

# EXPLORING ONLINE SHOPPING BEHAVIOUR WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF ONLINE ADVERTISEMENT, CUSTOMER SERVICE EXPERIENCE CONSCIOUSNESS AND PRICE COMPARISON WEBSITES: PERSPECTIVES FROM YOUNG FEMALE SHOPPERS IN THE ZLÍNSKÝ REGION

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## Abstract

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Online shopping behaviour within the context of price comparison websites presents an interesting area of consumer behaviour, yet very little research has been done in this area. Hence, the focus of this paper was to critically explore the impact of online advertisement and customer service experience consciousness on young female shoppers' intention to use price comparison websites as a purchase decision-making tool within the online retail environment. Our sample consisted of 123 female respondents of the Tomas Bata University students in Zlín, Czech Republic. From the sample, we found out using the Partial Least Square approach to Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM) that both online advertisement (Ads) and customer service experience consciousness are directly and positively related to online shoppers' intention to use price comparison websites. Hence, our two stated hypotheses were supported based on the outcome of the structural model. Apparently, customer service experience consciousness is a better predictor of female shoppers' intention to use price comparison websites compared to online advertising. Nonetheless, we have highlighted the need for a further research based on the study's limitations.

Keywords: consumer behaviour, customer service experience consciousness, e-Store, female, price comparison website, online advertising, online shopper

## INTRODUCTION

Globally, online sales have gained traction within the last one and half decades owing largely in part to the growth of Internet penetration as well as the rapid uptake of online shopping by the digital consumers. The global online sales for 2014 is expected to reach US \$1.5 trillion with a sales growth of 20.1% (eMarketer, 2014). In the global ranking of the most developed online retail market in terms of market size and infrastructure, the Czech Republic

occupies the 33rd position while it was ranked 20th in terms of Internet retail sales per capita (US \$217) in 2012 (Cushman & Wakefield, 2013). Similarly, for the Czech Republic, the total online sales in 2013 was put at US \$2.91 billion, with a growth of 19% in comparison to 2012 (Evans, 2014).

Arguably, in the online retail marketplace, online shoppers are increasingly becoming smarter consumers and more brand switchers owing to the growth in the adoption of price comparison

websites (PCWs). Seeking transparency in a post-recession globalized economic environment remains one of the fundamental reasons, while a growing number of online shoppers now perceive PCWs as a significant mediating tool between prior purchase and actual purchase of certain goods and services. Moreover, some digitally savvy- consumers leveraged on it (PCWs) during their post-purchase evaluations to ascertain if they got a good bargain or not from the online retail stores they bought their products. PCWs are basically websites which uniquely offer price and product attributes of registered online vendors' sales information to online consumers. Thus, it provides an avenue through which both potential and actual online shoppers can compare similar online vendors' product prices and product information by using a one-stop 'eWindow' shopping channel – the price comparison website.

As posited by Baye *et al.* (2004) shopping via PCWs offers a judicious way of shopping since consumers are able to get the “best” available price based on their demand given that such sites provide the various prices of goods and services charged by similar online merchants. Rather not so surprisingly, not all online merchants are registered with PCWs, so the available pricing with product information displayed on PCWs might not actually and fully reflect the best bargains in terms of price that is available on the Internet. Hence, the information that is available to both users and potential users of such sites is understandably skewed to the amount of information provided by PCWs registered merchants.

Notwithstanding this shortcoming, PCWs supposedly equip the modern-day IT-driven, savvy and well-informed consumer with pricing choice they could leverage upon by making them smarter online shoppers. In a report by RS Consulting for Consumer Futures (2013), it was noted that PCWs are now seen as a tool for consumer empowerment and it has the possibility of altering online shopping behaviour by making it possible for online shoppers' to understand their consumption needs while at the same time maximizing their scarce resources and scaling up the convenience of online shopping. With the advent of PCWs in the electronic commerce (e-Commerce) landscape, the online marketplace fosters an infomediary that is value-driven for the consumers by aggregating both price and product information on multifarious products and service offerings by online vendors. Hence, this does not only reflect price transparency within the Internet marketplace, but also is time-saving for consumers since it reduces search time for product offerings in the vastly evolving world wide web (The Law Society, 2011).

