



MASTER PROGRAM
IN BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION

DISSERTATION

CONSUMER BEHAVIOR AND GROUP BUYING SITES (GBS)

BY

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ABSTRACT

Group buying sites are the new trend in e-commerce; both group buying sites (GBS) and purchases are on the increase (Internet World Stats, 2008). This project examines Group Buying Sites in Greece in relation to consumer behavior. We start by examining e-commerce and business strategies of Group Buying Sites in contrast to ordinary e-shops or physical shops. We present research on the subject, completed in various other countries and evaluate its relevancy to the customer behavior and GBS in Greece.

The methodology used for data collect and analysis in this research, was the result of a survey questionnaire. The questionnaire was distributed and formulated to be accessible to the widest possibly demographic, both online (mainly) and not. Data was collected from 252 participants. The Technology Acceptance model (TAM) developed by Davis and his team was the theoretical bases of the survey questionnaire. Perceived Usefulness, Perceived ease of use, Shopping Enjoyment, E-buying proneness, Trust and Perceived Value as developed by Davis were in consideration both for the creation of the questionnaire and the data analysis (Fred D. Davis, 1993 and 1989)

To conclude, this study provides useful results to vendors, developers and researchers. Regarding vendors and developers, this study defines why consumers tend to use GBS for purchasing purposes. Thus, the results might be useful for other applications of e-commerce. Particularly, practitioners can apply the findings of this study to focus on the determinants of success for their online shopping websites.

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1. Introduction

1.1 . Purpose and aim of the thesis

One of the most widespread applications of Internet in business is the e-commerce. The dissemination of this communication and transactions medium has global effect and daily the number of companies using modern technologies to achieve their goals is increasing. This diploma work will deal with a new section of e-commerce , the Group Buying and particularly whether the personality and consumption habits of an individual , push them on online group buying sites . More specifically, using a questionnaire, we conducted a survey whose objective is firstly to outline the profile of consumers who choose to shop in online markets and to list the reasons that make them prefer online shopping from Group Buying Sites, also how their personality affects their behavior in these Group Buying Sites. Also we are attempting to divide the scope of questions to those about online purchases as they are known today with the ones who are relates with Group Buying Sites. Finally, an additional aim of the project is to record the evaluation of Group Buying Sites on reliability and trust that they provide both in access and management and in terms of products and services.

1.2. Outline of thesis chapters

The structure of this thesis is divided into five chapters which are:

1. **Introduction**

2. **E-commerce, Group Buying.** Review of relevant studies
3. Consumer Behavior
4. Survey Methodology
5. Data analysis and interpretation of findings
6. Conclusions and recommendations

The first chapter is introductory, and is spent in a general description of the thesis and its object but also in the overall goal of her drafting. There is also a brief description of the five chapters with brief references to their content.

In the second chapter there is a reference to electronic commerce, the categories and the benefits of it and the use of the phenomenon of group buying and its historical development. Also there are some researches who were conducted in the past and whose object is associated with this thesis.

In the third chapter we examine the consumer behavior in markets and factors affecting the consumer. There are also some related researches on the subject.

The fourth chapter discusses the research methodology chosen and why, also in what ways was the gathering of primary information done, how the design of the questionnaire and the choice of type of questions were made.

The fifth chapter deals with the analysis of survey data and interpretation of findings with appropriate diagrams and explanations. Finally, the sixth chapter summarizes the findings of the survey.

2. E-commerce – Group buying. Relevant studies review

2.1 Introduction

The following chapter contains a review of relevant studies regarding e-commerce and the behavior of on-line consumers in Greece and abroad. The indicators of consumer behavior in relation to the attitude of Greeks towards purchasing from a distance according to the Information Society Observatory will also be presented. The first section defines the concept of e-commerce as well as the phenomenon of group buying as its offshoot. It also refers to consumer behavior and later, the most important findings of similar research are presented.

2.2 E-commerce

The transaction procedure of products and services carried out online and from a distance is defined as e-commerce. It is based on the transition of data online, without needing the seller or the buyer to be physically present. It includes every online procedure: promoting, selling, delivering, servicing and paying both for products and services. Due to the extended use of the Internet, the range of online carried out transactions has rapidly increased in recent years. Furthermore, e-commerce includes the digitalization of markets: the purchasing of products or services through electronic means, such as the Internet, as well as the whole industry supporting these markets: online processing of transactions (mainly for banks), management of benefits chain, trade of electronic data and more.

2.2.1 Categories of E-commerce

The basic categories of electronic transactions depending on the nature of the participants are (Doukidis, 1998):

- Business to Consumer (B2C)
- Business to Business (B2B)
- Consumer to Consumer (C2C)

The first category involves transaction between a business and a consumer. It is the most familiar category to the consumers and the most widespread form of e-commerce. Generally, it focuses on retail products and services from businesses to simple consumers, mostly in retail gifts, entertainment, software and hardware, among others.

The second category involves transactions between businesses. This particular category refers to business to business activities and includes automated procedures between them. For that reason it has the largest market share in comparison with the other categories. Businesses have direct contact with suppliers and distributors, which reinforce their organizational and operational potential. In addition, B2B simplifies the procedures involved and minimizes the supply costs which, as a result, speeds up deliveries and makes stock management more efficient.

The third category involves transactions between consumers, i.e. selling from consumers to other consumers. One of the most important examples of this category is eBay where online auctions take place with private individuals and businesses participating. Everyone can participate, either by offering the products they wish to sell or by purchasing products on offer. Generally, C2C category refers to purchases actualized between consumers with the aid of a third means.

2.2.2 Advantages of e-commerce

Some of the advantages of e-commerce for businesses, consumers and society in general are the following (Δημητριάδης, 2003):

Regarding a business:

- It gains the ability to tackle expanded and specialized markets in order to become known regardless the location.
- Its internal functions are better carried through.
- The supply cost is reduced as well as the processing, storing and distribution cost for printed information.
- The level of customer services is increased since there is direct communication regarding the requirements and preferences of the customers. In addition, the interval for the delivery of products or services is reduced.

Regarding the customer:

- Transactions can be completed 24/7. This eases the time constraints of the consumers.
- Transactions can be carried out regardless of the distance between consumer and business. Purposeless transitions are thus avoided and the transportation cost is reduced as much as possible.

- It is possible to compare and search for products easier, both in terms of quality and price.
- It reinforces business competition which leads to gradual price drops.
- Finally, consumers are able to contact each other via online communities. That way they are better informed regarding the evaluation of the companies and the products or services which they offer.

Regarding society:

- People living in remote regions are allowed access to product and services under the same conditions with city dwellers. This is very important since it was inconceivable in the past.
- Quality and cost-effective public services (through e-government), or educational services (through e-learning) are provided.
- Selling goods at reduced prices contributes in the improvement of the living conditions of less advantaged social groups.

2.3. Group buying

2.3.1. Introduction

By group buying, according to Wikipedia, we define the purchase of products or services in reduced price. That is if and only if a certain number of buyers complete the same purchase. Those offers are available in various webpages and become active when the number of purchases needed is completed. Group buying is an essential part of e-commerce and is very popular.

2.3.2 History

The origins of group e-buying is located in China where the term Tuángòu is used to refer to a strategy of buying; i.e. when a number of individuals (friends or even strangers that come in contact via the Internet), in order to achieve the best possible price, decide to contact the same seller of a specific product. These groups of people purchase the same product with the benefit of a low price. The seller also gains from the chance of multiple purchases.

In the end of the 1990 Microsoft's co-creator Paul Allen attempted to create a business plan where offers were available in a webpage. This plan was a reverse e-bay; i.e. the more people registered for the purchase of an item the lowest the price would have been. This attempted was titled Mercata and according to Randy Nargi (part of the group that created Mercata), the project started off with best omens and was well ahead of its time. But Mercata could not cope with the competition and was terminated in 2001. Amazon.com was Mercata's stronger competitor, and it managed to gain the trust of consumers.

