

E-Marketing Mix Variables to Create Online Brand Equity in the Indian Context

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ABSTRACT

This paper is an attempt to investigate and empirically validate e-marketing mix framework creating online brand equity suitable for adaptation in the Indian context. Exploratory and confirmatory factor analysis are used to identify and validate the e-marketing mix variables to create online brand equity. Primary product and service offerings, website content, customer care and relationship, website interactivity, website's security and reliability, and website speed are the six e-marketing mix elements identified. Also, a conceptual categorization is used to propose and develop a typology that classifies these six variables into primary and secondary activities. The identified e-marketing mix variables will be an insightful aid to planning various marketing activities and controlling other outcome variables like online satisfaction, e-loyalty, online brand equity, etc. This is one of the first attempts to propose and verify e-marketing mix variables for a developing economy like India and classify them under a generic parsimonious dimensional framework for e-commerce.

KEYWORDS

E-Commerce, E-Marketing Mix, Internet Marketing, Online Retail

1. INTRODUCTION

Coined by Neil Borden, the word “marketing mix” signifies different combinations of marketing activities, that lead to successful marketing programs. This has been a subject of considerable research for last 50 years. However, with the advent of electronic commerce (e-commerce), the existing marketing mix elements or marketing activities tend to be inadequate. Today, with Internet becoming an omnipresent market place, the traditional 4 Ps of marketing mix have shifted to relationship building, interactivity, customization, word of mouth, online reviews, social media marketing and building online communities (Allard et al., 2020; Bapna et al., 2019; Chakraborty & Bhat, 2017; Haikel-elsabeh et al., 2019; K. Wang et al., 2020; Zollo et al., 2020).

These e-marketing mix variables become even more complex when we turn our attention to fast growing emerging economies like India. Though electronic commerce as an industry and a marketing phenomenon existed since 1990, its advent into the Indian economy has been only in 1999. Since then, in last 22 years, the Indian e-commerce industry has established itself as a thriving and a fast-growing sector making forays into the developing the economy.

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India is one of the most diverse countries in terms of culture and ethnicity. The value & belief system of Indian consumers are influenced by religious tradition and are significantly different from their western counterparts (Jain, 2020). In case of deeply-rooted culture, it becomes difficult for marketers and organizations to standardize strategies and outperform competition. For example, online shopping for Indian consumers was initially limited to only browsing and checking out prices (Khare, 2011). Later it was found that, once these consumers gain online shopping experience, the socio-economic factors do not affect their behavior. There are various other preference nuances of Indian consumer behavior which, like any other dynamic society, is continuously evolving.

It can be assumed that irrespective of the stage of economy (developed or developing) and ethnographic differences, the online milieu is characterized by multi-faceted and diversely complicated many-to-many communications. This has inherently transformed the consumer's decision making process (Novak & Hoffman, 2012). The generalizability of theories and framework like e-marketing mix framework developed in matured market is questioned from time to time as such theories and frameworks underplays the environment cues like the demand structures and cultural factors in emerging economies (M. Mukherjee, 2014). This leads us to our first research aim.

Aim 1: To investigate the applicability of existing e-marketing mix variables for the Indian e-commerce sector.

Marketing mix elements are pre-cursors to higher order marketing constructs such as brand equity (C. S. Park & Srinivasan, 1994). Established research has proven that, brand equity works as a source of competitive advantage and is a crucial dimension of business success (Aaker, 1991, 1992). For e-commerce companies, the e-marketing mix elements can similarly be assumed as pre-cursors to "online" brand equity. Availing information to understand how consumer decides before placing orders can help e-commerce platforms to build their brand (Maaya, 2020).

The Indian e-commerce sector is highly competitive. The competition becomes fiercer as global e-commerce companies (Amazon, Walmart-Flipkart, Alibaba) come forward to catch this fast-growing market. An important question that e-commerce companies are trying to answer is, the appropriate e-marketing mix elements needed to boost their online brand equity (C. H. Park, 2017; I. Park et al., 2010). E-marketing mix variables prescribed for building online brand equity needs to be affirmed for suitability in the Indian context. This leads us to our second research aim.

Aim 2: To validate the role of identified e-marketing mix variables in creating online brand equity for Indian e-commerce sector.

The following section highlights the existing e-marketing mix frameworks in the literature. Subsequently, related hypothesis is formed followed by the research methodology, analysis and results. The study has used exploratory and confirmatory factor analysis to derive a list of e-marketing mix variables and its relationship with online brand equity.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

2.1 Existing E-Marketing Mix Frameworks

Since the concept of four P's was proposed by McCarthy (McCarthy, 1960), the prime marketing classificatory schemata have been revisited from time to time. The evolution of the internet brought about a unique set of characteristics broadly different from the conventional brick - and - mortar setup, stretching the traditional marketing methods. In an attempt to define e-marketing and its activities, previous authors of the "revisionist" literature of the e-marketing mix has demanded a holistic view of the network system (Dennis et al., 2005; Kirithi & McIntyre, 2002).

To cater to the changing demands of the online marketing environment, the four Ps had been augmented, often with small or no change in the traditional e-marketing mix models. Kirthi and McIntyre (2002) proposed an e-marketing mix model defined as 4Ps+P2C2S3. The first 4 Ps stands for product, price, place and promotion, the next 2Ps stand for personalization and privacy, 2Cs stand for customer service, community and 3Ss for site, security and sales promotion respectively (Kirthi & McIntyre, 2002). Chen summarized e-marketing mix variables into 8 Ps. The first four Ps remain unchanged while the rest are precision (well – maintained database management system), payment systems, personalization, and push & pull. The 3 Cs model, given by Prandelli and Verona (2006), comprising of content, community and commerce, is the most parsimonious online marketing mix framework proposed so far. The website information or content which is available to the customers is its first dimension. The second dimension describes the platform that should be available for interaction and building relationships. The third-dimension commerce includes all the four Ps of marketing (Prandelli & Verona, 2006). Yet another e-marketing mix variable framework viz. the '7 Cs' framework for e-tail mix or e-marketing mix includes convenience, customer value and benefit, cost to the customer, computing and category management, customer franchise, customer care and service and communication & customer relationships (Dennis et al., 2005). Another view of e-marketing mix variable's framework, 4Ss, extend it to the strategic and business level. The 4S are scope, site, synergy and system. The scope dimension accounts for the strategic role of any e-commerce company, site dimension discusses the interface of the e-commerce website, synergy depicts the integration of the offline and the online activities and system refers mainly to data base management and security features of the website (Constantinides, 2002).

The above discussed e-marketing mix frameworks indicate that there are overlaps in the e-marketing mix variables proposed. Additionally, the marketing activities or e-marketing mix variables used are diverse with minimal uniformity. Though the researches above tend to create a broad marketing element classification but subsequent studies related to consumer behavior and attitude formation in the context of online shopping have refrained from using the same with unanimity. For example, information search, website related factors, privacy and security, delivery related factors, Customer Relationship Management (CRM), personalization, and the word-of-mouth factor (WOM) are applied with little uniformity in such studies.