The rapid uptake of PCWs has been significantly fuelled by online advertisement (Ads) campaigns (The Law Society, 2011). Online Ads serve as a veritable marketing tool for attracting a pool of online consumers to a particular product or service

offerings. Given the global reach of the Internet and coupled with immediacy in terms of information availability, online Ads seemingly offer a much more cost-effective approach of reaching targeted consumers compared to traditional advertising channels (Wu *et al.*, 2008; Jamalzadeh *et al.*, 2012). Unarguably, effective online Ads that are both engaging and inspiring have the capacity to facilitate online consumers' purchase decision-making processes and which may inadvertently impact on actual purchase behaviour. Wu *et al.*, (2008) were of the opinions that given the convergence of both online Ads and electronic stores (e-Stores), online shoppers would be quick to making instant purchases – impulse buying.

According to Webcredible (2009) aside building a dynamic trust-based relationship with online users in a bid to gaining brand visibility and repeat usage of such sites, PCWs usually have to engage in online advertisements in the form of search engine optimization (organic or paid listings), banner advertisements, social media advertisements, pop-ups, email/newsletters, video advertisements, etc. Presumably, once online users are able to strongly perceive the importance of PCWs through exposure and receptiveness to online Ads, this could set the tone for creating brand loyalty of such sites. Some previous studies (Haque, 2007; Manchanda, 2006; Wei *et al.*, 2010) that were done on consumers' attitudes towards online ads showed that in general consumers have a mixed feelings towards online advertisements and these findings are not atypical of similar studies (Woodside *et al.*, 1997; Hadjiphanis, 2011; Gulla and Purohit, 2013; Malik *et al.*, 2013) conducted on consumers' attitudes to traditional media advertisements.

By and large, the empirical evidences from the highlighted studies on both online Ads and traditional media Ads appeared to show that there is a positive influence of advertisements on consumers' buying behaviour. There is no gainsaying the fact that online Ads of PCWS that are targeted to the right audience(s) would definitely go a long way in encouraging online users to adopt PCWs as one of their shopping decision-making tools. How online Ads might possibly influence the intention of online shoppers to use PCWs as a shopping tool is one of the key areas this study hopes to explore.

Apparently, when online shoppers are less satisfied with their present service experiences with a particular e-Store, most of these dissatisfied consumers who perhaps are highly service experience conscious in terms of their expectations of online stores could easily afford to switch to other eStores with the hope they could attain a higher service experience. Service experience consciousness could be one of the main drivers of the ongoing rapid uptake of PCWs by smart shoppers in the online marketplaces. It is pertinent to point out that most of the popular PCWs like Google Shopping, mysupermarket.com, nexttag.

com, pricegrabber.com, skyscanner.net, shopzilla.com, and so many others in the globe enhance online shopping experience by providing shoppers with customers' reviews, attractive bargains, product information, shipping with delivery details and other relevant information.

Conceivably, when consumers become so inundated with getting a higher service experience from every purchase made with an online vendor, they may possibly use price with product information as a strong differentiating factor. Hence, it is plausible to state that some of these consumers might want to adopt the usage of PCWs as a means of gaining a higher service experience from possibly new eStores that supposedly offer them a good value (price and other relevant product information) for their money.

The primary aim of this study is to explore as well as to examine the impact of online Ads and customer service experience consciousness on young female consumers' intention to use PCWs in their intended online purchase transactions. Hence, within the confines of this research paper, two main hypotheses would be empirically tested, viz:

H1: Higher exposure with perceptual receptiveness to online Ads is directly and positively related to young female online shoppers' intention to use PCWs as a purchase decision-making tool.

H2: A higher inclination to customer service experience consciousness by young female online shoppers would be directly and positively related to the usage of PCWs as a purchase decision-making tool.

This paper is structured as follows: the first section presents the introductory part of the study while the second section presents an overview of relevant literature about this research. The research design in terms of materials and methods used in the course of the study is highlighted in the third section while the fourth presents the results, discussion of the empirical findings as well as limitations with possible areas of further research. We conclude the study by presenting a summary of the paper in the last section.