2.3.3 Business Plan

How a group buying site does operate then? To start with the consumer is interested in an offer provided by the group buying site. He/she must firstly register in order for his/her details to be available. Then the buyer declares his/her interest for the

offer and the way of payment he/she prefers. When the necessary number of buyers is achieved the offers becomes available and active and a coupon is emailed to the individual that declared interest in the purchase. The purchase is completed either by directly debiting a credit card of via an intermediary (for example PayPal) or even by payment upon delivery. There are many group buying websites with Groupon controlling the majority of the market (80%) and followed by LivingSocial, BuyWithMe and many others. According to Wall Street Journal's Smart Money magazine it is estimated that in August 2010 there were over 500 group buying sites internationally.

2.3.4. Differences between group buying sites and other e-buying.

The main difference between group buying sites and other e-buying is that a predetermined number of buyers are needed to declare interest on the offer, in order for it to become active; I.e. there is always the possibility that the customer interested in a product or a service may not be able to complete his/her purchase due to limited demand. Furthermore the offers available in group buying sites are constantly updated but have a due date of a few hours or days, in contrast to the usual e-market products that are available until the product stock is sold off. It must be noted that group buying offers are limited by city. Finally, group buying offers usually are services centered and products are very common. These services can be associated with body and hair treatments, travel, hotel rooms, dinning, night clubs, and repairs in the house among others.

2.3.5 Group buying sites in Greece.

In Greece in the past two years there is an explosion of group buying sites and there are very popular with both the consumer and the sellers.. Some of them are :

<http://www.groupon.gr> www.deals365.gr <http://www.goldendeals.gr>
<http://www.grandsales.gr> <http://www.buydeals.gr> www.couponi.gr
<http://www.crazydeals.gr> www.dealicious.gr www.winwindeals.gr.

There number of group buying sites is such now days that the average user cannot keep a daily track of the offers available. Thus, websites that collect those offers where created. Aggregation websites aggregate the offers of various group buying sites and present them to the consumer. Some of the sites can be found at the following addresses: <http://www.review-offers.gr> <http://www.soby.gr> <http://www.dealemma.gr>

2.4 Research on Group buying

Research on Groupon was contacted by John W. Byers, Michael Mitzenmacher, Michalis Potamias and Georgios Zervas. For a month the financial data of the daily prices of the offers, the coherence of products and services offered, and the general Groupon business strategy were studied; In order to discover the motivation-other than the price-behind the customer's choice purchases and behavior. The research demonstrated that Groupon's strategy is to maximize the presentation of the products and services reinforcing the motivation for purchase. For example in the beginning of the week up to Thursday offers expire in short time, while from Friday onwards offers last more than a day. In addition the sequence of offers is such that not all offers are related to the same

services appear at the same time but there is a diversity of offers on various products or services.

This research was further developed by observing data from Groupon for 6 months and LivingSocial for three months and discussing if the success of an offer can be predicted through social networking sites like Facebook. In addition, the influence of user evaluations on social networking sites on the success of offers and any future offers, it was examined. This research demonstrated that there is a definite influence on offers - even before their completion of the offer- from the social networking sites.

Shih-Ming Pi, Hsiu-Li Liao and Su-Houn Liu and I-Shan Lee researched the consumer behavior on online group buying in Taiwan from, financial, psychological and sociological perspective. The results implied that from a financial perspective the price of a product is not always the predominate factor in the decision of the customer to buy. The most important factors were social conformity and trust to the product or service on offer. I.e. individuals seem to be influenced by the expectations and demands for a certain behavior by their social group; for example gathering information via a social networking site in order to build trust to a product and finally to be convinced to purchase it.

In contrast to the previous research, Irem Eren Erdogmus, Mesut Çiçek in Turkey discussed group buying in their country and commented that the decision for a purchase is mainly based on the percentage of the discount. Important is the fact that the customers of group buying site felt like they are participating in something new and modern. They, also, feel that by registering to a group buying site they are privileged customers and often complain when products or services are provided to non-register

customers. Perhaps they have stronger feelings of being taken advantage off and being lied to, due to cultural differences.

Finally, Ming-Tien Tsai, Nai-Chang Cheng and Kun-Shiang Chen discuss influences leading to the intention to buy from group buying sites. They estimate that those influences are based in three factors: The quality of the website, the perception of usefulness of a purchase and trust to certain virtual communities. Thus, the research clearly delineates that customers are influenced by the usefulness and quality of the website as well as the usefulness and quality of the possible purchase. In addition, members of a virtual community can be influenced to buy if a purchase is evaluated positively by this community.

2.5 Research on e-commerce in Greece- Athens School of Economics.

Research was completed by the e-commerce libratory (ELTRUN) of the Athens School of Economics on e-commerce business aimed specifically to consumers in Greece and the consumer behavior of on-line Greek consumers. This research was contacted between September – October 2010 with the participation of 1106 online Greek consumers. The results of the study were presented in the yearly conference for ‘ E-commerce and Internet ‘ organized by the Greek Institute of IT of EEDE and ELTRUN of Athens School of Economics.(22-23 November 2010).

The outcomes of this research are as follows:

The average Online Greek consumer, in addition to the already established uses of internet(e-mail, news etc), is now interested in social networking media - for example Facebook (42%), reading and publishing in blogs(31%) chat/instant messaging(21%), online discussions/ forums(23%). Greek consumers make online purchases of: software/hardware (63%), Electrical appliances (50%), tickets (42%), hotel bookings (32%), books (32%). New interested categories of products recently added to the aforementioned list. Products like Household appliances(26%), clothing and shoes(21%), and beauty products(10%)

50% of the Greek online consumers are using e-banking (for information and transactions) while 42% attempts to locate online daily offers(in rapid increase) and 16% take part in online auctions and are interested in real estate. In figure 2 we are presented with the behavior of online consumers.

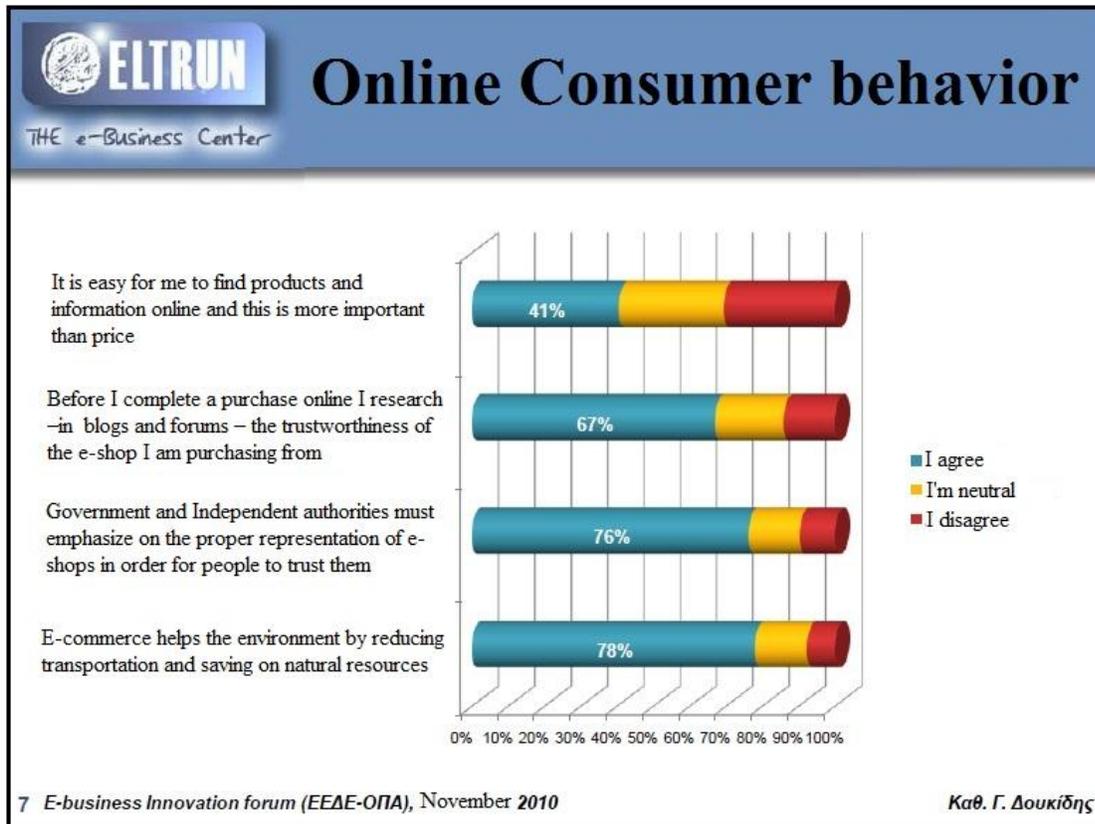


Figure 2 . Online Consumer behavior

Consumers make purchases for e-shops because it is easy to use(76%) payment is safe (69%) and there is a great variety of products(65%). 38% of consumers would have made a purchase even if the aforementioned factors were not in play, but they found a great offer or a very good price. The importance of price in a purchase is demonstrated in figure 3

