

Nepalese Customers' Attitude and Preferences towards Online Marketing: Index Based Analysis

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Abstract

Tremendous evolution of virtual advertising and marketing has also made its effect in Nepal as it is making around the globe. Current status of e-trade in Nepal seems to be promisingly accurate as many customers are being attracted to online purchasing and using online offerings. With the advent of latest technologies, virtual stores, and interactive apps, there is a huge boost in area of e-commerce. This study, therefore, aims to analyze Nepalese customers' attitudes and preferences towards online marketing. A descriptive research design has been applied for this study where a sample of 401 respondents was taken in Kathmandu valley. Both Attitude and Preferences Index were a measure to check respondents' attitude level and preferences level respectively towards online marketing in Kathmandu valley. The current study found that 55% of consumers believe online marketing provides informative content to them. The majority of consumers have a positive attitude towards online marketing and they are preferring to purchase via online websites if they improve on certain criteria. The study also shows that customers are aware and satisfied regarding online marketing. However, 28.43% feel that there are still some challenges in the online marketing sector in Nepal that can be mitigated with the implementation of effective strategies. Thus, the study concludes that concerned authorities and online business holders should pay proper attention to the challenges faced by consumers so that they could be mitigated so that consumers would have a better online purchase experience.

Keywords: Attitude, Customers, Nepal, Preference, Online marketing, Kathmandu Valley

1. Background

Businesses are increasing the usage of the internet for commercial activities (Lal & Chavan, 2019). The growth of technological know-how has widespread conceivable as it reduces the fees of product and carrier transport and extends geographical boundaries in bringing customers and dealers together (Tp & S, 2016). On the other hand, online advertising and marketing imply packages of measures, which ought to lead internet users to certain web pages to buy or order certain products or services. So, net presence is the foremost object of online advertising (Schwarzl & Grabowska, 2015). Online advertising and marketing have been the integral sector in the contemporary era. New media is having a large potential to emerge a new segment of customers (Tripathi, 2016). Customers use the internet not solely to buy the product online but additionally to examine prices, product features, and after-sale carrier amenities they will receive if they buy the product from a specific shop (Kochar & Kaur, 2018).

The tremendous evolution of virtual advertising and marketing has made its effect in Nepal as well. Following the plummeting of cash transactions within China's Retail market from 60% to simply 38% within the span of 6 years from 2010 to 2016 (Now, Us, & Broadway, 2018). The

correlation between online transactions and urbanization has a considerable function on increasing online purchasing/transactions and the effects are seen inside the market of Nepal as well. The main online market in Nepal, e-commerce is developing at a rapid pace, people are positively responding to those marketplaces that provide the number of merchandise from digital objects to home equipment to apparel (Marketing, 2020). Digital advertising and marketing in Nepal is an exceptionally modern fashion but many people, and businesses have already begun to implement digital marketing to reinforce their business and earnings (Marketing, 2020). Virtual advertising in Nepal is the next huge thing as the patron interest shifts towards the digital platform, greater target audience and capability patron can be reached and the virtual platform is the most price-effective platform for commercial purposes in Nepal (Sthapit & Khadka, 2016).

Current status of e-trade in Nepal seems to be promisingly accurate. Many customers are being attracted to online purchasing and using online offerings. With the advent of latest technologies, virtual stores, and interactive apps, there is a huge boost in area of e-commerce (Ducheyne, 2016). Many online portals are being launched, now we have dozens of virtual Nepali shops within the web. They're doing precise commercial enterprise at the side of offering t pleasant services. They offer competition and various reductions to entice clients from the bodily stores. Due to the increase in online shops in Nepal, the competition is hastily increasing day to day, which allows you to ultimately gain the future of e-commerce in Nepal (Ministry of Communication and Information Technology, 2018). Daraz and Sastodeal are the rising agencies doing remarkable work in the field of e-commerce. Virtual advertising and advertising have shown superb potential in Nepal.