Next section highlights the emerging and dynamic marketing mix variables collated from previous research.

2.2 E-Marketing Mix Variables

The literature pertaining to e-marketing mix broadly speaks of the following variables - *website content/ information, website aesthetics, primary product and service offerings, website security-reliability, customer care and relationship and website interactivity*. Various subfactors related to these variables are discussed in this section.

2.2.1 Website Content/Information

Website content/ information is defined in the form of the accurate, searchable, complete, relevant, up-to-date & understandable information available on any website. E-marketing mix variable related to website content have been discussed by several authors who have emphasized upon the availability, relevance and transparency of information (VELTRI et al., 2020; Zhou et al., 2018).

Accurate and current form of information has been claimed to be essential for online service quality, online satisfaction (W. Liu et al., 2016; Salomone, 2017; Wigand, 2012) and e-loyalty (Geok et al., 2018). A current, relevant and accurate form of product information hosted on a website helps in product comparison and builds online trust (Pengnate & Sarathy, 2017).

Website content has been identified as a primary motivating factor in online purchase for Indian consumers (Sahney et al., 2013a; Sahney, Ghosh, & Shrivastava, 2013b) which helps to create online brand equity.

2.2.2 Website Aesthetics

Website aesthetics is defined by website layout & color scheme, uploading and rendering speed and extent of smooth & easy browsing experience. The designs of unity, complexity, intensity, interactivity, and novelty jointly determine the aesthetics of websites (Jiang et al., 2016). Website aesthetics characteristics can be divided into four features namely website format, website speed, website navigation and dynamic online features. ‘Website format’ is associated with the layout and color scheme of a website. Uploading and rendering speed is represented by ‘website speed’. ‘Website navigation’ is the overall browsing experience of a user while browsing a product catalog or steering through the transaction process. The above-discussed characteristics help in making a website efficient and reliable (Wigand, 2012), contributing to customer satisfaction and building online trust (Chi, 2018).

The relationship between website design and aesthetics like menu layout, professional design, logical presentation, sequencing and presentation of product availability and online customer satisfaction and trust have been found significant (Pandey & Chawla, 2018). Website aesthetics is a physical evidence of services marketing that helps in creating brand equity (S. Mukherjee & Shivani, 2016).

With the advent of social media marketing, website aesthetics is gradually evolving as one of the important dimensions of website design from the Indian customer’s perspective. This is further reflected by recent research in this domain (Islam et al., 2019; Khare, 2011a; Reddy & Jagadeesan, 2020; Sahney et al., 2013a).

2.2.3 Primary Product and Service Offerings

Product, in any e-commerce website, is a combination of the actual or primary product that is purchased, the ‘customization features’ that the website provides on the product, the smoothness of ‘online transaction’ and browsing experience in the overall purchase process and the ‘order – fulfillment and final delivery’ of the purchased product by the e-commerce website.

‘Customization features’ refer to the availability of tailor-made options, specifications and product/ design choices catering to specific needs of the online customer. (Zhang & Zheng, 2021). These include automated purchase recommendation, personalization of advertisement and discounts as per needs of the customer and augmentation to the primary product offered (Pallant et al., 2020). ‘Online transaction’ is characterized as flawless and hassle-free process along with smooth billing. Some authors have stressed on easy navigation and the time saved during a transaction process because of the easy navigation (Küster et al., 2016; Pandey & Chawla, 2018). ‘Order-fulfillment and final delivery’ is characterized as timely and fast delivery of purchased products. With timely product delivery becoming mandatory for most online purchases, the main focus is on delivering right and undamaged product (Mallapragada et al., 2016; Nguyen et al., 2018, 2019; Vakulenko et al., 2019), with focus on appropriate packaging.

Customization w.r.t. to product as well as website offerings significantly contribute towards loyalty and customer satisfaction. Furthermore, there are evidences that customization in addition to web page design and website interactivity leads to customer satisfaction (Khare & Khare, 2011). In developing countries like India where e-commerce is comparatively a new phenomenon, consumer’s product delivery related concerns are always prevailing (Kshetri, 2007). The cash-on-delivery system has assured consumers in reference to their online purchase (Sahney et al., 2013a, 2013b). Product and services offered by e-commerce retailers always at the core of brand equity.

2.2.4 Website Security-Reliability

Website security and reliability is defined in terms of ‘financial security’ and ‘privacy of personal information’ during online shopping. ‘Financial security’ indicates security of consumer credit cards/debit cards/bank account and other financial information provided to the website. ‘Privacy of personal information’ indicates confidentiality of customer’s personal details both during browsing

the website and when a transaction is initiated (Al-Jabri et al., 2020; Anic et al., 2019; Punyatoya, 2019; T. Sheng & Liu, 2010; Yun et al., 2019).

E-marketing mix variables related to security and privacy play a significant role to increase the level of trust amongst customers (Barusman, 2019). This e-marketing mix variable impacts the purchase intention as well as contributes to online satisfaction, e-loyalty, online trust, online service quality, online brand image and online brand equity (Marianus & Ali, 2021). Security and privacy can be related to the familiarity of the consumer with the website, which in turn exhibits a risk-free attitude while making online transactions through the portal (J.-H. Kim et al., 2009).

In tune with the risk averse and financial security driven mentality of the Indian consumer, website security and privacy are determined as the major barriers in adopting e-commerce (Kaushik et al., 2018). This is further augmented by the perceived risk of revealing personal and financial information (Adhikari & Panda, 2018). Both this behavior affects online purchase intention and therefore online brand equity significantly.

2.2.5 Customer Care and Relationship

Customer care and relationship or 'responsiveness', is characterized as solving queries on time, intimating customers about new products from time to time, availability of an exhaustive list of frequently asked questions (FAQs) and ease to contact the customer service personnel. The response of a website to customer interaction and how customer queries are handled form the key determinants of 'responsiveness' (Kumar & Ayodeji, 2021). A few authors have also studied 'responsiveness' in terms of care provided by the websites to their customers during both pre-and-post purchase activities (Srinivasan et al., 2002).

E-marketing mix variable related to responsiveness is used as one of the items for developing a multi-item scale for measuring service quality of online firms. Commitment towards addressing consumer's problems, concerns and complaints is critical for customer satisfaction (Istanbulluoglu, 2017; Santouridis & Veraki, 2017). Responsiveness has also been featured as an important variable while assessing online brand image (Silva & Alwi, 2008), customer-based brand equity (Gürhan-Canli et al., 2016), and service quality (Ahmad & Khan, 2017).

Responsiveness also been found to act as an antecedent to online shopping behavior in the Indian context (Dhingra et al., 2020). With the advent of Artificial Intelligence, automated chatbots are increasingly being used by websites to interact with customers and respond to consumer queries. However, research on the effect of AI on this marketing mix variable is scarce.

2.2.6 Website Interactivity

Literature review revealed there are a few other variables which also may be included in the list of e-marketing mix variables. These include; feature of 'sharing' over social media, the 'policies of an e-commerce website', and the 'entertainment factor' of a website. These variables enhance the interaction of customers with the website, and can collectively be termed as *website interactivity*.