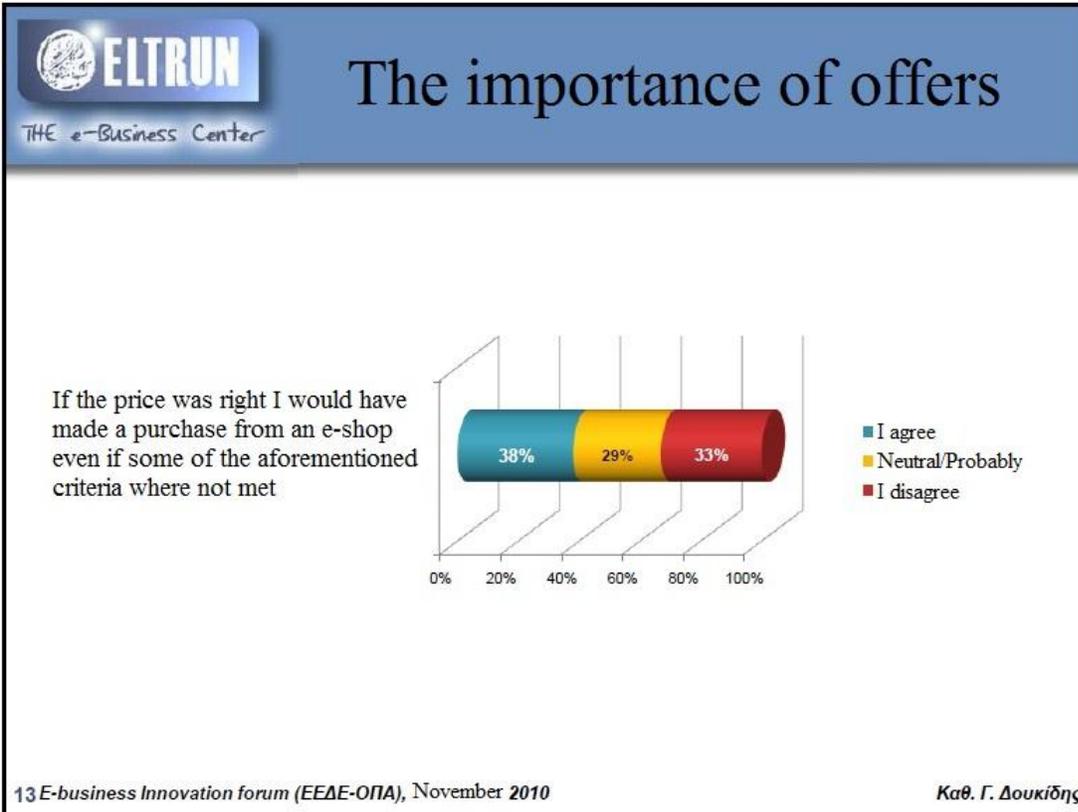


Figure 3. The importance of offers

Although the Greek consumers use social networking sites widely, they are cautious with their contents(51%). Only 18 % believe that the image of a company is improves if it is actively participating in social media, and only 10% are influence by friend or advertisement in social media, before an online purchase. E-shops derive trust form certification for independent bodies (66%), positive comments from friends (61%) and positive evaluation from other online buyers (55%); as demonstrated in Figure 4 .

Finally, internet users do not make online purchases due to the following reasons: trust (85%), habit (56%), and reluctant to use a credit card (30%). However 12% of those online users expect that they will start making online buys next year.



Figure 4. Trust on the internet and on e-shops

3. Consumer Behavior.

In this chapter we will discuss the consumer behavior in long distance purchases, and the factors that affect that behavior. Research on the subject will be presented.

3.1 Consumer Behavior- a definition

By the term consumer behavior we refer to all individuals that make purchases and their behavior towards those purchases. The term consumer behavior involves any human behavior related to the purchase and use of products or services. Consumer behavior is defined as: (Siomkos, 2002) all the activities related to the purchase of a product and the mind frame and influences that occur before during and after the purchase of the product, as they are defined by the buyer and consumer of the products and services as well as by the market gatekeepers. The terminology of consumer behavior is closely related to psychology, sociology, social anthropology and economics and is an attempt to understand the decision making process of the consumer. The main characteristics of the consumers often are discussed, for example demographic data of the consumer and attempts to evaluate possible influences on the consumer by certain groups like family friends or society in general.

3.2 Influences upon consumer behavior.

The main reasons that influence a consumer-individual can be readily divided to internal and external (Magnisalis, 1997).

3.2.1. Internal factors.

Internal factors include the physiological factors and the psychological factors. As physiological factors we define the personality characteristics, the age of the person, the sex, the profession, their financial situation, and their way of living in general. Psychological factors are knowledge, understanding, memory, education (experience from previous purchases), motivation (reasons, motive, needs that drove the purchase), and the opinions developed.

3.2.2 External Factors

External factors include social factors like, family, class, or nation, language, religion, and traditions. In terms of finances, we are interested on the income of the consumer, his/her employment, the over-consumerist attitude of the society he/she lives in, and the availability of consumer products. Finally, in external factors we include geographical factors, i.e. the weather, the geography of the area and the frequency of naturally requiring events.

3.2.3 Utilitarian Factors

The following terminology is based on the Technology Acceptance model (TAM) developed by Davis and his team, in order to discuss the acceptance of Information Technology from the individual. The issues discussed by TAM are also the elements that were considered in the creation of the questionnaire. The questionnaire was designed to be an important part of the research associated with this dissertation. Accordingly, the utilitarian factors are the basis on which we consider the result of this research.

Perceived Usefulness

According to Davis this term is used to measure the degree which an individual believes in the use of a certain system in order to increase his/her performance in his/her job. In online shopping the term perceived usefulness is used to explain the belief of the individual that by using technology and internet he/she will improve or support better the experience of making a purchase. Perceived usefulness is directly connected and influenced from the perceived ease of use since the easiest the technology is to use the more useful it is for the individual.

Perceived ease of use

As perceived ease of use Davis characterizes the degree in which the individual believes that the use of a particular system does not require any or much effort. As far as distance purchases are concerned the perceived ease of use refers the difficulty of easiness of using the internet as medium of purchase. As it was previously discussed the perceived ease of use affects the consumers in the choice to purchase or not. The easiest and flawless it is for him/her to uses the medium the more probable he/she is to use it.

Shopping Enjoyment

A further motivation for purchasing items over the internet is shopping enjoyment. This term explore the satisfaction of the entire shopping process over the internet. That of course implies that the more satisfying is the online shopping the more people use the internet as their medium of choice to shop. There is also an increase in the number of people that use the internet to make purchases.

E-buying proneness

A buyer that has completed a successful online purchase will more easily proceed to a new online purchase than a person that has never purchased products or services over the internet. Thus, the consumers previous experiences are enforcing his practice of purchasing online but also improve his/her consumer behavior as an online customer.

Trust

Trust can be one of the main reason people are prefer not to make purchases online. The lack of trust can exist due to various reasons; For example people don't trust companies that offer their products or services over the internet because they have to send their personal sensitive information to a third party they don't know, and can be anywhere in the world. Furthermore, the luck of trust can come from poor website design or the fact that there is no actual physical interaction with a sales person or even the product. There is an uncertainty that the products demonstrated may not be the same as the products received by the consumer. Therefore it is important for the business and website designers to present a design that promotes professionalism and clearly delineated the terms and condition.