## Literature Review

### Price Comparison Websites

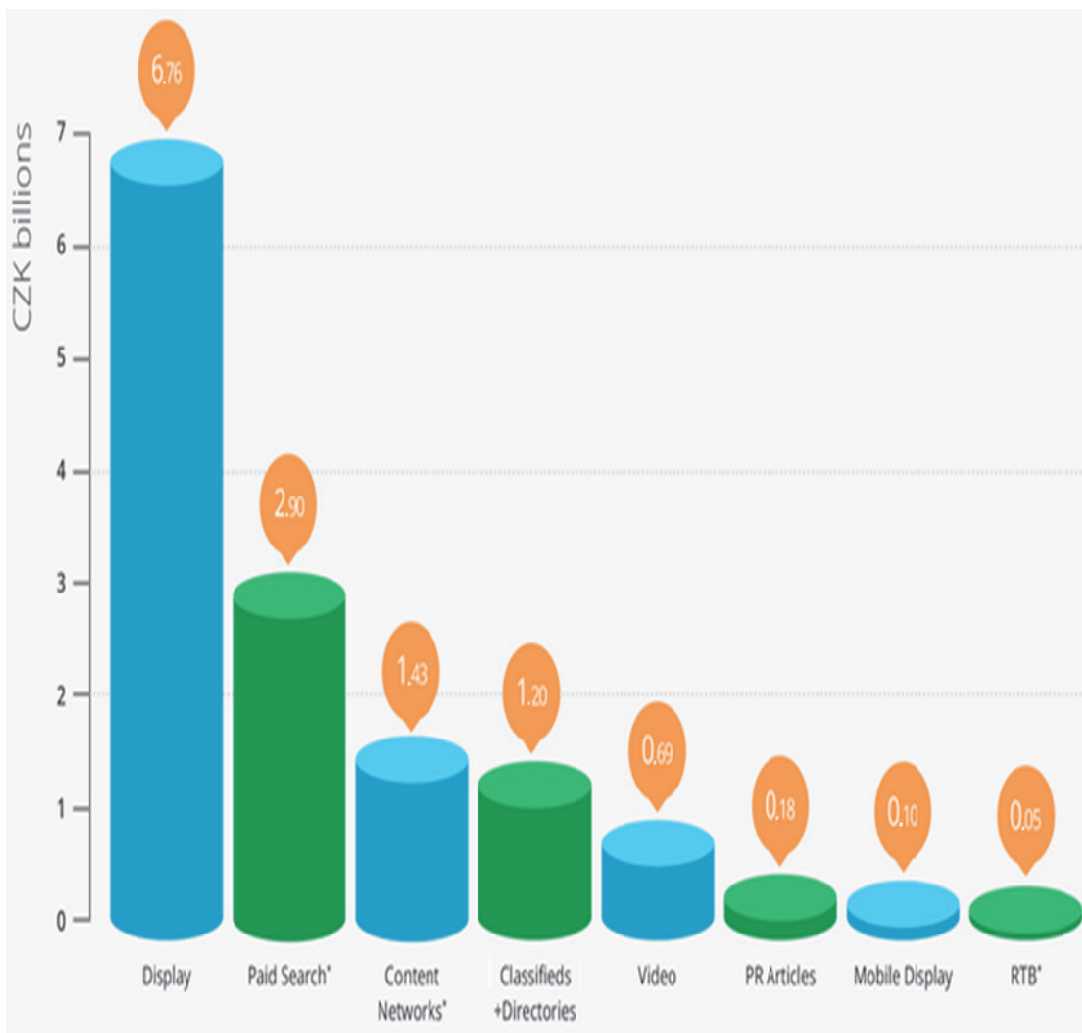
Price Comparison Websites (PCWs) are perhaps seen as a near-frictionless marketing intermediary that can drive down online shoppers' search costs while equally creating opportunities for online vendors to increase their brand visibility and set a 'win-win' pricing model that is seemingly of value to both the consumer and the vendor (Smith, 2002). As adduced by Moraga-Gonzalez and Wildenbeest (2011), the market attractiveness of PCWs to both online shoppers and vendors remains largely the fact that PCWs play the dual role of price discrimination and product differentiation in the online retailing landscape. PCWs are more or less seen as an information aggregator in the online

marketplace since the primary responsibility of any one of the PCWs is to build a seamless pipeline that connects an online shopper with an Internet retailer. The empirical work of Brown and Golsbee (2002, as cited in Moraga-Gonzalez and Wildenbeest, 2011) showed that as more online consumers adopted PCWs, the price of term life insurance dropped significantly in the late 1990s. Thus, showing a significant negative relationship between PCWs usage and price of the life insurance package.