'Sharing' refers to exchange of information in the form of product/service feedback or experience. This takes place between customers using community forums, social networking websites or e-retailer's platforms. Exchange of information which revolves around the products and services helps to create a community (Tolba & Mourad, 2011).

The 'policies of an e-commerce website' refer to the financial and physical risk-free norms available on the website w.r.t. returning of a product, compensation required in case of damages & terms and conditions of various processes. Businesses which opt for transparent privacy policies generate better trust among the consumers (Chang et al., 2018; Duell et al., 2018; Guo et al., 2021). Return policies can affect the purchase intent of a customer towards online shopping (J.-H. Kim & Lennon, 2010). There are studies that indicate that return policies can also affect online satisfaction (Jeng, 2017; Khouja et al., 2019; Pennarola et al., 2019) and e-loyalty (Sinha, 2010). Other studies

have demonstrated the effectiveness of return policies and their association with customer motivation to shop, consumer intention, web equity and e-marketing strategy formulation (Jeng, 2017).

The 'entertainment factor' of a website is defined as the degree of enjoyment a customer feels while visiting the site. An individual's Internet shopping experience is moderated through pleasurable online shopping, virtual social interaction and often one-to-one interactions with the company representatives (Barlow et al., 2004). Many studies have attempted to understand these hedonic factors (such as presence of 'Avatars') to map the influence of entertainment on the online shopping behavior (Foster et al., 2021). There are studies that have recognized the prevalence of a virtual world in the consumer psyche as one of the important factors in brand building and revenue generation (Barnes & Mattsson, 2011). The attribute of 'entertainment factor' is also used as a variable in some studies of online satisfaction (White Baker et al., 2019), online branding (Carlson & O'Casey, 2011), and online trust (Urban et al., 2009).

2.3 Role of E-Marketing Mix Variables to Create Online Brand Equity

Brand Equity is the added value which a brand name provides to the product or service (Aaker, 1991). It is evident from the traditional literature that marketing mix variables lead to the formation of brand equity (1994; Yoo et al., 2000). The importance of marketing mix variables in creating brand equity and its sources has been addressed from time to time, establishing the fact that marketing actions have proved to have an impact on brand equity. Each step of marketing actions is counted and the differential effect of consumer response accumulates to build a strong brand over time (Keller, 2016).

Internet marketing is progressing and going through technological changes continuously. Even in developing economies like India, these evolutions are plainly observed. The brand equity of e-commerce companies is referred to as "Online Brand Equity" in this study. Unfortunately, literature pertaining to e-marketing mix variables to build online brand equity in the context of emerging economies is scarce. When it comes to Indian context, such literature is outright sparse. There is an irregularity in using the e-marketing mix variables as antecedent to online brand equity. In the absence of a definitive list of e-marketing mix variables, it becomes more difficult to track and trace the roots of online brand equity. The study aims to bridge this gap.

3. RESEARCH GAPS AND HYPOTHESIS

All the e-marketing mix variables, as discussed above, have been used in over two decades of research with considerable overlap and very little uniformity. It is evident that, there is a gap in conceptualization of a definitive list of e-marketing mix variables. Furthermore, the characteristics of these variables are not consistent in the literature - for example, *Website Content/ Information* in some research is referred to as reliable information while the same is regarded as up-to-date information in others.

The gap is even more prominent in the Indian context, where despite the growing size of online Indian retail, little research has been done to understand the antecedents of online brand equity. Ironically, over the last two decades, online marketing has made wide forays into the Indian consumer psyche. This underpins the importance of assessing the applicability and relevance of existing e-marketing mix variables for Indian retail.

Notwithstanding the non-uniformity in definition and usage, there is also lack of literature, both in the Indian context or otherwise, in elucidating the relationship of the e-marketing mix variables with online brand equity. In the absence of uniformity, it becomes even more difficult to measure and validate these non-uniformly defined e-marketing mix variables that may create brand equity of online companies (online brand equity).

The study intends to cater to all these three research gaps, viz., non-uniformity of e-marketing mix variables, their relationship with online brand equity and the establishment of such a relation in the Indian online retail context.

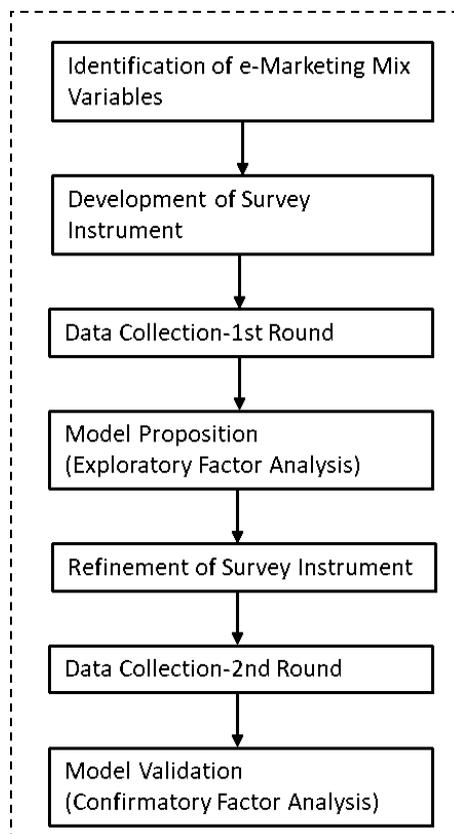
To alleviate these research gaps, the following research hypothesis are tested in the subsequent sections:

- H₁**: For Indian Online Shoppers, Website content/information significantly affects Online Brand Equity.
- H_{2a}**: For Indian Online Shoppers, Website format significantly affects Online Brand Equity.
- H_{2b}**: For Indian Online Shoppers, Website speed significantly affects Online Brand Equity.
- H_{2c}**: For Indian Online Shoppers, Website navigation significantly affects Online Brand Equity.
- H₃**: For Indian Online Shoppers, Primary Product and Service Offerings significantly affect Online Brand Equity.
- H₄**: For Indian Online Shoppers, Website security-reliability significantly affects Online Brand Equity.
- H₅**: For Indian Online Shoppers, Customer care and relationship significantly affects Online Brand equity.
- H₆**: For Indian Online Shoppers, Website Interactivity significantly affects Online Brand Equity.

4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The important steps in the research methodology include identification of e-marketing mix variables, survey instrument development, data collection, data analysis, model proposition and model validation. The research methodology outline is given in Figure 1. In total 57 items were identified to measure the e-marketing mix variables. The details are given in the following section.

Figure 1. Research methodology outline



4.1 Identification of E-Marketing Mix Variables

In total, 57 items were identified to measure the major e-marketing mix variables; *website content/information, website aesthetics, primary product and service offerings, website security-reliability, customer care and relationship and website interactivity*. The details of the same is given in Table 1.