Perceived Value

The value of a product or a service to the consumer can be understood through different approaches. According to Ziethaml there are the following definitions of value: a) value is in the low price b) value is what each person wants from the product. c) value is the quality I get for what I pay d) value is what I get for what I give. Those four factors can be summed up under a general definition: The perceived value is the evaluation on the consumer's part of the usefulness of a product in and of what it has been received and what it has been given in return.

3.3 Advanced research on consumer behavior

In the research of Manju, Ahuja, Babita Gupta and Pushkala Raman discuss what influences consumer behavior when shopping online. In particular they discuss customers whose consumer

behavior is based on varied demographic groups and present differentiated attitudes and behavior, for some categories of products or services. They discussed that customer services and ease of use can both be strong motivation to a purchase, but also strong obstacles, when they are lacking. Furthermore security and privacy are the greatest worry of the consumer as far as buying online is concerned. The aforementioned factors are often more important even than the price of the product.

Chung- Hoon Park and Young – Gul Kim developed a model in order to study the consumer behavior to the contents of an e-shop. The result of their research demonstrated that the consumers are influence by the quality of the working environment of the user, from the quality of the information provided and the products and services provided as well as the sense of security while at the e-shop. In addition, as far as customer satisfaction is concerned the quality of information has an important role, leading the customer to an immediate online purchase. Furthermore, it has been pointed out that the information concerning the location of the e-shop is an important factor in the decision making process of the individual, the nature of the e-shop does not alter this fact. All the aforementioned point out the importance of the quality of information provided as well as the importance of a good interface design.

Research completed by Constantinides, concerning the consumer behavior and the decision making process for online buyers revealed both similarities and differences between the online customer behavior and the traditional consumer behavior. The external and personal factors that influence consumer behavior are similar to both groups of consumers. The tools used by traditional and online trades in order to influence the consumer behavior of customer vary vastly. As far as traditional customers are concerned the 4Ps(Product, Price, Place, Promotion) are

enough. The research, however, supports that online customers behavior is influenced by factors related to the interface of the customer with the webpage.

- Website functionality: includes all elements that involve the interactive- ness and ease of use of the webpage.
- Psychological elements: ease the insecurity of the customer and increase the trustworthiness of an online seller and website.
- The contents and the aesthetic presentation of the webpage in relation to marketing.

In Na Li's and Ping Zhang's study 10 issues are discussed as influencing the online markets and how they interact. Those issues are : The external environment, demographic elements, personal characteristics, characteristics of the product or service, the quality of the webpage, the opinion of individuals on online markets, information research before the purchase, how often one shops over the internet and customer satisfaction. The issues that influence most the consumer behavior and his/her intent to buy online are the quality of the webpage and the characteristics of the product or service. The improvement of the product and the quality of the service provided can positively influence the consumer behavior and drive to a faster purchase or even more purchases. It is also important that the satisfaction of the customer is directly associated with the attitude of the customer towards online shopping or towards certain e-shops, that he/she may visit again in the future.

3.4. Research on Greek consumer behavior on long distance buying- consumer behavior index.

On August 2010 the Institute for the Information Society presented data on the consumer behavior of Greeks making long distance purchases via Internet, phone or mail. The results of this research demonstrated that Greeks are using the Internet but are hesitant in making financial interaction over the internet. From the following graphic we reach to the result that:

- One in ten Greeks uses the internet to purchase or order goods and services. While a slightly smaller percentage (8%) made purchases over the internet in the last three months of 2009. The average European percentage for the same activity is 3.5 time higher
- One in twenty Greeks use Internet banking, while the differential between the European Union and Greece in this activity is 27% for 2009(5% for Greece, 32% for Europe)
- Only one in one hundred Greeks uses the internet for sale of goods and services, for example via online auction websites. The European average is approximately 10%.

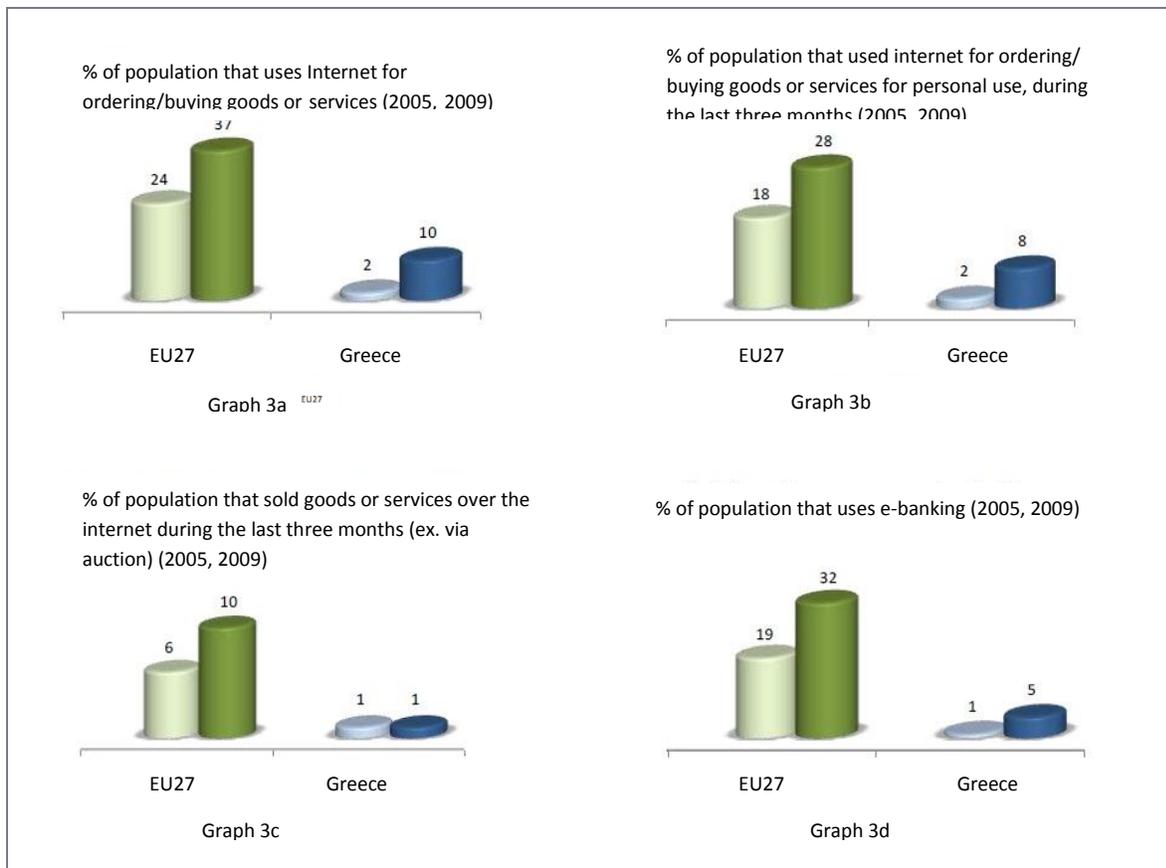


Image 1. Financial transaction percentages.

In term of Consumer trust, the Greek consumers are skeptical and feel unsafe.

- The Greek consumers present one of the highest percentages of skepticism towards the effectiveness of independent organizations for the protection of the consumer, while only four in ten are satisfied by them.
- Over 50% of Greeks consumers seem not to trust all public authorities on consumer protection.

- Only 3 in 10 Greeks feel safe with the current consumer protection schemes, while a similar percentage strongly disagree with this statement.

Finally the consumer seems unhappy with the complaints management of the long distance purchases. In particular for long distance purchases the 21% of Greek consumer says that he/she faced a problem with his/her purchase. The 15% proceed to complain to the seller; however the majority (59%) was dissatisfied with the result of the complaint. The consumers that were happy with the outcome of their complaint were satisfied either because the product was replaced (65%) or was repaired (20%).

