other things, that Internet buyers tend to have higher educational levels (Hawkins *et al*, 2001:595). The gross monthly household incomes of the consumers who use the Internet as a buying channel were grouped into the following categories: 119 earned less than R9 999; 174 earned between R10 000 and R19 999; 204 earned R20 000 or more. Forty-six respondents did not specify their monthly income.

Product and service categories purchased by Internet shoppers

Table 3 lists the products and services that Internet shoppers said they had purchased before and considered to purchasing again in future. A notable observation that can be made from Table 3 is that the respondents have purchased from all 38 listed product and service categories and will probably buy merchandise from them again in future. The product and service categories from which most respondents have purchased before are: books and magazines (64%); music CDs (41%); computer software (39%); movie or

event tickets (35%); airline tickets (27%); and hotel reservations (25%). These findings correlate to a large extent with studies done in other countries. In the USA popular products purchased on the Internet include computers, books, CDs, travel services and flowers (Cleaver, 1999; Diaz, 1997; and Pargh, 1997 in Peter & Olson, 2002:4). According to McCuivey (in Hawkins *et al*, 2001:594), Forrester Research in the USA estimate that online-sales as a percentage of all sales in 2003 for certain product categories will be as follows: software (25%), music (20%), event tickets (19%), and books (18%). In this study, the product and service categories least purchased from were: interior decorating/ renovations (1,47%); and property (1,29%).

Eight percent of the cybershoppers indicated that they had purchased clothing items online before and 18% were considering doing so in future (10% increase). Only 2% had bought household appliances in the past; almost 17% plan to buy these items on the Internet in future (15% increase). Nine percent of the respondents have bought food and grocery items in the past, and 29% are considering buying such items online in future (20% increase).

The notable increase in planned future purchases from these product and service categories (and others listed in Table 3) should be good news for the marketers of these products. Their future marketing and advertising strategies could be planned around these findings.

Factors cybershoppers take into account when considering buying online

For many consumers the buying decision process includes not only decisions with respect to the product (eg the price, style or colour), or what brand to buy, but also decisions regarding which outlet to use. The information in Table 4 summarises the mean scores for the factors (24 statements) the 543 online shoppers in this study consider when deciding to buy on the Internet.

The respondents rated the importance of the 24 statements on a 7-point scale (1=extremely important; 7=not important at all). From Table 4 it can be deduced that the four most important considerations by South African Internet shoppers when deciding to purchase via the Internet are: credibility of the seller (mean score 1,51), implications of providing credit card details (mean score 1,54), how secure Internet payment methods are (mean score 1,58) and availability of prices on Internet sites (mean score 1,63). The four least important considerations for the cybershoppers were: don't have a credit card (mean score 4,88), importance of "touching and feeling" products prior to purchase (mean score 3,69), safety of purchasing from home (mean score 3,55), and personal attention (mean score 3,12). It is interesting to note that the findings of this study (with specific reference to the importance of "touching and feeling" products prior to purchase) do not correlate with the findings presented in Table 2, where it was noted that security

TABLE 2: REASONS NOT TO SHOP ON THE INTERNET

Reasons for not shopping	Male (%)	Female (%)
Security concerns	70	73
Lack of "touch"	45	54
Unfamiliar merchants	41	37
Too difficult	21	26

(Hawkins *et al*, 2001:593)

and lack of "touch and feel" are some of the main reasons why consumers avoid buying online (Hawkins *et al*, 2001:593). It must be noted, however, that the study to which Hawkins refer included consumers who do not use the Internet as a buying outlet.

The information in Table 4 further indicates that cybershoppers in this study are most homogeneous with regard to the credibility of the seller (standard deviation 1,01), and most heterogeneous with regard to the possession of a credit card (standard deviation 2,33).

Peter and Olson (2002:505) assert that many consumers still do not use the Internet as a buying outlet simply because they do not know how to use this medium effectively as a buying channel. There seems, however, to be a lack of knowledge and empirical evidence in this field. It is suggested that marketers who wish to sell their products on the Internet would benefit from engaging in studies to determine why consumers do not buy online.

Determining the underlying factors that Internet shoppers consider before deciding to buy via the Internet

In order to determine the ratings for the 24 statements in the questionnaire, it is important to know whether there were any underlying factors that respondents consider when deciding to purchase via the Internet. Factor analysis was applied to the data related to the importance ratings for the 24 statements or factors that Internet shoppers take into account when deciding whether they should purchase via the Internet or not. The Varimax technique of orthogonal rotation was used for this purpose (Aaker & Day, 1990:550; Sudman & Blair, 1998:555; Cooper & Schindler, 2001:581).

All factors with eigenvalues greater than one were retained (Sudman & Blair, 1998:549). Although factor loadings greater than 0,35 are often considered significant, it was decided to concentrate on values greater than 0,50 only, in an attempt to reduce the subjectivity associated with factor analysis. When discussing the results of the factor analysis, the computed Cronbach's alpha values will be reported. For exploratory research a Cronbach's alpha of 0,60 is acceptable, although values greater than 0,70 are preferred (Bagozzi, 1994:18).