4.2 Survey Instrument Development

57 items adapted from various studies was not developed for Indian consumers. Therefore, face validity assessment was done to check content validity. Face validity is defined as the degree that respondents assess and accept an instrument to be appropriate (Mary R. Lynn, 1986). As the first phase of pre-testing, the draft of the questionnaire was given to 3 academicians to assess the clarity, specificity, use of language, and font size used. All the 57 items were retained and a ten-point rating scale was used; 1 represented low effect, 5 represented medium effect and 10 very high effect. It is assumed that the

Table 1. Details of Items Used to measure the e-marketing mix variables

Constructs	References	Items Selected
Website Content/Information	Wigand (2012), Lee (2010), Gao and Koufaris (2006), Kabadayi and Gupta (2011), Chung and Shin (2010), Liu et al. (2008), Rod et al. (2009), Leelakulthanit and Hongcharu (2010)	V1: At this website the information related to the product and services are easy to find.
		V2: The product information available at the website has clarity and easily understandable.
		V3: At this website in-depth or comprehensive information is available.
		V4: The information provided is accurate and reliable.
		V5: The information search function is easy to use and is helpful.
		V6: Retrieving any information from this website is very fast
		V7: The organization and layout of the website facilitate searching for products.
		V8: This website helps in researching of the product.
		V9: The site has well-arranged categories.
		V10: The website is laid out in logical fashion.
Website Aesthetics/Website Design -Website format -Website Speed -Website Navigation	Otim and Grover (2006), Wigand (2012), Wolfinbarger and Gilly (2003), Fan and Su (2011)	V11: The product can be reached with a minimum number of clicks.
		V12: The website is always available for business.
		V13: The website pages load fast.
		V14: The website pages do not freeze or crash at any point of time.
		V15: The website is very attractive
		V16: This website doesn't look appealing
		V17: The website is very creative
		V18: The website has a good balance between text and graphics
		V19: The website provides uncluttered screens
		V20: The website is very engaging
		V21: It is easy to move around in this website
		V22: The website and all of its linked pages works well
		V23: This website uses good colour combinations
		V24: The scrolling through the pages is kept to minimum
Primary Product and Service Offering	Wigand (2012), Rachjaibun (2007), Parasuraman et al. (2005), Wolfinbarger and Gilly (2003), Julie (2002), Sinha (2010),	V25: The website has the feature of "shopping cart" which enables shopping of more than one product at a time.
		V26: The feature of 'zooming' the products to check the colour and size is easy and hassle free.
		V27: The information related to the payment process like "credit card/debit card/COD/EMI" available at one place.
		V28: The website has wide categories of products and it can be called "one-stop-shop".
		V29: The website supports the feature of product comparison.
		V30: The website discloses the actual time required in a delivery process.
		V31: The website also provides the details of the courier services/mailling services.
		V32: The website also has an additional feature of COD
		V33: The website delivers their product to most of the cities of India.
		V34: The website has this feature to check the 'pin codes' which are under the delivery zone.
Website Security-Reliability	Otim and Grover (2006), Hyun et al. (2006), Rose et al. (2012)	V35: The website ensures timely delivery of the product.
		V36: The website makes it easy to track the order.
		V37: Features like sorting according to price, size, color, gender, brands etc are available and easy to use.
		V38: The website has an easy and transparent billing process.
		V39: The website has adequate security features
		V40: Personal information cannot be misused by this website
		V41: The website protects information about the credit or debit card used
		V42: The transactions are very safe
		V43: The website enables easy contact to the customer service representatives.
		V44: The customer service's email id and contact numbers are easily available.
Customer Care and Relationship	Parasuraman et al. (2005), Rowley (2006), Wolfinbarger and Gilly (2003), Lee (2010),	V45: After sales support is excellent at this website.
		V46: The customer service representatives are available round the clock.
		V47: The website provides convenient options for returning items.
		V48: The website handles product returns well.
		V49: The customer service representatives are also available online.
		V50: The website offers the ability to speak to a live person if there is a problem
		V51: The website gathers feedback from the customers effectively.
		V52: The website has a feature to send personalized emails.
		V53: The website also sends information which is relevant to one's purchase.
		V54: The return policies related to the product is given clearly in the website
Website Interactivity	Tolba & Mourad (2011), Holzwarth et al	V55: The visual effects and the interactivity feature makes the website very entertaining
		V56: The website provides videos related to the product and how to use it.
		V57: The website has community pages. E.g Facebook page

distance between the two points in the scale is equal. In the second phase of pre-testing, 3 PhD students were asked to evaluate the questions in terms of the duration to fill the questionnaire and readability issues. All of them took 10-15 minutes to fill the questionnaire and provided additional comments like “lengthy questions”/” spelling mistake”/” difficult to comprehend” etc. All the comments were considered and further used for the refinement of the questionnaire.

4.3 Data Collection

Data collection was done online using the website, www.qualatrics.com. For this study, respondents contacted in both phases of data collection, consisted of Indian online shoppers in the age group of 20-34. A rationale for selecting Indian online shoppers in this age group lies in the fact that for India, 28% of regular online shoppers are in the 18 – 25 age group, while 42% are in the age group of 26-35%¹.

In the first phase of data collection, 467 online shoppers were contacted of which, 352 completely filled up responses were obtained. In the second phase of data collection, 406 complete responses from online shoppers have been collected. In each phase of data collection, the respondents were additionally asked about the e-commerce platform they normally prefer to use for online shopping. Subsequently, the “*website*” word in every item of the questionnaire was replaced by the respondent’s choice of e-commerce platform automatically. The major e-commerce website for which the responses recorded are Amazon.in, Flipkart.com, and Snapdeal. Respondent characteristics across the two samples are provided in Table 2.

Table 2. Sample characteristics

Characteristics	1st Sample	2nd Sample
Gender		
<i>Male</i>	53%	51%
<i>Female</i>	47%	49%
Age group		
<i>20-24</i>	22%	26%
<i>25-34</i>	78%	74%
Shopping Frequency		
<i>Once a month</i>	31%	33%
<i>1-2 times a month</i>	25%	26%
<i>2-3 times a month</i>	25%	24%
<i>More than 3 times a month</i>	16%	12%
<i>I don't shop online</i>	3%	5%
Education Level		
<i>Undergraduate</i>	52%	54%
<i>Post Graduate</i>	34%	29%
<i>MPhil/ PhD</i>	6%	8%
<i>Others (Diploma)</i>	8%	9%
Occupation		
<i>Professional Services</i>	41%	38%
<i>Self Employed/ Business</i>	22%	21%
<i>Homemaker</i>	19%	22%
<i>Student/ Researcher</i>	18%	19%

4.4 Validation of E-Marketing Mix Variables Using Exploratory and Confirmatory Factor Analysis

A structure of e-marketing mix variable has been hypothesized beforehand; however statistical technique is required to decide about the structure of the latent variables and their relationship.