E-Commerce is nevertheless in its infancy in Nepal. The country's difficult territory and lack of road addresses make deliveries a challenge. Nepal lacks an assisting eco-system (such as digital payments, online banking, etc.) which is necessary for the development of a digital society. As a result, Nepali society has now not been capable to reap full benefits of the ongoing digital revolution and while internet penetration in Nepal has risen sharply in few years, a massive area of Nepali human beings stays digitally unskilled due to worries around affordability, access, and digital illiteracy (Technology, 2018). Thus, a proper study is required to understand and analyze the situation and status of consumer psychology toward online marketing. This study is noble in the Nepalese context. Hence, this study will help to overcome the problem related to consumer's psychology towards online marketing.

A further part of this study is organized as; the second section includes methodology, results are discussed in the third section and the fourth section finally concludes the study.

2. Methods

2.1 Study Area

For this research, Kathmandu valley is taken as a study area. Kathmandu valley is located between 27°36" and 27°48" N, between 85°12" and 85°31" E at 13000 meters above sea level with an area expanding of 899 square kilometers comprising of three districts Kathmandu, Lalitpur, and Bhaktapur (Ishtiaque, Shrestha, & Chhetri, 2017). Being the capital metropolis of Nepal and one of the handiest regions which accumulate maximum awareness of the populace, conducting studies on online marketing a number of the humans in Kathmandu gives better and greater factual effects. Kathmandu bills for 1/12 populace and is the main gateway to the tourism and has a population of 985000 in 2019 and taking Kathmandu as take a look at the location can reduce the mistake in our study because of the inclusion of patterns from diverse

ethnicity, age gender and exclusive class of people. In the present context, there are a handful of websites that provides online advertising and marketing for clients within Kathmandu Valley. Websites facilitating electronic trade are broadly speaking primarily based inside Kathmandu valley, wherein credit card verification offerings are with no trouble available. Thus Kathmandu valley is chosen as a study area because many business activities happen in the valley.

2.2 Study Population

As of May 2019, there had been 31 private ISPs in Nepal, with approximately 200,000 subscribers, and nearly 16.67 million internet users nationwide. Roughly forty percent of these bills are commercial, with organizations selling their products and services and speaking with foreign businesses via the net (export.gov, 2019). Online hobby is concentrated in Kathmandu and half-dozen different towns, with tremendously little internet penetration in rural regions, although the scenario is slowly changing with most customers having access to the net through cellular phones. While notably little enterprise hobby is carried out online, the marketplace is growing. Many companies depend upon the internet whilst handling foreign partners (export.gov, 2019). This study was targeted in the direction of people residing in Kathmandu valley who are mainly lively on their website and have offered any goods or services from online platforms. The sampling unit in the study was the web items purchasing clients.

2.3 Sampling Technique and Sample Size Determination

This study is based on Descriptive research as it is not merely possible to calculate customers using online services in Kathmandu valley. Convenient sampling, from the non-probability sampling techniques, is adopted in this study since no records of those online users are kept from any agencies. Since our population is unknown, the formula used to identify sample size is $n_0 = \frac{z^2 pq}{l^2}$ (Cochran et al., 2004). Where, n_0 = sample size required for study, standard tabulated value for 5% level of significance (z) = 1.96, p = Prevalence of customers perception towards online shopping 50 % = 0.5 so, $p = 0.5$, $q = 1 - p = 0.5$. We undertake 5% allowable error that can be tolerated i.e. (e) = 5%. Thus, total population for the study $n_0 = \frac{z^2 pq}{l^2} = (1.96)^2 \times 0.5 \times 0.5 / (0.05)^2 = 384.16$. Also, we undertake non-response error 5%, i.e. $384.16 \times 5 / 100 = 19.20$. Adding all, the sample size necessary for the study was $(384.16 + 19.20) = 403.36 \approx (403)$. Based on the sampling formula, a total of 401 respondents were interviewed for this study.