The rotated factor matrix for the 24 statements that Internet shoppers consider when deciding to purchase via the Internet is shown in Table 5. It can be seen from Table 5 that three factors were identified for the 543 Internet shoppers, labelled as factors 1, 2 and 3. Factor 1 comprises 12, factor 2 four and factor 3 two variables (statements). The realised eigenvalues for each of the three factors are 6,54; 1,82 and 1,27 respectively. The three factors respectively accounted for 52,95%, 15,31%, and 10,82% of the total variance, and cumulatively accounted for 79,08% of the total variance. Cronbach's alpha computed for the instrument items of the factor analysis reflected in Table 5 is 0,891, indicating relatively high internal consistency reliability.

As mentioned earlier, for the purpose of this study factor loadings of 0,50 or higher were used for analysis. Table 5 indicates that 12 variables constitute factor 1, and that they can be labelled as aspects related to the *buying situation* itself. In this case consumers consider factors such as the range, price and brand name of the product; guarantees offered by the seller, after sales service and return policies of the seller; as well as the time between purchasing and receiving the goods, and the possible damage of products in transit. Factor 2 comprised aspects such as invasion of the buyer's privacy and the need to provide personal and credit card details. Factor 2, therefore, was labelled *security concerns of the buyer*. Factor 3 was labelled *ease and convenience of online buying*.

When observing the three factors described above as a whole, one could state that these findings correspond to some factors that Webchek (1999: 53) found that South African consumers consider before deciding to buy on the Internet. These factors are (in order of importance) the following: security; reliability; convenience; the ease of finding the product; online speed of Internet access; price of the item; ability to make more informed purchase; and no pressure from a salesperson.

It is evident from the discussion above that the privacy issue is one aspect that is a major concern to consumers when decisions regarding online buying have to be made (Factor 2). The BMI (2000:75) study cited earlier also referred to the privacy issue as a reason why consumers are hesitant to shop online. Cybershoppers would be much more at ease if they know that an e-commerce organisation has a privacy policy in place. The overall image of the organisation would also be enhanced if they communicated the details of their privacy policy to consumers on the website. In this regard Hawkins *et al* (2001:601) suggest that all Internet marketers join forces to find solutions to overcome the security concerns associated with using a credit card on the web.

CONCLUSION

The impact of the Internet has not only changed the way in which organisations conduct their businesses,

TABLE 3: PRODUCT AND SERVICE CATEGORIES INTERNET SHOPPERS HAVE PURCHASED FROM BEFORE AND CONSIDER BUYING IN FUTURE (N = 543)

Product and service categories	Have purchased from before		Consider to purchase in the future	
	N	%	N	%
Adult entertainment	83	15*	54	10
Airline tickets	147	27	295	54
Baby products	16	3	39	7
Beauty products	29	5	71	13
Books and magazines	345	64	430	79
Cars and related	27	5	73	13
CDs (music)	222	41	348	64
Cellular phones and accessories	37	7	134	25
Clothing and accessories	43	8	98	18
Computer games	123	23	210	39
Computer hardware	105	19	204	38
Computer software	212	39	323	59
Cosmetics	20	4	63	11
DVDs / videos	113	21	255	47
Flowers	79	15	173	32
Electronic equipment (TV, Hi-Fi, Video machine; etc)	44	8	141	26
Household appliances (Washing machine, Fridge, etc)	13	2	90	17
Outdoors equipment and accessories (eg tents and camping gear)	17	3	111	20
Food (groceries)	51	9	159	29
Food (take away)	26	5	119	22
Furniture	15	3	57	11
Gifts	132	24	280	57
Gift vouchers	38	7	180	33
Garden related	14	3	88	16
Health products	55	10	153	28
Hotel reservations	137	25	301	55
Insurance: Car	22	4	106	20
Insurance: Household	22	4	107	20
Insurance: Life	11	2	68	13
Interior decorating / renovations	8	1	52	10
Jewellery	14	2	51	9
Movie or event tickets	190	35	324	60
Property	7	1	50	9
Sporting goods	36	7	117	22
Toys	41	8	144	27
Unit trust / Shares	49	9	148	27
Wine	11	2	78	14
Other Liquor	49	9	162	30