4.4.1 Factor Analysis

Factor analysis is known to be an established technique used for data reduction (Lozeron & Victoria-Feser, 2010). It is a frequently used method to measure, relate and validate the unobserved or latent variables under any study. There are two forms of factor analysis; Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) and Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA). In exploratory factor analysis, the objective is to reduce the number of observed variables and map to a set of latent variables without loss of any information. Confirmatory factor analysis tests the same and verifies the factor model using a different set of data (Orcan, 2018).

In this study, statistical package SPSS 20 is utilized to investigate the dimensionality of the e-marketing mix variables and its adaptability in the Indian context by performing an exploratory factor analysis (EFA).

Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was performed using Lavaan (R Package) to validate the structure and the latent factors of the e-marketing mix variables to create brand equity. The items of online brand equity were adapted from Rios and Riquelme study (Rios & Riquelme, 2010).

5. DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

Before doing factor examination it is important to check the quality of relationships between the factors and the internal consistency. Internal consistency is checked using Cronbach's α . Value of Cronbach's α ranges between 0 to 1 and a value of more than .60 is considered to indicate consistency in the items used (Malhotra & David F Birks, 2007; Taber, 2018). Correlation matrix, Bartlett's test of sphericity and KMO measure of sample adequacy are checked to validate the quality of information recorded to be further used for factor examination.

Corrected item-total correlation (CITC) was checked and each item's value was found to be above the threshold value of 0.5. The Cronbach α values and CITC values for all the items are given in Table 3.

The appropriateness of using factor analysis with each data series was determined using the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy and Bartlett's test of sphericity. A KMO of equal or greater than 0.50 indicates partial correlations between variables are small. Bartlett's test of sphericity tests whether the correlation matrix is an identity matrix, indicating that a factor model is inappropriate. The KMO is 0.805, and the chi-square statistics is 3928.627 ($p < 0.05$), thus factor analysis is adequate to investigating the e-marketing mix variables (Refer Table 4).

5.1 Factor Analysis Results

5.1.1 Exploratory Factor Analysis

Exploratory Factor Analysis has been performed using SPSS (version 20) in order to determine the factors parsimoniously. In the first step, principal component analysis was performed without any rotation for all the 57 items. This measurement model resulted in 12 components that explained 92% of the variance. However, it was difficult to identify and characterize these 12 components.

At this stage, multi-collinearity between all the items were checked. The variance inflation factor (VIF) for 40 items was above the threshold level of 7 (Hair et al., 2018). Therefore, another model has been tested with only 17 items. In this process, items related to e-marketing mix variable *website format* and *website navigation* was dropped.

Table 3. Item-total statistics

	Item-Total Statistics			
	Mean	SD	CITC	CAID
V1	8.31	1.28	.598	.962
V2	8.11	1.37	.517	.963
V3	7.31	1.47	.745	.962
V4	7.50	1.69	.585	.963
V5	7.86	1.31	.756	.962
V6	7.47	1.42	.621	.962
V7	8.03	1.48	.881	.961
V8	6.97	2.07	.744	.962
V9	8.49	1.29	.799	.962
V10	8.03	1.46	.738	.962
V11	7.17	2.01	.680	.964
V12	7.91	1.81	.623	.962
V13	7.40	1.54	.575	.962
V14	7.74	1.95	.828	.961
V15	6.69	1.47	.579	.962
V16	3.71	2.50	.598	.967
V17	6.26	1.74	.500	.963
V18	6.80	1.98	.586	.962
V19	7.34	1.43	.750	.962
V20	6.94	1.39	.578	.963
V21	7.60	1.22	.702	.962
V22	7.80	1.21	.743	.962
V23	7.14	1.19	.711	.962
V24	7.03	1.52	.625	.962
V25	7.40	1.65	.755	.963
V26	7.47	1.86	.557	.963
V27	7.91	1.60	.570	.963
V28	8.06	1.71	.593	.962
V29	7.88	1.62	.724	.962
V30	7.94	1.82	.862	.961
V31	7.47	2.02	.723	.962
V32	7.26	2.11	.585	.962
V33	7.91	1.33	.812	.962
V34	7.91	1.58	.734	.962
V35	6.74	2.06	.543	.964
V36	7.56	2.15	.572	.962
V37	8.50	1.19	.601	.962
V38	7.59	1.66	.678	.962
V39	7.73	1.91	.523	.963
V40	7.88	1.70	.508	.962
V41	7.85	1.97	.755	.961
V42	7.97	1.85	.719	.962
V43	8.44	1.78	.824	.961
V44	7.76	1.89	.587	.962
V45	8.14	2.12	.779	.962
V46	8.57	1.40	.809	.962
V47	8.24	1.58	.806	.961
V48	8.44	1.69	.784	.961
V49	7.71	1.78	.595	.962
V50	7.85	1.52	.887	.961
V51	7.79	1.34	.765	.962
V52	6.88	2.36	.531	.963
V53	8.06	1.65	.757	.962
V54	6.30	1.90	.532	.964
V55	4.91	2.77	.502	.967
V56	8.18	1.36	.676	.962
V57	8.47	1.31	.498	.962

Notes: CITC, corrected item-total correlation; SMC, squared multiple correlation; CAID, Cronbach's α if item deleted

Table 4. KMO and Bartlett's Test

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		.805
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	3928.627
	df	1596
	Sig.	.000

The measurement model has retrieved six components that were distinct and meaningful. The 6 underlying components have Eigen values >1 and communality of each item ranged from 63% to 93%. Factor loadings ranged between 0.468-0.943, which is above the threshold value of 0.3 (Kim & Mueller, 1978). The variance explained by each component ranged from 6.2% to 24.8%, and the total variance explained is 77.97%. Following the principle of ‘Occam’s Razor’ that states that given two models, the simpler one should be preferred as it is likely to have lower generalization error (Blumer et al., 1987). Model 2 that explained 72.86% of the variance with 6 components was preferred over model 1 that explained 92% variability with 12 components. The results can be found in Table 5 & 6. The Rotated Component Matrix is provided in Table 7.

An attempt was made to explain each of the identified 6 components by relating them the e-marketing mix variables. The details are provided below:

Component 1: Primary product offering (captured by the features of customer feedback on product and ability to compare similar product) and associated service provided by the website such as ensuring timely delivery are loaded on Component 1. This component is therefore named as *Primary Product Service offering*.

Component 2: Reliability (as measured by website up-time and ability to send personalized messages) and security features (such as safety of online transactions in the website) are loaded on Component 2. This component is therefore named as *Website’s security and reliability*.

Component 3: Questionnaire items associated with content and information of the website (including ease of availability, understandable content, clear accurate and reliable information) are loaded on Component 3. This component is therefore named as *Website content*.

Component 4: Ease of interaction within the website, including visual effects, relevant product content video etc. are captured in Component 4. This component is therefore named as *Website interactivity*.