In a report tagged "Comparison Tools – Report from the Multi-Stakeholder Dialogue" presented at the European Consumer Summit (2013), it was found out that at least 80% of European consumers did make use of PCWs in 2010. The same report did state that PCWs have continually evolved over the years owing to the addition of personalised search capabilities and online users' ratings of these sites, thereby, easing and aiding online shoppers' purchase decision-making process as well as the possibilities of exploring other competing eStores with attractive offers. Similarly, in a report by Civic Consulting (2011), Czech Republic online shoppers appeared to be the leading PCWs users across the EU-27 countries. The report showed that 92% of Czech online shoppers use PCWs as an important information source for online shopping. A similar trend was equally observed in Poland (91%) and Slovakia (90%). For the EU-27 countries as a whole, it was estimated that 81% of the 29,010 respondents covered in the study did make use of PCWs. From the report, most of the online shoppers who use PCWs stated that it is the fastest way to compare prices online and it represents a vital medium for finding cheapest price deals on the Internet. Some of the popular PCWs in the Czech Republic are it-zone.com, obchodnidum-maji.cz, tripadvisor.com, hostelscombined.com, nezabloudite.cz, skyscanner.cz, etc.

### Online Advertisement

As posited by Mehta (2001, as cited in Yang, 2011), in general, consumers who are more receptive to Ads are more likely to be coaxed into buying an advertised product. So far, there has been inconclusive findings on consumers' attitudes towards online Ads and how online Ads either directly or indirectly impact on online shoppers' behaviour (Schlosser *et al.*, 1999; Wolin and Korgaonkar, 2003; Ha, 2008; McDonald and Cranor, 2010; Azeem Haq, 2012; Sanje and Senol, 2012; Onay, 2013). This study is one of the very few to empirically investigate the indirect impact online Ads might possibly have on consumer behavior via PCWs. In the Czech Republic, online Ads expenditure by firms rose from 5.04 billion Czech Koruna in 2008 to 13.31 billion Czech Koruna in 2013 and with a further estimate of 15.31 billion Czech Koruna in 2014. A bulk of the online Ads expenditures (see Fig. 1) is focused on display Ads and this had a market share of 6.76 billion Czech Koruna in 2013 (SPIR, 2014).



1: Market Share of Individual Forms of Online Ads  
Source: SPIR, ppm factum, February, 2014

### Customer Service Experience Consciousness

As highlighted by Verhoef *et al.* (2009) and Neslin *et al.* (2006, as cited in Verhoef *et al.*, 2009), customer service experience extends beyond the various touch points and it could be traced to an accumulation of customer experiences over time, which is shaped by information search, actual purchase, consumption, and post-purchase stages of the consumer experience. Customer service experience represents a key dynamic business area that businesses ought to focus on given that customer service experience is by itself a continuum as well as a conscious process that takes place on multifarious touch points – email, chat, Ads, social media engagement, corporate sites, phone, retail-channel, and in-store environments (Fiveson, 2011).

The popular saying that “the customer is king” seems to be evidently playing out in the digital age and the advent of the Internet has significantly given consumers freedom of choice -consumers are now becoming much more savvy, smart, sophisticated and very demanding. For eStores to continually

match online shoppers’ expectations with an excellent personalised customer service delivery experience presents a new business challenge for most online retailers. Unarguably, exceeding online consumers’ service experience goes beyond offering the right pricing for products, it is a total service experience package that involves other intrinsic factors such as convenience, communication, speed, trust, and relationship-building. In a study by Dimensional Research (2013), covering 1,046 individual respondents, one of the key findings was that a good customer service experience impacts on the bottom-lines of online vendors; 42% of online shoppers bought more as a result of previous good service experience while 52% stopped purchasing from an eStore due to the poor service experience they had earlier encountered. It is interesting to note from the same study that 49% of the women in the study are most likely to not only switch vendors, but also likely to stop patronising an online vendor, even two years or more after a bad service experience encounter.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study was conducted based on a non-probability sampling method – convenience sampling. Our choice of research instrument for data collection was the use of self-administered questionnaire which was more or less geared towards a web-based survey. The questionnaire was prepared using Google Docs and as such it was easily made available online for respondents to fill. Moreover, in a bid to facilitate response rate, questionnaires were printed and distributed to the targeted sample – female students of Tomas Bata University in Zlín within the period of January to March, 2014. Aside the fact that the questionnaire contained demographic information, it also included Likert scale questions within the range of 1 (completely disagree) to 5 (completely agree). The Likert scale questions for PCWs were adapted from Gentry and Calantone (2002), Park and Gretzel (2010) and Heitz-Spahn (2012) while the items for online Ads were adapted from Ducoffe (1995), Wu *et al.* (2008) and Ling *et al.* (2010). Also, the multi-item scale for customer experience consciousness was adapted from Parasuraman *et al.* (1988), McCollough *et al.* (2000), and Mazaheri *et al.* (2010).