Of the 27 countries of the European Union, Greece has the first position on consumer that are unhappy with the way their complaint was dealt with- but do not proceed in any further action (72%). The reason behind this attitude lies in the belief that their complain will not have a positive outcome – this may point towards a less developed consumer awareness.

4. Research Methodology

4.1. Introduction

Before analyzing the research methodology that was used, it would be useful to refer to the general procedure for market research. In particular, a market research consists of the following stages (Fragkos, 2004):

1. Locating the research problem.
2. Formulating the research problem. This stage along with the first one constitutes the preparatory phase of the research.
3. Selecting and designing the research methodology which will be followed. The procedures which will be required to carry out the research are recorded here.
4. Collecting data. The researcher selects the respondents and collects the primary evidence that will be used for the particular research.
5. Analyzing the data. The collected evidence is recorded, encoded and verified.
6. Composing the report and presenting the results. The design of the selected research methodology and the collected evidence as well as their analysis is included in a written report.

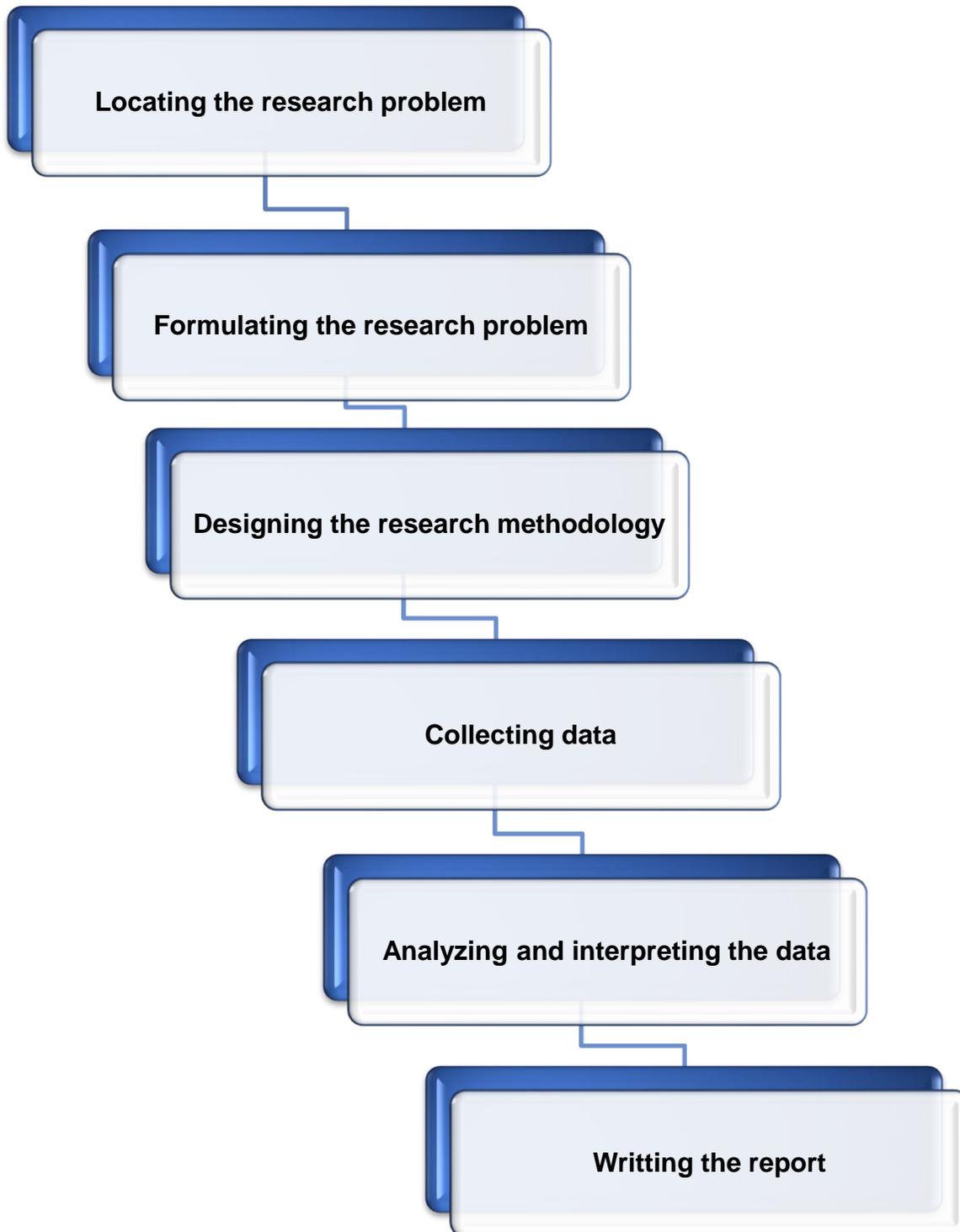


Diagram 1. Stages of market research

4.2. Types of market research

The data during the procedure of market research are collected in three ways: the qualitative, the quantitative or the mixed method (Σιωμκος Γεώργιος, Μαύρος Α. Δημήτριος, 2008).

4.2.1. Qualitative method

The research method used in qualitative market research is in the form of conversation, conducted by specialized sociologists and psychologists (Φίλιας, 2001). It aims in understanding the causes of a problem, the elicitation of the way of thinking and the deeper motives of the consumers. Which type of methodology will be selected by the researcher during the elaboration of a study depends on many factors, as much in theoretical as in practical level. The methods of qualitative research are (Σιωμκος Γεώργιος, Μαύρος Α. Δημήτριος,2008):

- Conversation groups with few people and a predetermined topic.
- Individual interviews that delve deeper in specific topics.
- Observation aiming to highlight specific points.
- Groups designed to promote debate and argumentation.

4.2.2. Quantitative method

Quantitative methods are suitable when the information is limited and specific. Quantitative research is based on collecting quantitative evidence from samples of the target-population, usually by using a structured questionnaire. It aims in statistical analysis and drawing conclusions which reflect the attitude of the whole target-population. The methods of conducting quantitative research are (Siomkos Georgios, Mavros A. Dimitrios, 2008):

- Personal interview (face to face) in the environment of the respondents.
- Telephone interview at the houses of the respondents or their personal phones. The questionnaire is filled in through the telephone.
- Postal method in the form of group or individual consignments.
- Interviews through the Internet. The questionnaire is available in the web and the respondent fills it electronically.

4.2.3. Mixed method

Mixed research is considered the combination of qualitative and quantitative research. With that method, the researcher collects at first primary evidence using either of the methods presented above and tries to analyze quantitative data by carrying out a questionnaire.

4.3. Selecting the research method of the diploma thesis

The methodology of this particular research was based on the quantitative approach. That is because quantitative methods constitute the suitable means when there are specific suppositions which can be checked by the researcher and their main aim is to draw statistical conclusions. In specific, an uploaded in the web [questionnaire](#) was used, which was to be filled in electronically. Thus was judged to be the most appropriate way in order to collect the data faster and proceed with their processing. It also carried only a small cost for the researcher and the response time of the respondents was better managed. In addition, having set as required answering the questions, it was possible to check and ensure completed questionnaires.

The purpose of the developed questionnaire was to study the consuming attitude of the consumers towards the electronic markets and especially from sites for group purchases. The aim was to include only simple and clear, regarding their meaning, questions, thus reducing the required completion time of the questionnaire and increasing the probability that it will be completed.

Generally the questionnaire used is broken into three sections. The first one requires some personal information such as: gender, age, level of education and occupation, in short, it is comprised of demographic questions. It includes four questions: a dichotomized one, an open-choice one and two multiple-choice questions. The second section is comprised of six questions regarding involvement with the web and purchases from sites for mass purchases. Two of the questions are close-ended; allowing the selection of only one answer while the rest are dichotomized. Finally, the third and largest section includes questions related to the focus of the research, which is the consuming attitude of the consumers regarding the electronic mass

markets. There are 43 close-ended questions here with tiered answers. The [Likert](#) scale measuring is largely used, where the degree of coherence in certain topics is presented with constant divisions (seven in this particular case) from minimum to maximum.

5. DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF FINDINGS

5.1 Trust

Trust is an important issue in shopping intentions. Gefen (2000) argued that trust is shown by uncertain and asymmetric data, and trust is the main mechanism in ecommerce for reducing uncertainty in the society. If server providers do not have enough trust from consumers, they will obviously not have orders because consumers do not want to be taken advantage of (Keeney, 1999; Bailey and Bakos, 1997; Gefen, 2000) Jarvenpaa et al. (2000) proved trust can be an antecedent factor for transaction intention and is related to attitude and behavior. Thus, we hypothesized

H1: Trust has positive effect on intention to use Group-Buying sites

H2: Trust has positive effect on Shopping Enjoyment

5.2 Perceived Usefulness (PU)

Usefulness is known to be an important predictor of a system's acceptance and diffusion (Davis, 1989). Usefulness can be defined as “the degree to which a person believes that using a particular system would enhance his or her job performance (Davis, 1989). Rogers

(2003) called usefulness as “relative advantage” while defining it as “the degree to which an innovation is perceived as being better than its precursor.”

In recent years, the correlation between perceived usefulness and attitude applying on the usage of WWW or online shopping had been proven to be of positive significance (O’cass, Fenech(2003))[48], (Vijayasathy(2004))[49]. Their results show that the effects of these relationships were derived from perceived usefulness, not perceived ease of use, as explained by the original TAM.

In this study, perceived usefulness is defined as the degree to which an individual perceives that the use of Group-Buying sites improve his/her efficiency regarding his/her their shopping productivity. Thus, we hypothesized

H3: Perceived Usefulness has positive effect on intention to use Group-Buying sites

H4: Perceived Usefulness has positive effect on Shopping Enjoyment

5.3 Perceived ease of use (PEU)

Ease of use is defined as “the degree to which a person believes that using a particular system would be free of effort” (Davis, 1989). Rogers (2003) and Thompson, Higgins, and Howell (1991) considered ease of use as complexity and defined it as “the degree to which a system is perceived as relatively difficult to understand and use”.

By treating a Group Buying site as a technology system and the Web consumer as a computer user, we could assume that PEOU will enhance user’s intentions to use Group Buying site. Therefore,

H5: Perceived Ease of Use has positive effect on intention to use Group-Buying sites.

H6: Perceived Ease of Use has positive effect on Shopping Enjoyment.

5.4 Shopping Enjoyment.

A common measure of flow is the level of intrinsic enjoyment of an activity, similar to the emotional response of pleasure from environmental psychology. Enjoyment in flow has, in fact, been measured using an adapted scale from environmental psychology (Novak et al. 2000). In the context of online shopping, shopping enjoyment is measured by four-item scale adapted from Ghani et al. (1991). Past studies have indicated that shopping enjoyment can be an important determinant of online customer loyalty (Jarvenpaa and Todd 1997, Rice 1997, Eighmey and McCord 1998). We expect the effects on user's intentions to use a Group Buying site to be similar. We, therefore, hypothesize that:

H7: Shopping Enjoyment has positive effect on intention to use Group-Buying sites.

5.5 E-Buying Proneness

E-Buying Proneness can be defined as an increased propensity to use web sites for purchase purposes and products' evaluations. We believe that users with higher E-Buying Proneness will intend to use sites with purchase offers like Group Buying sites. Moreover, we believe that E-Buying Proneness is a determinant of Shopping Enjoyment. Particularly, users with higher E-Buying Proneness probably they will enjoy more shop activities. Therefore, we hypothesized:

H8: E-Buying Proneness has positive effect on intention to use Group-Buying sites.

H9: E-Buying Proneness has positive effect on Shopping Enjoyment.

5.6 Price consciousness

Price consciousness is the degree to which consumers use price in its negative role as a decision-making criterion (Lichtenstein et al., 1988). Since Group Buying Sites are typically lower in price relative to other e-commerce sites, we believe that consumers with higher Price Consciousness are more influenced by Group Buying Sites. Moreover Consumers with higher price consciousness are more likely to find Group Buying sites useful regarding their Price-Based Purchase criteria. Therefore, we hypothesized:

H10: Price consciousness has positive effect on intention to use Group-Buying sites.

H11: Price consciousness has positive effect on Perceived Usefulness.

5.7 Buying Speed

Buying Speed can be defined as the time period and the easiness of buying a product by consumers. E-commerce provides more speed to consumer's transactions since they could reach any store or product through their personal computers. In addition Group Buying sites integrate e-commerce advantages with more attractive prices. Therefore, we hypothesized:

H12: Buying Speed has positive effect on intention to use Group-Buying sites.

H13: Buying Speed has positive effect on Perceived Usefulness.

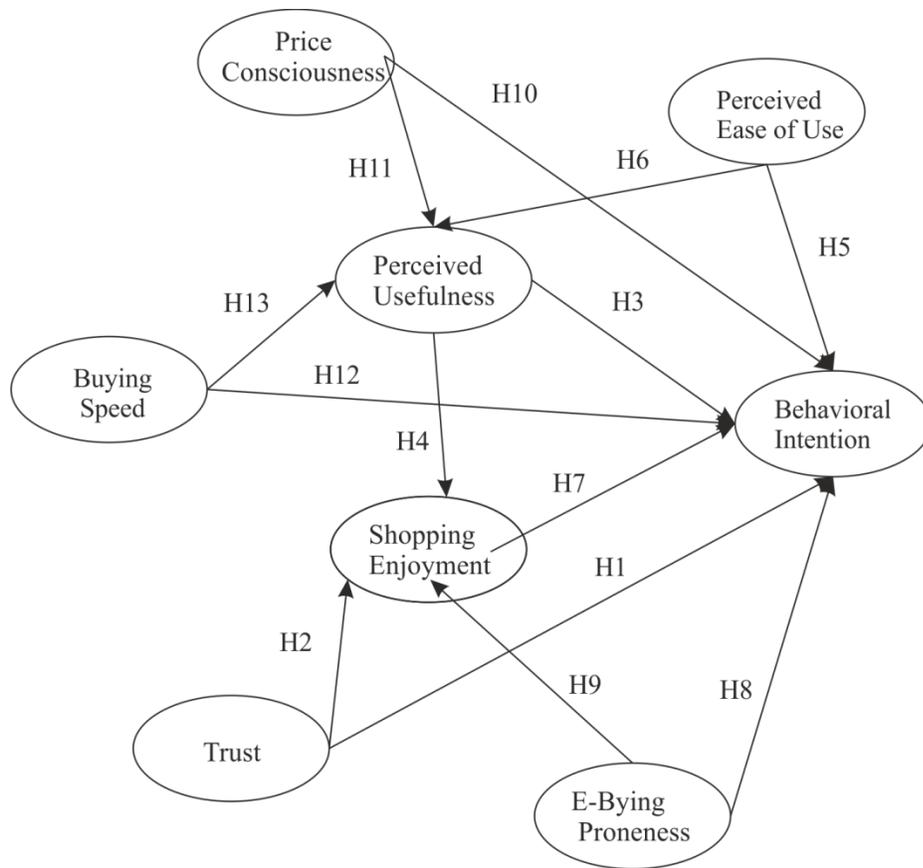


Figure1: Research Model and Hypotheses

Measures

In order to examine the eight latent constructs of the model, we adapted items based on previous studies. A modification of the items was necessary regarding the students' language and the use of social commerce, in order to be relevant to our study. All items were measured on a seven point Likert-type scale with 1 = strongly disagree to 7 = strongly agree. These items have been used extensively in several previous studies of acceptance. For Perceived Usefulness (PU) three items were adopted from Davis (1989). From the same study we adopted three items for Perceived Ease of Use (PEOU) (Davis, 1989). We used four items for Shopping Enjoyment (SE) construct (Ghani et al. 1991). The three Items for Price Consciousness were based on two studies

(Ailawadi et al., 2001; Batra and Sinha, 2000). Buying Speed (BS) is a new variable introduced in this research. We used three items to measure BS. E-Buying Proneness (BP) variable's three items were developed based on E-coupon proneness (Lichtenstein et al., 1990). For Trust construct, we used three items introduced by Pavlou (2003) in e-commerce. Finally, for Behavioral Intention to Use, we adapted 3 items from Davis (1989). To conclude, our measurement instrument consists of 24 items and our research model consists of seven constructs.