2.4 Customers' Attitude and Preferences Index

Since this paper aims to analyze Nepalese customers' attitudes and preferences towards online marketing in Kathmandu valley, customers' attitudes and preference contains are prepared. To measure attitude of the customers 13 questions that contains yes and no as response options to respondents where 5 questions regarding emotional, 4 behavioral questions are kept forward. Similarly, to measure perception total 15 questions quality (3), attractive (3), availability of products (3), satisfy customers' and awareness (2) are asked to the respondents so that we can know the customer's attitude and awareness. Following Paudel et al. (2020) if individual customers mention yes for more than 9 questions include decision-making in perception, then they are considered as highly aware of their decision-making process. Similarly, if respondents receive less than 6 and 7 questions no or incorrect in attitude and perception respectively, then they can be perceived less aware about their decision making. The general form to identify Nepalese customers' attitudes and preferences towards online marketing can be calculated, as suggested by Paudel et al. (2020), as:

$$Y = \begin{cases} Y = 1, & \text{if scale score} < 50\% \\ Y = 2, & \text{if scale score } 50\% \text{ to } 75\% \\ Y = 3, & \text{if scale score above } 75\% \end{cases}$$

2.5 Research Instruments

The research instruments used in this research are expert opinion and survey through a questionnaire. The expert opinion was commenced with the three experts—Mr. Salikram Dhakal (Joint Secretary) at Ministry of Industry, Commerce and Supply; Mr. Pradeep Rauniyar, the owner of K & B Pasal; and Mr. Rohit Raj Pandey, professor in e-commerce throughout the study period. Mr. Dhakal helped to understand rules and regulations related to online business and how online businesses are being operated in Nepal. Similarly, Mr. Rauniyar helped to understand the daily process of running an E-commerce Company and what must be kept in mind while running an e-commerce business mainly here in Nepal where there are lots of limitations. Lastly, Mr. Pandey provides insight on the basic e-commerce ideologies, their development, current use, and future of e-commerce. The methodology has been developed based on the suggestion of experts and a questionnaire has been prepared & implemented for the data collection. Then, structured questionnaires are prepared as research instruments for the study. After the questionnaire was finalized, they were deployed into the Kobo toolbox and the information was collected then after.

2.6 Survey Implementation and Data Analysis

A pre-test was done with 20 respondents (5% of the population determined) to confirm whether the specified questions provide appropriate information or not. After the pre-test certain modification and additional questions were added to get more useful information from the respondent particularly from the consumers. Based on the sample size 401 respondent reached and collect their opinion. It took three months to collect the data. Due to COVID-19, it was tough to reach every location so the data were collected from both telephone interviews and face-to-face interaction with the respondent. Some of the respondents also responded online with the use of the kobo toolbox. Finally, data analysis is done based on descriptive study and index and presented with the help of the table, charts, and diagrams.

3. Result and Discussion

3.1 Socio-demographic Characteristics

In this section, sex, age, contact number, location, education level, family type, occupation, and monthly income of the sample has been indicated which reveals the information accumulated from Kathmandu valley i.e. 55% from Kathmandu, 22% from Bhaktapur, and 23% from Lalitpur while surveying randomly. The majority of the respondents are from Kathmandu due to the fact it covers a larger scale of the valley. Among 401 respondents 59% were male and 41% were female which also shows that males are more interested in online shopping rather than female. The majority of respondents (58.86%) were from the age group 25-35 years followed by 15-25 years (33.92%) which means, youths are more inclined towards online shopping and look for online marketing.