At the end of the survey exercise, a total useable number of 123 questionnaires were collated from the participants. Going forward, all the Likert scale questions were subjected to an internal validity test using Cronbach Alpha. Given that this is an exploratory study, it has been suggested that Cronbach's Alpha value of at least 0.5 is deemed sufficient for such a study (Nunnally, 1967 as cited in Yang and Kang, 2006). Arguably, a Cronbach alpha value of slightly less than 0.5 might even be okay for a preliminary study of this nature based on the given theoretical constructs. Thereafter, we performed an exploratory factor analysis using Principal Component Analysis (PCA) and more specifically using VARIMAX orthogonal rotation technique to aggregate the most important dimensions found in the data. Based on the result of the PCA, we opted to use the variance-based Partial Least Square approach to Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) to test our hypothesized statements. We opted for PLS-SEM due to our small sample size and the possibility of our data being non-normally distributed. We also performed convergent validity and discriminant validity of our research constructs. Moreover, a battery of test was equally employed to check the validity of the model. For the purpose of this work, we have made use of three important software tools – MS Excel, SPSS version 20 and SmartPLS 2.

## RESULTS, DISCUSSION AND NEED FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

### Demographic Profile of Respondents

Based on the sample survey of 123 female respondents, 24.4% of the respondents were within

the age range of 17–20 while a majority (62.6%) of the respondents were between the ages of 21–24. In terms of nationality, the Czechs made up 78.9% of the sample while for non-Czechs, it was 21.1%. The majority (69.9%) of respondents were undergraduate students and the rest were either Master's (25.2%) or PhD students (4.9%). Regarding eStore usage rate, 39% of the respondents shop online at least on a monthly basis while 32.5% use eStores at least on a quarterly basis, 28.5% use eStores at least twice in a year. What do respondents usually shop for online? It is obvious that a majority shop for a mixture of these items- fashion apparels/ clothes, transportation tickets, and books/learning materials.

### Reliability Test Based on Cronbach Alpha

The result of the reliability test using Cronbach Alpha showed that the 15 multi-scale items (5 initial items per each construct) met the threshold value of 0.5 for a preliminary study of this nature. The Cronbach's alpha value of the online Ads construct was 0.685 while for the price comparison website construct, it was 0.639 and lastly for customer service experience consciousness construct, it was 0.561. Thus, this is a pointer to the internal consistency of the measurement scales of our constructs. Also note that along the line, some of these initial items were dropped as a result of low correlation and possible overlapping of items in at least two dimensions, so it is possible to see either an improvement or a slight drop in the Cronbach's alpha value in one of the subsequent sections.

### Exploratory Factor Analysis

Based on the result (see Tab. I) of the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) Measure of Sampling Adequacy (0.612) and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity (statistically significant at  $p = 0.000$  with an approximate Chi-Square value of 244 and a degree of freedom of 55); we then proceeded to do a principal component analysis as had earlier been stated. The Kaiser's criterion of eigenvalues of at least one served as the baseline for the dimensions that were retained. From the result (see Tab. I), three dimensions were derived and it accounted for 52.24% of the total variance in the sample. In terms of the most variance accounted for, online Ads accounted for 23.62%, while the variance accounted for by intention to use PCWs was 16.76% and then followed by customer service experience consciousness –11.86%. The few items that cross-loaded were eliminated, so also items with insignificant loadings (in this instance, loadings with less than 0.49) were equally dropped. With respect to convergent validity and discriminant validity, we can state that our three unique dimensions satisfied all a priori requirement since all the factor loadings exceeded 0.50 and there was an absence of cross-loadings when the rotation finally converged in just five iterations.