Data Analysis

The technique of partial least-squares (PLS) analysis was used to analyze the measurement and the structural model. PLS (Chin, 1998; Falk & Miller, 1992; Wold, 1982) and Linear Structural Relations (LISREL) (Joreskog & Sorbom, 1993) are the most common structural equation modeling (SEM) techniques. LISREL is a covariance-based SEM technique and it uses a maximum likelihood function to obtain estimators in models. On the other side, PLS is component-based and uses a least-squares estimation procedure. PLS is more suitable for our research because it provides several advantages. The main advantages of PLS for testing are: (1) fewer demands on residual distributions; (2) smaller sample; (3) wider number of constructs and/or indicators (Falk & Miller, 1992; Chin, 1998); (4) testing theories in early stages of development (Fornell & Bookstein, 1982); (5) better for prediction.

Regarding sample size, the minimum recommended value is defined by the two following guidelines: (a) 10 times larger than the number of items for the most complex construct; (b) 10

times the largest number of independent variables impacting a dependent variable (Chin, 1998). If the larger value of the two guidelines is supported then the sample size is large enough. The proposed model has four independent variables impacting a dependent variable (Perceived Usefulness). Thus, our sample of 482 participants exceeded the recommended value of 40. Previous PLS studies for technology adoption have found reliable results using smaller sample sizes (So & Bolloju, 2005; Venkatesh & Davis, 2000). In addition, many studies on technology acceptance on learning systems used PLS analysis (e.g. Han, 2003; Hsu, Chen, Chiu, & Ju, 2007; Van Raaij & Schepers, 2008; Zhang, Zhao, & Tan, 2008; Yi & Hwang, 2003).

The internal consistency, convergent validity and discriminant validity prove the reliability and validity of the measurement model (Barclay, Higgins, & Thompson, 1995; Wixom & Watson, 2001). The first step of analysis is the assessment of items' factor loadings on the corresponded constructs. A value higher than 0.7 is acceptable (e.g. Teo, 1999). Moreover, items should load more strongly on their own corresponded variables than on other variables in the model to satisfy the discriminant validity. Regarding the discriminant validity, we also have to measure AVE (Average Variance Extracted). AVE should be larger than 0.5 and the AVE's squared root of each construct should be greater than any correlation with every other construct (Barclay et al., 1995; Chin, 1998; Fornell & Larcker, 1981). Furthermore, a composite reliability greater than 0.7 is considered adequate (Agarwal & Karahanna, 2000; Compeau, Higgins, & Huff, 1999).

The structural model and hypotheses are assessed mainly by two criteria: (1) by examining the variance measured for (R^2) by the antecedent constructs. Cohen (1988) proposed 0.2, 0.13 and 0.26 as small, medium and large variance respectively; (2) the significance of the path coefficients and total effects by using bootstrapping procedure and calculating the t-values.

SmartPLS 2.0 was used for data analysis (Ringle, Wende, & Will, 2005). SmartPLS uses the partial least squares (PLS) method. It is similar to the PLS-Graph. We preferred SmartPLS because is a freeware with improved graphical interface.

Table 1 : Results for the Measurement Model

Construct	Items	Mean	Standard Deviation	Factor Loading	Cronbach a	Composite Reliability	Average variance extracted
				(>0.7) ^a	(>0.7) ^a	(>0.7) ^a	(>0.5) ^a
Trust (T)		4.01	1.54		0.93	0.96	0.88
	T1			0.94			
	T2			0.93			
	T3			0.94			
Perceived Usefulness (PU)		4.39	1.43		0.88	0.93	0.81
	PU1			0.90			
	PU2			0.91			
	PU3			0.89			
Perceived Ease of Use (PEOU)		5.00	1.50		0.91	0.95	0.85
	PEOU1			0.83			
	PEOU2			0.88			
	PEOU3			0.77			
Price Consciousness		5.38	1.05		0.72	0.80	0.66

(PC)							
PC1					0.71		
PC2					0.83		
PC3					0.76		
Shopping	Enjoyment	4.36	1.56		0.92	0.95	0.86
(SE)							
SE1					0.94		
SE2					0.93		
SE3					0.91		
E-Buying	Proneness	4.37	1.60		0.92	0.95	0.88
(BP)							
BP1					0.94		
BP2					0.95		
BP3					0.90		
SC4					0.83		
Buying Speed (BS)		4.50	1.31				
BS1					0.89	0.77	0.78
BS2					0.74		
BS3					0.76		
Behavioral Intention to		4.45	1.73		0.96	0.97	0.93
Use (BI)							
BI1					0.95		
BI2					0.97		

Discriminant validity

This study used Fornell and Larcker (1981) test to verify the discriminant validity. Discriminant validity is supported when the square root of the average variance extracted (AVE) of a construct is higher than any correlation with another construct. This means that a construct correlation with its indicators is higher than with any other construct. In Table 3 the diagonal elements are the AVEs. All the AVEs are greater than any other correlation. Thus, the discriminant validity of the proposed research model is verified.

Table 2: Discriminant validity for the measurement model

Construct	T	PU	PEOU	PC	SE	BP	BS	BI
T	0.94							
PU	0.66	0.90						
PEOU	0.62	0.64	0.92					
PC	0.30	0.41	0.40	0.75				
SE	0.69	0.67	0.58	0.31	0.93			
BP	0.60	0.51	0.51	0.38	0.65	0.93		

BS	0.39	0.32	0.30	0.14	0.30	0.44	0.73
BI	0.74	0.78	0.67	0.38	0.75	0.59	0.96

Testing Hypotheses

SmartPLS 2.0 was also used to examine the statistical significance of the relations in the model. A bootstrap procedure with 1000 resamples was applied. Figure 4 and Table 4 summarize the results for the hypotheses. Regarding the Behavioral Intention to Use, we find a direct positive effect of Perceived Usefulness, Perceived Ease of Use, Shopping Enjoyment and Trust but no direct effect of Price Consciousness, Buying Speed and E-Buying Proneness. Moreover, Perceived Ease of Use, Buying Speed and Price Consciousness are strong determinants of Perceived Usefulness. In addition Trust and E-Buying Proneness are defined Shopping Enjoyment.

Moreover, in the PLS analysis the R^2 values are used as a goodness-of-fit measure (Hulland, 1999). The model explains almost the 75% of variance in Behavioral Intention to Use. The effects of Perceived Usefulness (0.35), Perceived Ease of Use (0.12), Shopping Enjoyment (0.24) and Trust (0.25) are strong. This indicates that these 4 constructs are very important for the explanation of the Behavioral Intention to Use F-commerce. (Fig. 4, Table 4).

Hypothesis	Path	Path coefficient	t value	Results
H1	T -> BI	0.25	3.79	support

H2	T -> SE	0.28	4.27	support
H3	PU->BI	0.35	5.82	support
H4	PU->SE	0.31	4.39	support
H5	PEOU->BI	0.12	2.07	support
H6	PEOU->PU	0.53	10.22	support
H7	SE->BI	0.24	3.44	support
H8	BP->BI	0.03	0.53	not support
H9	BP->SE	0.32	4.11	support
H10	PC->BI	0.01	0.43	not support
H11	PC->PU	0.18	3.27	support
H12	BS->BI	0.02	0.53	not support
H13	BS->PU	0.14	2.44	support