Table 1: Socio-Demographic Characteristics

Variables	Frequency	Percentage (%)
<i>Gender</i>		
Male	237	59
Female	164	41
<i>Age (in years)</i>		
15-25	136	33.92
25-35	236	58.86
35-45	23	5.74
45-55	6	1.5
<i>Education</i>		
Illiterate	2	0.50
Intermediate	27	6.73
Bachelors'	224	55.86
Masters'	120	29.93
Above Masters'	32	7.98
<i>Family Type</i>		
Joint	176	44
Nuclear	181	45
Extended	44	11
<i>Occupation</i>		
Agriculture	31	7.73
Industry	28	6.98
Service	211	52.62
Business	70	17.46
Others	61	15.21
<i>Income (in NRs.)</i>		
Up to 20,000	59	14.71
20,000-40,000	203	50.62
40,000-60,000	99	24.69

60,000-80,000	15	3.74
80,000-1,00,000	8	2
Above 1,00,000	17	4.24

Majority of respondents who preferred online shopping were from the bachelors' level i.e., 55.86% and only 0.50% illiterate used online shopping tools which can be termed that online shopping is generally preferred by literates. However, people who live in both joint and nuclear families do online shopping as reflected by this study i.e., 44% and 45% respectively. As depicted in table 1 majority of consumers who opt for online shopping are from the service sector. Likewise, people with income 20,000-40,000 majorly considers online purchase only a few people with higher income prefer online shopping. It can be because user income affects the first interaction with the internet and e-commerce as people with high incomes perceive less risk in the adoption of online marketing and new technologies that it comes with.

3.2 Information about Consumer Psychology towards Online Marketing

Understanding consumer psychology towards online marketing describes how much respondents are familiar with online marketing in Kathmandu valley. In this regard, it was found that the majority of respondents (39.40%) spend 3-4 hours on the internet every day. 9.73% spend less than one hour and 10.22% spend above 5 hours on the internet daily where 80.80% males and 87.12% females pay attention to online marketing while using the internet. Talking about various online advertisements mobile advertisements are also quite popular these days. Mobile advertising, or m-advertising, refers to advertisements dispatched to and introduced on mobile devices, i.e., cellular phones, PDAs, and different handheld devices. For which 81.93% female and 79.14% male stated they opt for m-advertising as well.

Also, while looking for mobile advertisements maximum (44.9%) of respondents consider product information followed by price information (25.44%), Discount and deals (20.45%), celebrities, and famous people (5.74%), and others (3.99%). Advertising is the business of saying that something is for sale or of attempting to persuade clients to buy a product or service Vargas-Hernández et.al (2020). Similarly, advertisements build a demand that might be unknown to the viewer before and they provide information, entertainment and are a source of happiness and time pass for the viewers. 55% of respondents stated that they find online advertisement informative, 34% mentioned such online advertisements creates awareness among customers, 7% find it irritating and 4% find it a waste of time.

Likewise, a maximum number of respondents i.e., 44.64% stated that online advertising has a large influence among consumers. Sometimes while ad pop-up while using internet consumer gets attracted to the products and they tend to buy them. This study revealed that 60.50% of males and 68.10% of females who were surveyed for the study tend to purchase products after viewing internet ads. Most of the time customers' shopping behavior depends on the liking or disliking of the client toward the commercial of the product advertised influence advertisement buying. The study unleashed that 77.81% of respondents agreed that online advertising benefits consumers and directs such ads which they feel are beneficial to consumers.

3.3 Consumer's Attitude towards Online Marketing

To measure consumers' awareness respondents' emotional, information-related online marketing and their behavioral aspects were undertaken as the main variables that contribute to analyzing customers' attitudes towards online marketing. Respondents were asked five different