Table 5. Model 1 results

Component	Total Variance Explained								
	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings			Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	25.169	44.157	44.157	25.169	44.157	44.157	10.543	18.496	18.496
2	5.719	10.033	54.190	5.719	10.033	54.190	8.517	14.942	33.438
3	4.118	7.224	61.413	4.118	7.224	61.413	7.119	12.489	45.926
4	3.538	6.207	67.620	3.538	6.207	67.620	6.580	11.544	57.471
5	2.887	5.066	72.686	2.887	5.066	72.686	3.521	6.178	63.648
6	2.223	3.900	76.586	2.223	3.900	76.586	3.368	5.909	69.557
7	1.824	3.200	79.786	1.824	3.200	79.786	2.905	5.097	74.654
8	1.732	3.039	82.825	1.732	3.039	82.825	2.405	4.219	78.873
9	1.608	2.822	85.647	1.608	2.822	85.647	2.052	3.600	82.473
10	1.397	2.451	88.098	1.397	2.451	88.098	2.040	3.579	86.052
11	1.283	2.251	90.349	1.283	2.251	90.349	2.023	3.549	89.602
12	1.092	1.915	92.264	1.092	1.915	92.264	1.518	2.662	92.264
13	.939	1.648	93.912						
14	.778	1.365	95.278						
15	.658	1.154	96.432						
16	.543	.952	97.384						
17	.442	.775	98.159						
18	.347	.609	98.768						
19	.241	.423	99.191						
20	.228	.399	99.590						
21	.168	.295	99.885						
22	.066	.115	100.000						

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Table 6. Model 2 Results

Component	Total Variance Explained								
	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings			Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	25.169	44.157	44.157	25.169	44.157	44.157	11.087	19.451	19.451
2	5.719	10.033	54.190	5.719	10.033	54.190	9.401	16.493	35.944
3	4.118	7.224	61.413	4.118	7.224	61.413	9.225	16.184	52.129
4	3.538	6.207	67.620	3.538	6.207	67.620	8.161	14.318	66.446
5	2.887	5.066	72.686	2.887	5.066	72.686	3.557	6.240	72.686
6	2.223	3.900	76.586						
7	1.824	3.200	79.786						
8	1.732	3.039	82.825						
9	1.608	2.822	85.647						
10	1.397	2.451	88.098						
11	1.283	2.251	90.349						
12	1.092	1.915	92.264						
13	.939	1.648	93.912						
14	.778	1.365	95.278						
15	.658	1.154	96.432						
16	.543	.952	97.384						
17	.442	.775	98.159						
18	.347	.609	98.768						
19	.241	.423	99.191						
20	.228	.399	99.590						
21	.168	.295	99.885						
22	.066	.115	100.000						

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.
Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.

Table 7. Model 2 rotated component matrix

	Rotated Component Matrix					
	Component					
	1	2	3	4	5	6
V1:At this site the information related to the product and services are easy to find.			0.64			
V2:The product information available at the website has clarity and easily understandable.			0.73			
V4:The information provided is accurate and reliable.			0.82			
V12:The website is always available for business.		0.76				
V39:The website has adequate security features		0.86				
V42:The transactions are very safe		0.47				
V52:The website has a feature to send personalized emails.		0.61				
V53:The website also sends information which is relevant to one's purchase.					0.92	
V17:The website is very creative					0.63	
V49:The customer service representatives are also available online.					0.56	
V35:The website ensures timely delivery of the product.	0.81					
V51:The website gathers feedback from the customers effectively.	0.83					
V29:The website supports the feature of product comparison.	0.83					
V55:The visual effects and the interactivity feature make the website very entertaining				0.61		
V56:The website provides videos related to the product and how to use it.				0.94		
V13:The website pages load fast.						0.73
V11:The product can be reached with a minimum number of clicks.						0.78

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.
Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.

Component 5: The questionnaire items that are loaded in Component 5 cater to consumer responsiveness or customer care, viz., availability of customer service representatives, sending information about purchase etc. This component is therefore named as Customer care and relationship.

Component 6: The loading speed of the website and ease or fastness of website navigation (captured by minimum number of mouse clicks) are loaded in Component 6. This component is therefore named as Website speed.

Table 8. Goodness-of-fit measures

Indexes		Ideal Figures	Research Findings	Result	Reference
Absolute fit measures	χ^2/df	< 3	2.95	Satisfied	Hair et al. (2014) Bagozzi and Yi (1988) Bagozzi and Yi (1988) Hair et al. (2014)
	GFI	> 0.8	0.943		
	AGFI	> 0.8	0.894		
	RMSEA	< 0.08	0.071		
Incremental fit measures	IFI	> 0.9	0.931	Satisfied	Satisfied Bagozzi and Yi, 1988; Hair et al. (2014)
	NNFI	> 0.9	0.896		
	CFI	> 0.9	0.931		
Parsimonious fit measures	PNFI	> 0.5	0.605	Satisfied	Hair et al. (2014)
	PGFI	> 0.5	0.503		

5.1.2 Confirmatory Factor Analysis

Confirmatory Factor Analysis was performed using Lavaan (R Package) to validate the structure and the latent factors of the e-marketing mix variables to create brand equity. The items of online brand equity were adapted from Rios and Riquelme study (Rios & Riquelme, 2010). 406 responses were used to validate the 6 identified component and its relation to brand equity. Result of measurement model (CFA model), shows $\chi^2=377$, $df=131$, $p=0.000$, $\chi^2/df=2.87<3$ provided in Table 8. Other criteria highlighting the complete adequacy of the factor models, viz., GFI and AGFI, are also given in Table 8. The path diagram for CFA is presented in Figure 2.

The details of Convergent Validity, Discriminant Validity and Composite Reliability results are presented in table 9. Factor loading of all the variables are more than 0.5 and the average variance extracted (AVE) by the underlying latent construct was equal to or more than 0.5. Also the composite reliability of the all the underlying construct is more than 0.7 (Hair et al., 2018). Square root of the AVE also found to be more than the inter-construct correlations therefore indicating discriminant validity.

Hypothesis H₁: Which results that website content affects online brand equity was supported in this study as the relationship between this two variables has been established as being statistically significant.

Hypothesis H_{2b}: Reveals that website speed affects online brand equity. The relationship has been found significant and therefore the hypothesis was accepted. The path co-efficient for the same is 0.78.

Table 9. Convergent Validity, Discriminant Validity (Fornell-Larcker Criterion) and Composite Reliability Results

	CR	AVE	A	B	C	D	E	F
Primary Product Service offering (A)	0.923	0.680	0.824					
Website's security and reliability (B)	0.897	0.478	.084	0.691				
Website content (C)	0.817	0.540	.232	.333	0.735			
Website interactivity (D)	0.717	0.631	.198	-.375	-.209	0.794		
Customer care and relationship (E)	0.938	0.773	.129	.166	.050	.014	0.879	
Website speed (F)	0.731	0.567	.226	.036	.089	.282	.139	0.753

Table 10. Hypothesis test results

<i>Hypothesis</i>	<i>Path</i>	<i>Path Coefficient</i>	<i>P(> t)</i>	<i>Support</i>
H_{1}	Website Content (WC)->Online Brand Equity (OBE)	0.15	0.03	Supported
H_{2a}	Website Format (WF)->Online Brand Equity (BE)	NA*	NA*	NA*
H_{2b}	Website Speed (WS)->Online Brand Equity (OBE)	0.78	0.00	Supported
H_{2c}	Website Navigation (WN)->Online Brand Equity (OBE)	NA*	NA*	NA*
H_{3}	Primary Product and Service (PPS) ->Online Brand Equity (OBE)	0.22	0.01	Supported
H_{4}	Website security-reliability (WSR) -> Online Brand Equity (OBE)	0.39	0.04	Supported
H_{5}	Customer care and relationship (CCR) -> Online Brand Equity (OBE)	0.75	0.00	Supported
H_{6}	Website Interactivity (WI) -> Online Brand Equity (OBE)	0.47	0.00	Supported

*NA: Variables Dropped after EFA

Hypothesis H_{2a} and H_{2c} : Which results that website format and website navigation affects online brand equity cannot be confirmed. These two variables, have been dropped at the exploratory factor analysis stage and not been considered for validation using CFA and path analysis.