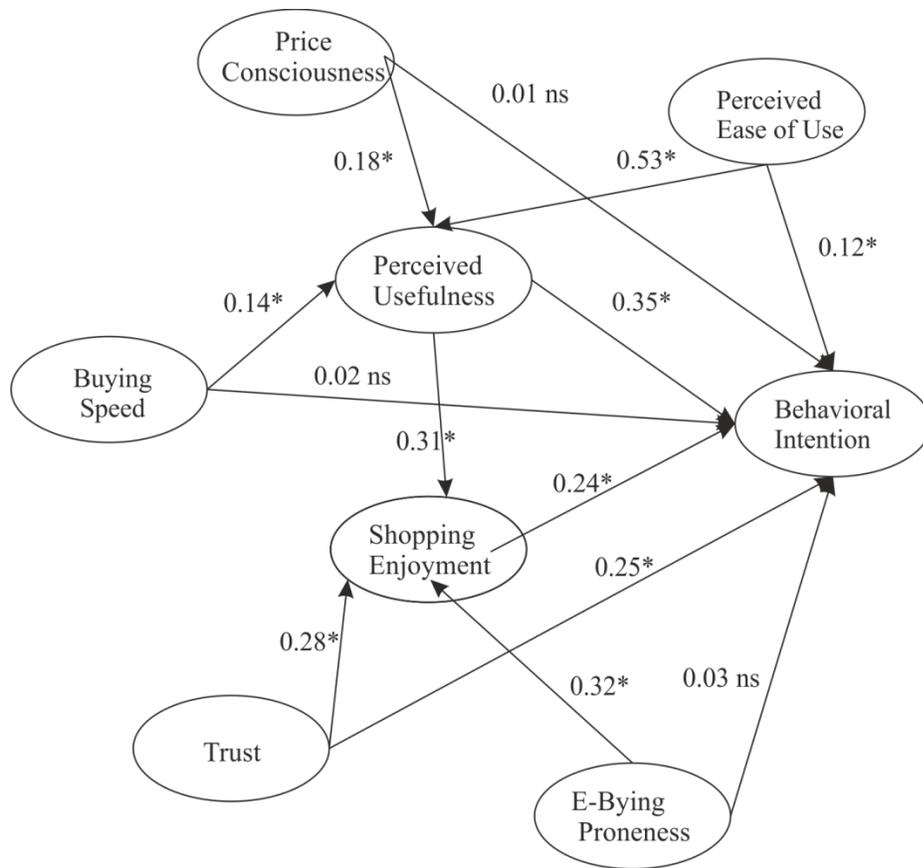


Figure 2: Structural Model with Path Coefficients

6. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Group Buying sites are the last trend of e-commerce. The aim of this study is to explain why e-consumers intent to use them. The results demonstrate that Perceived Usefulness, Perceived Ease of Use, Shopping Enjoyment, Trust have direct effect on Behavioral Intention to use Group Buying sites. Moreover, Buying Speed and Price Consciousness have indirect effects on Behavioral Intention through Perceived Usefulness, while E-Buying Proneness defines indirectly Behavioral Intention through Shopping Enjoyment.

According to the direct effect on Behavioral Intention to use Group Buying (GB) sites, we assume that e-consumers are more likely to use Group Buying sites if these sites are easy to use and useful regarding their purchases. Moreover, it is more likely that e-consumers will use GB sites if their transactions are enjoyable. In addition, GB sites must provide confidence and trust regarding their transactions and the quality of the products that demonstrate.

Moreover, GB sites are useful because they provide quick purchases in better prices. Through GB sites, e-consumers do not need to search through the internet for products in good prices, since they could find many interesting products in GB sites with much lower prices. Moreover, GB sites are very useful for e-consumers with price as the most important factor for their purchases. Finally, users with propensity to buy through the internet are more likely to enjoy shopping through GB sites.

To conclude, this study provides useful results to vendors, developers and researchers. Regarding vendors and developers, this study defines why consumers tend to use GB sites for purchasing purposes. Thus, the results might be useful for other applications of e-commerce. Particularly, Practitioners can apply the findings of this study to focus on the determinants of success for their online shopping websites.

There is a need for further research efforts focused on accumulating empirical data and addressing the limitations of the present work.

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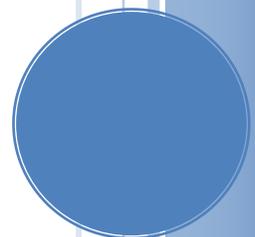
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ANNEX

GROUP BUYING RESEARCH



A. DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

1. Gender

Woman

Man

2. Age _____

3. Level of education you have completed :

Secondary Education

Higher Education (Computer and Information related)

Higher Education (other)

Graduate Studies

4. Type of employment

Public servant

Private Employee

Freelance

Student

Unemployed

B. Internet – Group Buying

1. How much time per day are you using the internet

- Less than 1 hour
- 1 -3 ώρες
- 3-5 hours
- More than 5 hours

2. How much time a day you spent with group buying sites (group on, deal in, etc.)

- Less than 30 minutes
- 30 minutes - 1 hours
- 1-2 hours
- 2 hours and over

3. Are you making purchases from group buying sites (group on, deal in, etc.)?

- Yes
- NO

4. If not in the previous: Do you think you would ever want to purchase from group buying sites (group on, deal in, etc.)?

- Yes
- NO

5. Do you buy from internet sites except group buying sites (group on, deal in, etc.)?

YES

NO

6. If not in the previous: Do you think you would ever want to purchase from internet sites ?

Yes

No



C. Consumer behavior for group buying sites

In every next question you should note a number from 1 to 7. Tick 1 when you do not agree at all with the proposal, while the 7 tick agree very much with the proposal.

Caution: Questions about websites group market people who have used answering about the interaction they had with people who do not use them depending on the impression they have formed or what they think about them.

1	I make comparison / price research before buying a product	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2	It is very important for me to buy a product at the best price	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
3	I think the price of a product is the most important factor to buy something	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
4	I think group buying websites offer or would offer me attractive purchases in connection with the money I spend	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
5	I think group buying websites offer me or would offer me attractive buying opportunities	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
6	I think that usually the products and services available on the group buying websites deserve the money that cost	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
7	I think the value and quality that I enjoy or would enjoy buying from group buying websites is very good	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	Using group buying websites improves or would improve my	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

	purchasing abilities to find profitable purchases							
9	Using group buying websites improves or would improve my purchasing efficiency	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
10	I find it useful to use group buying websites	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
11	I learned quickly or I think it is easy to use group buying websites	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
12	The interaction with the group buying websites is clear and understandable or I think it would be easy and understandable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
13	The group buying websites are easy to use and I think it would be easy to use	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
14	I find it pleasant to purchase or I would find it pleasant to purchase from the group buying websites	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
15	I find it interesting or I would find it interesting to purchase from the group buying websites	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
16	I find it enjoyable or I would find it enjoyable to purchase from the group buying websites	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
17	I trust the group buying websites	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
18	I think the offers from the group buying websites are reliable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
19	I trust the group buying websites for the accuracy of the information they provide	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
20	I find it pleasantly or I would find it pleasantly to purchase from the group buying websites	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
21	I find it enjoyable or I would find it enjoyable to purchase products and services from the internet	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

22	Is or would be very interesting to search for information and to buy products through internet	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
23	As soon as I find something I want to buy I buy it , if I have the money	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
24	Usually I look carefully to find products that meet my needs	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
25	Usually I buy products that I like without a second thought if I have money	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
26	If I have the opportunity in the future I would (again) use the group buying websites to make purchases.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
27	I predict that I will (re)use in future the group buying websites to make some of my purchases	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
28	Generally I think that I will (re)use in future the group buying websites to make some of my purchases	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
29	The employers should listen and follow the decisions of their leaders without question	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
30	Those responsible for an organization / company should take most decisions on their own	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
31	The employers should not question the decisions of their leaders	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
32	Individual profits are more important than the collective prosperity	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
33	The individual success is more important than team success	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
34	Being a member of a group is more important than to have autonomy and independence	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
35	To properly perform your duties are more important than concern for	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

	others							
36	A demanding job with high pay is better than one that gives you the opportunity to have quality of life but with lower earnings	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
37	The man must be strong and the woman should be soft	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
38	When I start a new job, I'm afraid that I might not complete it	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
39	I fear the uncertainty about the future	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
40	I fear the strange, dangerous situations and new-unknown activities	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
41	The degree I agree with the notions of "frugality-do economy"	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
42	The degree I agree with the concepts of "persistence, obsessed"	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
43	The degree of frequency basis you feel the emotion of shame	1	2	3	4	5	6	7