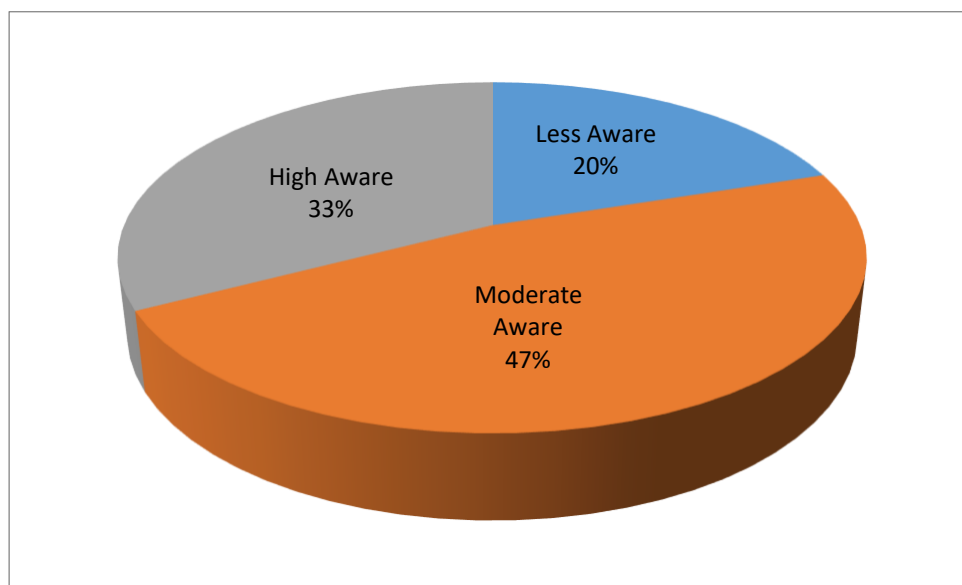
questions related to the emotional section of consumer's attitudes towards online marketing regarding the emotional attribute of respondents saying whether online marketing is suitable, trustworthy, and sense of curiosity or not. Out of 401 respondents, 80.55% respondents do emotional purchases. Emotional advertisement and online marketing attract 70.57%, 70.07% respondents respectively and 65.09% become curious to buy a product after seeing emotional advertisements.

Information attracts the audience and potential customer creates trust between customers and businesses, increasing the likelihood that customers will feel comfortable buying. Further, respondents were asked whether they make a comparison, search and visit new products regarding online marketing or not. For the same, it was found that around 78.80% of respondents are inclined towards getting information easily while making a comparison with other products. Likewise, 70.82% find their way to find and select the right product. Also, 77.31% of the respondents said that they compare easily price different and 59.60% of the respondents visit a new product even if they have not heard of it before.

Similarly, consumers' behavior towards online marketing is greater means of offering a variety of points that are no longer reachable in traditional advertising and marketing tools such as the number of statistics and the variety of templates in which information is delivered. From the behavioral aspect, it was found that 65.29% of respondents are inclined towards online advertisement. Around 66.58% of respondents are familiar with website advertisement making actual purchase reduce the risk of shopping online, whereas 72.57% of respondents, especially retrieve products that have reasonable information in comparison to any other advertisement and 75.31% stated that products information in an appropriate time and place are generally looked upon. However, one of the biggest changes in consumer behavior due to online marketing is that modern consumers expect a more consistent and personalized experience.

The overall attitude index indicates that almost half of the respondents (47%) are moderately aware. One-fifth (20%) are less aware and 33% are highly aware. It indicates that consumer's attitude is still in between traditional and modern marketing mechanisms. They still could not decide whether modern marketing tools would prove to be effective for their business or not.