Hypothesis H_{3} : Had also been accepted depicting the relationship between primary product and services offerings and online brand equity.

Hypothesis H_{4} : Reveals the relationship between website security-reliability and online brand equity. The hypothesis had been accepted.

Hypothesis H_{5} : Which depicts that customer care & relationship impact online brand equity had been verified and been accepted. The path co-efficient is 0.75.

Hypothesis H_{6} : Which results that website interactivity is related to online brand equity had been supported, therefore the hypothesis is accepted.

6. DISCUSSION

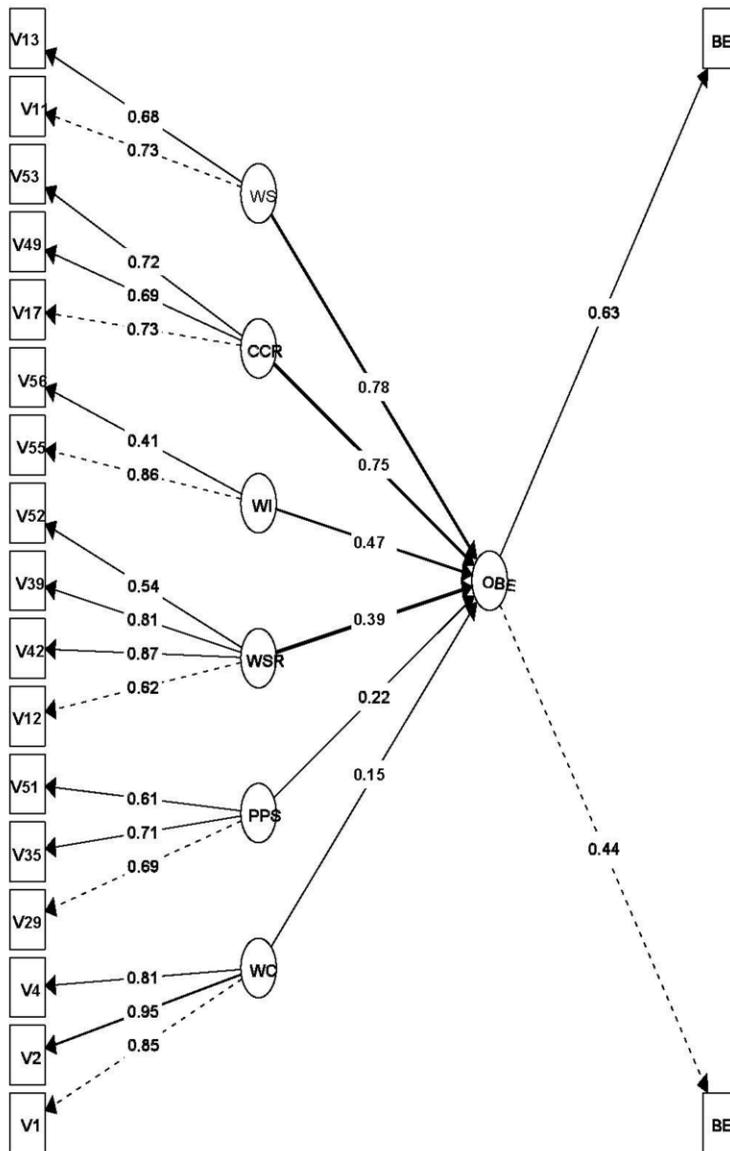
The paper intended to investigate the applicability of existing e-marketing mix variables for the Indian e-commerce sector. It also attempted to validate the role of identified e-marketing mix variables in creating online brand equity for Indian e-commerce sector. In this study, six e-marketing mix variables namely *website Content*, *Customer care and relationship*, *website Interactivity*, *website speed*, *website's Security & reliability* and *primary product and service Offerings (C2ISO)* stands out as precursors to online brand equity for the Indian e-commerce sector.

The proposed framework of e-marketing mix variables is the result of logical partitioning through factor analysis. As a first stage of any scientific theory, we investigated this phenomenon by following the outlines provided by Hunt (1991) to propose a classification scheme. We first selected the phenomenon, determined the characteristics on which the classification can be based, looked into mutually exclusive categories and determined the usefulness.

6.1 Position of C2iso w.r.t. Existing E-Marketing Mix Frameworks

The first aim of our study was to investigate the applicability of existing e-marketing mix variables for the Indian e-commerce sector. The identified C2ISO variables for the Indian e-commerce sector,

Figure 2. Path diagram representing relationship between e-marketing mix variables and online brand equity



WC: Website Content, PPS: Primary Product and Services, WSR: Website Security-Reliability, WI: Website Interactivity, CCR: Customer Care & Relationship, WS: Website Speed, OBE: Online Brand Equity

conform to the major e-marketing mix variables of the existing frameworks (Dennis et al., 2005; Kirthi & McIntyre, 2002; Prandelli & Verona, 2006). Among the set of e-marketing mix variables identified, *primary product and service offerings* has only been discussed by the 7C's framework (Dennis et al., 2005), while *website content* is referred by Prandelli & Verona (Prandelli & Verona, 2006). *Customer care and relationship* is interpreted as a combination of two different variables 'customer care & service' and 'customer communication & relationship', as defined by the prevailing frameworks. *Website's security – reliability* and *website speed* are identified as desirable website

characteristics and have been used by Kirthi & McIntyre (Kirthi & McIntyre, 2002) and in the 4S framework (Constantinides, 2002).

However, *Website interactivity* has not been included previously in any of the existing frameworks. This variable has perhaps evolved with the advancement in technology and due to the increasing expectation of customers towards interactivity features.

6.2 Relationship of C2ISO With Online Brand Equity for Indian E-Commerce Sector

The second aim of our study was to validate the role of identified e-marketing mix variables in creating online brand equity for Indian e-commerce sector. For a heterogeneous and diverse country like India, the behavior of its internet users vary markedly from technologically developed countries (Tandon et al., 2018). Any framework attempting to explain brand equity in the Indian online context needs to take into account this multidimensional plurality latent within the Indian consumer psyche. The current study and its results are a step towards this end.