* Percentages rounded off to the nearest integer

TABLE 4: MEAN SCORES FOR FACTORS CONSUMERS CONSIDER WHEN DECIDING TO BUY ONLINE

Statements	Internet shoppers (N= 543)	
	Mean	Standard deviation
The possible invasion of my privacy	2,01	1,55
Providing my personal information to others	1,92	1,49
Implications of providing my credit card details	1,54	1,19
Credibility of the seller	1,51	1,01
Concerned that goods purchased via the Internet will not be received	2,48	1,48
Goods may be damaged while shipped (in transit) or when delivered	2,99	1,63
The price of products or services offered via the Internet	2,55	1,53
Brand name of products or services offered via the Internet	2,86	1,58
Additional cost associated with purchasing via the Internet (eg) delivery / shipping costs; insurance costs, import taxes, etc	2,53	1,61
The availability of prices on Internet sites	1,63	1,05
Guarantees offered by Internet sellers	1,78	1,12
Exchange/return policies offered by Internet sellers	1,81	1,18
Ability to understand how to use the Internet/purchase via the Internet	2,50	1,70
Importance of "touching and feeling" products prior to purchase	3,69	1,64
The range of products/services offered from individual sellers on the Internet	2,72	1,46
After sales service	1,94	1,35
Personal/individual attention	3,12	1,75
The time between purchasing and receiving goods	2,20	1,31
Safety of purchasing from home (ie don't have to visit shopping malls and possibly be a victim of crime)	3,55	2,06
Knowledge of the seller	2,42	1,46
Convenience of purchasing from home	2,36	1,53
Ease of purchasing via the Internet	2,22	1,40
Don't have a credit card	4,88	2,33
How secure Internet payment methods are	1,58	1,21

but also how consumers behave in the marketplace. The e-Business Handbook (2003:55) notes that "shopping is as much about browsing as it is about buying, and the Web provides the ideal browsing aisle." This and many other advantages point to the fact that more and more cybershoppers will consider selecting the Internet as an outlet to buy from in future.

However, marketers need to be aware of certain barriers that are still preventing many consumers from engaging in online shopping. Consumers who go online expect to find the same store that they have become loyal to in the brick and mortar environment - in other words, the same range and quality of goods, same prices, the same services (for example credit policy, guarantees, and return policies), and the same "look and feel" of the store. One of the findings of this study was that cybershoppers place a high premium

on the credibility of the seller, guarantees offered by online sellers, and after-sales service (See Table 4 - aspects included in factor 1).

On the basis of the findings and discussions in this study, the following areas for future research are proposed:

- ♦ Using the availability of information on the Internet, determine to what extent online consumers engage in impulsive purchases.
- ♦ Determine if there are significant differences between cybershoppers within different demographic settings (age, gender, cultural background, education).
- ♦ Investigate the implications of the practice by consumers of shopping at stores first to examine and experience the product and then searching on the Net and buying the product online.

TABLE 5: ROTATED FACTOR MATRIX FOR INTERNET SHOPPERS

Statements	Factor		
	1	2	3
The possible invasion of my privacy	0,19	0,76	0,03
Providing my personal information to others	0,07	0,84	0,08
Implications of providing my credit card details	0,09	0,78	0,03
Credibility of the seller	0,42	0,31	0,10
Concerned that goods purchased via the Internet will not be received	0,47	0,32	-0,004
Goods may be damaged while shipped (in transit) or when delivered	0,57	0,31	0,03
The price of products or services offered via the Internet	0,52	0,06	0,05
Brand name of products or services offered via the Internet	0,55	0,07	0,13
Additional cost associated with purchasing via the Internet (eg delivery /shipping costs; insurance costs, import taxes, etc	0,51	0,18	0,08
The availability of prices on Internet sites	0,50	0,08	0,19
Guarantees offered by Internet sellers	0,63	0,21	0,19
Exchange/return policies offered by Internet sellers	0,62	0,17	0,18
Ability to understand how to use the Internet/purchase via the Internet	0,58	0,22	0,06
Importance of "touching and feeling" products prior to purchase	0,38	0,17	-0,14
The range of products/services offered from individual sellers on the Internet	0,56	0,01	0,18
After sales service	0,59	0,19	0,13
Personal/individual attention	0,52	0,15	0,11
The time between purchasing and receiving goods	0,55	0,07	0,24
Safety of purchasing from home (ie don't have to visit shopping malls and possibly be a victim of crime)	0,30	0,12	0,43
Knowledge of the seller	0,48	0,17	0,25
Convenience of purchasing from home	0,13	0,04	0,90
Ease of purchasing via the Internet	0,18	0,04	0,82
Don't have a credit card	0,23	-0,02	0,05
How secure Internet payment methods are	0,29	0,53	0,11
Eigenvalues	6,54	1,82	1,27
% of variance	52,95	15,31	10,82
Cumulative %	52,95	68,26	79,08

- ◆ As the security and privacy issue is one of the real challenges faced by Internet sellers, in-depth research is required in this area.

Relatively little research on consumer behaviour in the Internet context, and specifically the factors that influence online buying decisions, has been reported. The vast information available on the Net makes cyber-shoppers in the twenty-first century the best-informed consumers in history. Fresh approaches are required to research this "new consumer". Marketers therefore need to understand the Internet consumer and more specifically the factors that determine why they select (or reject) the Internet as a buying outlet.

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