Figure 1: Attitude Index



3.4 Customer's Perception of Online Marketing

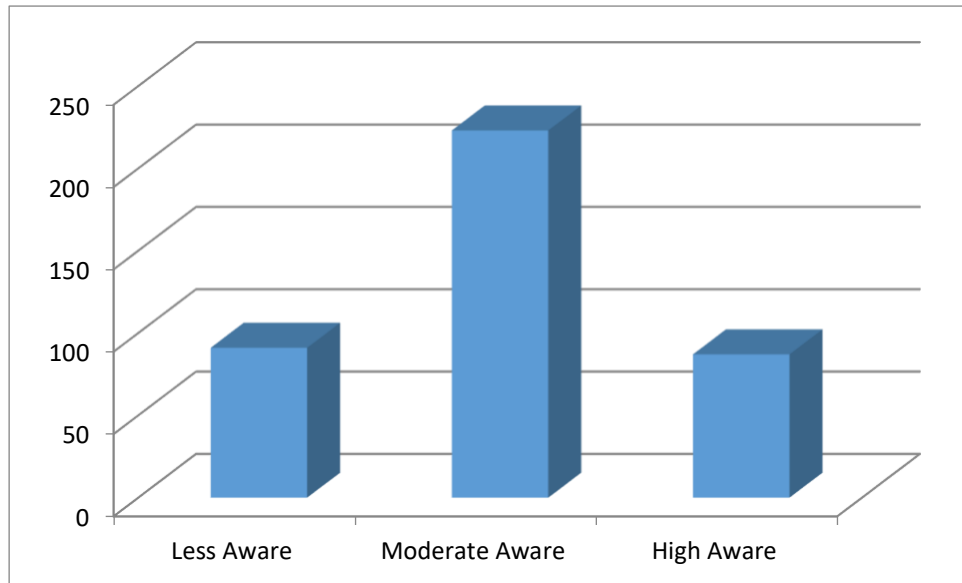
This section deals with five variables; quality, attractiveness, availability of products, satisfaction, and awareness to analyze customers' perception of online marketing. Quality is the goodness or excellence of any product, process, structure, or other component that an organization consists of or creates. Out of 401 respondents, this study reveals that 54.86% of respondents receive the best quality service through online marketing. While 61.60% feel they receive the best quality products through online marketing and 61.10% stated that online marketing meets the quality and service expectations of customers. Therefore, the quality product creates unshakeable customer loyalty. When customers find a product they trust, they return, make repeat purchases, and recommend the product or service to others.

Another area of interest is attractive. Results indicate that 79.55% of respondents are attracted to online marketing through an attractive promotional offer. 75.31% of consumers are attracted towards those online marketing sites which provide effective schemes and offer and 70.07% of customers are attracted towards those online marketing tools which have improved experience of using the tool effectively. Similarly, the availability of products is another important aspect. Our result shows that 71.32% of the respondents through online marketing provide a large section of information than the traditional method of advertisement Likewise, around 70.32% of respondents revealed online marketing provides a wider products selection than local stores. Also, 78.80% of the respondents feel that online marketing provides more variety of products. The majority of the respondent shows that almost all the respondents perceived online marketing provide more variety of products.

In terms of satisfaction, this study found that 76.81% of the respondents like online marketing as it is an easy way to shop. Likewise, 75.06% of the respondents feel the information provided by online marketing is satisfied. Also, 71.57% of respondents stated through online advertisements one can get information at any time. Similarly, 69.33% of respondents believe online marketing enhances shopping satisfaction. Finally, awareness is measured. The result shows that 79.3% of the respondents having online marketing generates awareness regarding the latest products whereas, 69.08% of respondents like shopping through internet advertisement is more convenient. However, there is high involvement of online marketing generates awareness regarding the latest products. So, through online marketing and advertising efforts, positive associations around the brand grow in the consumer's mind, generating consumer interest, trust, and loyalty.

The overall perception index indicates that more than half of the respondents (56.7%) are moderately aware while around 22% of respondents are highly and less aware respectively (Figure 2). It indicates that consumer's perception is moderate on the adoption of online marketing tools and mechanisms. However, inclination towards modern phenomena can be seen though they are still stuck with traditional mechanisms.

Figure 2: Consumers' Perception Index



3.5 Challenges Related to Online Marketing

Though online marketing and online purchase are emerging in the present context several challenges are being faced by consumers. It may be because the online marketing phase is in the initial stage in the current context though only 28.43% of respondents stated that they are facing challenges in online marketing (Table 2).