Primary product and service Offerings capture the core benefit that any website offers to its customer thus enhancing brand association and creating brand equity for the website. Reading product reviews, or comparing products before purchase are part of information seeking behavior, a crucial dimension of online purchase and brand awareness (Dutta, 2009). Indian consumers are not any exception to this product review process. With 'significant others' playing a huge role in the Indian consumer decision making (Jain, 2020), the importance of online reviews in this information seeking process cannot be underscored.

Website content, Website security & reliability and Website speed are the three basic requirements of any e-commerce website. These variables augment the basic *product and service offering* provided by the site. The three factors together define website quality (Kaur & Thakur, 2019). Information seeking, perceived risk and trust are determined as the pre-cursor of Indian e-shopping behavior (Chaturvedi et al., 2016). Abundance of complete, accurate & understandable information facilitates this decision making process (Chatterjee, 2020). *Website content* provides economic value and information regarding one's purchase. This information provided by the e-commerce websites leads to positive purchase intention as it boost consumer confidence. Two major concern for Indian customers are; one related to the authenticity of the product and second related to the privacy of their information (A. Singh et al., 2020). *Website security & reliability*, the determinants to allay these consumer concerns, have often been quoted as a dominant factor, that influences online shopping (Chincholkar & Sonwaney, 2017; Tiwari & Sharma, 2017). It is security and privacy perception of e-commerce website that leads to cognitive trust (Punyatoya, 2019) and helps in creating online brand equity.

Customer care and relationship, and website Interactivity are the additional two e-marketing mix variables that add value to the basic offerings. *Customer care*, often interpreted as 'customer responsiveness' within the e-commerce domain, is defined in terms of response speed, response length and response volume (J. Sheng, 2019). *Customer relationship* management has always been a notable part of customer satisfaction and continues to be an integral part of online service quality, thereby building brand trust. It has been found, that Indian consumers hesitate to shop from website which do not guarantee support over telephone, email or text (Kumar & Ayodeji, 2021). It is difficult to isolate *website interactivity* from the gamut of all e-marketing mix variables defined above. In fact, in a consumer facing online business, they can effectively be collated under the broad umbrella of interactivity. An additional feature of *website interactivity*, that is underpinned in this research is the need of ingraining fun and entertainment to the shopper's online shopping experience (Islam et al., 2019).

6.3 Analyzing the Underlying Dimensions of C2ISO

The identified C2ISO variables, are precursors to online brand equity for the Indian e-commerce companies. However, holistically, these C2ISO variables may also be referred as market-based

resources, since they are tangible and intangible assets that an e-commerce company may leverage to implement its business strategies (Barney & Arikan, 2001).

From market-based resource point of view, the C2ISO variables can be further categorized into intellectual and relational assets. Intellectual assets are defined as assets that are developed solely by the enterprise in question. Relational assets are defined as tangible or intangible value additions developed by an organization in conjunction with its stakeholders and exogenous entities or the external interacting environment (Barney, 1991; Barney & Arikan, 2001; Barney & Clark, 2007). The relational and intellectual market-based assets are complementary to each other and reinforces the execution of a customer–connected process.

Per this classification, *website content*, *website speed* and *website's security -reliability*, are three important intellectual assets for any e-commerce company. E-commerce organizations have gradually realized that with fast progress in technology, providing a wider range of information (*website content*) to the consumer is a key differentiator. Anonymity along with a hassle free and secured transaction (*website's security*) is critical for online customers. *Website speed* is one of the essential and basic elements of any e-commerce website. A faster browsing experience, aided by high Internet bandwidth available to today's customers, positively affects consumer's brand perception. Similarly, providing accurate and reliable information (such as customer reviews, feedbacks, pricing accuracy etc.), viz. *website's reliability* can be a major trust factor for the e-commerce website (Bonsón Ponte et al., 2015). With the help of these intellectual assets, an e-commerce company aims to create brand trust amongst its customers. This translates to online brand equity for the e-commerce company (Ruparelia et al., 2010; Stoecklin-Serino & Paradice, 2009).

Customer care & relationship and *website interactivity* are the relational market-based assets for an e-commerce company. *Customer care and relationship*, when developed on the basis of trust and reputation, can work as a rare and non-replicable resource for an organization. Additionally, more interactive the website (*website Interactivity*), the more virtual-real it turns out for the customer (Ryan & Jones, 2009), creating a greater collaborative experience and strengthening the relationship with the company. Good *Customer care and relationship* and *website Interactivity* leads to strong a customer interaction that helps in building brand advocacy, making the company more accountable towards its customers.

Primary product and service offerings can be tagged both as an intellectual and relational market-based asset. These *offerings* are integral components of an e-commerce company's operations making it an intellectual resource for the organization. Provision of these offerings, lead to a good word of mouth, - a relational asset which in turn increases sales and helps in creating brand awareness - a precursor to online brand equity (Barreda et al., 2015; Hutter et al., 2013).

7. CONCLUSION

Marketing, as defined by Culliton (1948) is the blend of decisions that must all be simultaneously set to create a consistent strategy or mix of ingredients. In this study, the six proposed e-marketing mix variables, namely website Content, Customer care and relationship, website Interactivity, website speed, website's Security & reliability and primary product and service Offerings (C2ISO), are the marketing decisions bounded by information & technology. Together, they work towards an economic integration and complete utilization of resources necessary for growth of e-commerce companies.

This study can serve as a guideline to marketers operating in the digital space. It provides a guideline and directive on the e-marketing mix elements that needs to be focused on by brand managers to strengthen online brand equity. The framework highlights a degree of synchronization achieved between established research while elucidating its appropriateness in the Indian context. For Indian e-marketers, operating in one of the biggest emerging economies poised to embrace online shopping as the new paradigm, this can be a useful precursor in designing marketing activities. Furthermore,

the study becomes even more relevant in the wake of the current COVID-19 pandemic, which has shifted the focus of customers towards an online shopping experience (Ali, 2020).

8. RESEARCH LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE CONSIDERATIONS

The study acknowledges the fact that it is undertaken on online retail consumers in India and its applicability to other sectors or geographies is subjected to further testing. Further studies can, therefore explore e-marketing mix variables for diverse e-commerce context like travel and tourism, ticket booking, food delivery for India as well as other countries. In addition, marketing activities pertaining to the mobile platform for shopping can also be explored.

The study is focused on e-commerce models relying on a B2C framework of operation. Similar parallel may be drawn for developing e-marketing mix frameworks for social commerce and other e-commerce business models (B2B or C2C frameworks). Furthermore, e-commerce as a dynamic platform, requires constant amendments to theoretical frameworks. The framework and its viability to a changing technology landscape needs to be revisited periodically to evaluate the change in online customer psyche. The study can also be replicated using longitudinal data to enable further generalization and validity.

Notwithstanding these limitations, the study is a first attempt to investigate and validate the efficacy of established e-marketing mix variables, in creating online brand equity for e-commerce companies operating in an emerging economy like India.

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ENDNOTE

- ¹ A study by Assocham and Deloitte.

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