Table 2: Challenges of online marketing

Challenges	LIKERT SCALE				
	Extremely High	High	Moderate	Low	Extremely Low
I feel challenged to find the right product on social media	69 (17.21%)	180 (44.88%)	94 (23.44%)	47 (11.72%)	11 (2.74%)
I feel challenge having a quick mobile responsive website	45 (11.22%)	134 (33.42%)	155 (38.65%)	56 (13.96%)	11 (2.74%)
I feel challenge using a dynamic secured website	45 (11.22%)	168 (41.89%)	120 (29.93%)	62 (15.46%)	6 (1.49%)
I feel engagement challenge in email marketing	49 (12.21%)	171 (42.64%)	117 (29.17%)	53 (13.21%)	11 (2.74%)

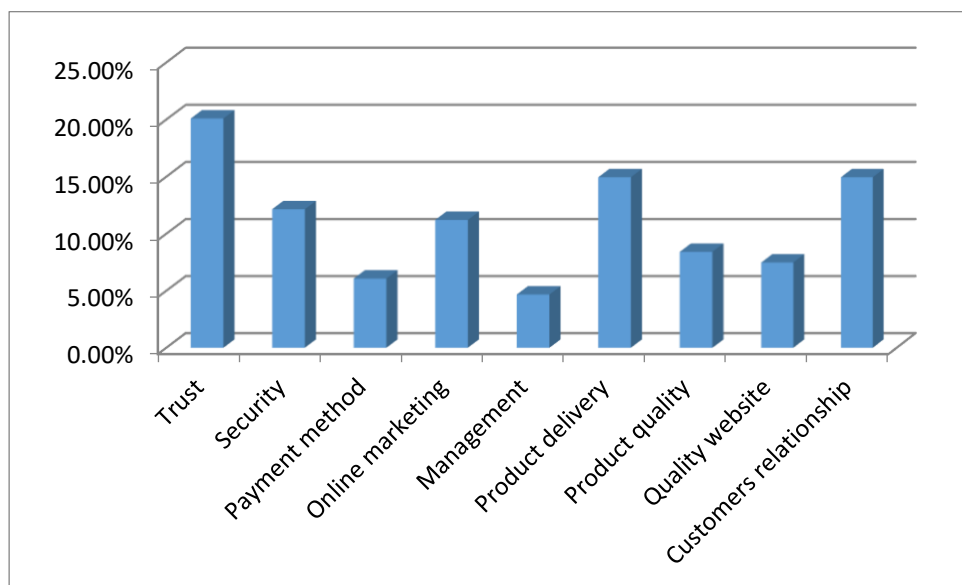
Besides the challenges seen in the above table some of the other major challenges of online marketing as per respondents are untimely delivery of the product (16.22%), quality of the product (37.84%), website (8.11%), Security, and trust issues (18.92%) respectively. Such

challenges arise from various sources. Majority i.e., 28% respondents stated that challenges generally occurs in terms of delivery services and least (6%) mentioned that challenges occur due to call center issue. Further, others revealed that accounting process, cost, security, bank, and website also causes challenges sometimes and 40.65% stated that such challenges occasionally in the process of online marketing. However, 31.67% also stated that such challenges occur frequently and 2.49% stated it never occurs and 34.41% stated such challenges mostly occur during the winter season but 33.92% stated it occurs during the summer season.

3.6 Management of Challenges

Among all 401 respondents, 80.3% stated that challenges that are arising in online advertisements can be managed with the help of various strategies whereas, 19.7% stated that such challenges can never be managed. Those who stated that challenges can be managed 20.09% stated that if online sites can increase trust among consumers that it can be mitigated to a greater extent, 14.95% stated that if delivery service is improved that the whole service can be enhanced (Figure 3). Likewise, various suggestions are provided as depicted in Figure 3. In the meantime, some respondents argued that these challenges are not manageable due to increased competition (36.84%), security issues (21.05%), internet and websites problems (15.79%), trust (13.16%), and time management (13.16%).

Figure 3: Management of Challenges

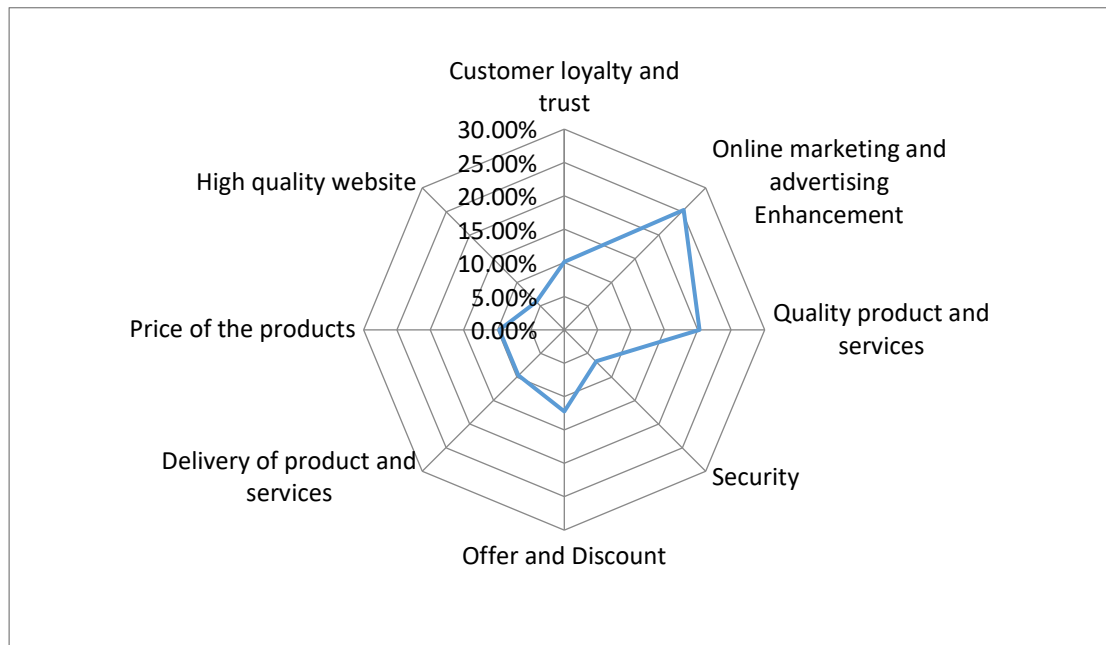


3.7 Managerial Solution and Way-forward

The internet has created a new pattern of the standard to the way people shop. Customers are no longer tied to the opening hours or specific location; it may additionally turn out to be active virtually at any time and in any vicinity to buy products and services. As many challenges were identified in online marketing respondents also have suggested some managerial solutions for the effectiveness of online marketing. Figure 4 shows that most of the respondents (25.32%) feel that if advertisement and online marketing are enhanced properly then the challenges arising from it can be mitigated. (Figure 4) Further, 20.25% stated enhancing the quality of

products and services would improve the overall online marketing mechanism and least i.e. 5.91% believed that improving websites would improve online marketing as well.

Figure 4: Managerial solution for online marketing



4. Conclusion

Online marketing has been growing tremendously throughout the globe and Nepal is also witnessing a boom in the sector. Thus, the study was focused on analyzing the attitude and preference of Nepalese consumers towards online marketing which showcased that most of the consumers spend a generous amount of time on the internet and pay attention to online advertisements as well. Respondents also had a positive attitude towards online marketing i.e. emotional, psychological, and behavioral as analyzed by this study. Though certain challenges are witnessed in the sector consumers believe that they can be mitigated with the help of proper plans and strategies. Thus, concerned authorities and online business holders should pay proper attention to the challenges faced by consumers so that they could be mitigated so that consumers would have a better online marketing experience which would increase the digital purchase of products.

Further, as mentioned earlier this study is based on descriptive research methodology so, the inferential part can be considered by other researchers conducting a similar study which would make the study stronger. Also, only Kathmandu valley is selected as an area of study future research could include another part of the nation as well for better representation. Likewise, careful considerations of variables can be made in future studies which are missed out on by this study.

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