## I: Results of the PCA of Research Constructs

Questionnaire Items	Dimension 1	Dimension 2	Dimension 3
	PCW factor loadings	eADs factor loadings	CSEC factor loadings
I think PCWs give consumers freedom of choice	.686		
To get variety, it is good to use PCWs	.750		
I can easily switch my buying preferences with PCWs	.801		
PCWs promote the interest of consumers by making us smart consumers	.501		
Online Ads will motivate me to buy a different brand/product		.772	
Online Ads stimulate me to buy a new product/service		.818	
Online Ads influence(d) my decisions to try products' varieties		.597	
Online Ads will influence my decision to switch to another brand/product		.706	
If I am dissatisfied with an online service provider, I will stop using the service			.597
I am particular about customer service whenever I am buying anything			.735
A vendor who fails to deliver on his/her promise puts me off from buying items online			.682
Initial Eigenvalues	1.843	2.598	1.305
% of Variance Explained	16.757	23.616	11.864
Cumulative % Variance Explained → 52.237			
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy → .612			
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity			
Approx. Chi-Square → 244.008			
df → 55			
Sig. → 0.000			

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.

Rotation converged in 6 iterations;

Note: PCW – Price Comparison Website; eADs-online Ads; CSEC-Customer Service Experience Consciousness

Source: Authors' Elaboration extracted from SPSS Output

### Hypotheses Testing Using Partial Least Square Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM)

First, the outer reflective model using PLS-SEM was evaluated in an attempt to validate the model in terms of internal consistency reliability, convergent validity as well as discriminant validity. It has been observed that the traditional Cronbach's alpha in PLS-SEM is usually less robust compared to composite reliability (Wong, 2013). Nevertheless, the Cronbach's alpha value was included as part of the result in Tab. II. From Tab. II, it can be seen that all the outer loadings exceeded the threshold value of 0.5. Composite Reliability should exceed 0.6 for research constructs internal consistency to be seen as highly assured (Wong, 2013). As such, all the composite reliability values for the three latent variables in the model exceeded 0.6. All the Cronbach's alpha values of the constructs exceeded the minimum acceptable level of 0.5 with the exception of the scale of customer service experience consciousness (CSEC) which was 0.48, thus, marginally below the threshold value of 0.5.

Moreover, a check (see Tab. II) on the convergent validity for each of the latent variables using the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) showed that only CSEC was marginally below the cut-off value of 0.5. Arguably and given the fact this is an exploratory study, this provides slightly strong evidence of the convergent validity of the three latent variables. Also, see Tab. III for the result of the discriminant validity using the square root of AVE of the three latent variables across the diagonal elements of the correlated latent variables. According to Fornell and Larcker (1981, as cited in Wong, 2013), for discriminant validity to hold, the square root of each unique latent variable's AVE should be higher than its correlation with other latent variables. More so, the cross-loadings for the constructs were highly insignificant and with a maximum cross-load value of about 0.2. We can carefully state that our measurement model fulfils the laid down conditions of discriminant validity (see Tab. III).

Given that our structural equation model using partial least squares has been deemed to be a fairly

## II: Quality Criteria for Outer Reflective Model

Latent Variable	Indicators	Loadings	Bootstrapped T-Value (loadings)	Composite Reliability	Cronbach's Alpha	AVE
eADs	AD2	0.750	3.720	<b>0.810</b>	<b>0.710</b>	<b>0.518</b>
	AD3	0.637	3.042			
	AD4	0.659	3.248			
	AD5	0.819	4.598			
PCW	PCW1	0.691	4.137	<b>0.802</b>	<b>0.670</b>	<b>0.505</b>
	PCW2	0.756	6.221			
	PCW3	0.774	7.062			
	PCW4	0.611	3.746			
CSEC	SERVC1	0.632	3.296	<b>0.740</b>	<b>0.480</b>	<b>0.488</b>
	SERVC2	0.662	3.233			
	SERVC4	0.791	4.586			

Source: Own Elaboration extracted from SmartPLS

## III: Discriminant Validity Test Using Fornell-Lacker Criterion

	CSEC	PCW	eADs
CSEC	<b>0.699*</b>		
PCW	0.248	<b>0.711*</b>	
eADs	0.05	0.210	<b>0.720*</b>

Note: The diagonal elements (marked with \*) represent the square root of AVE

Source: Own Elaboration extracted from SmartPLS

good model, next in line was the estimation of the inner model path coefficients in an attempt to ascertain the study's hypotheses. The structural path coefficients were estimated using a bootstrapping procedure of 5000 replacements sampling values with individual changes as sign changes using the aforementioned software. The estimated model has an R-Squared value of 0.101, this shows that the model was able to capture 10% of the variability in young female online shoppers' intention to use PCWs. The effect size is fairly moderate given that an R-Squared value of 0.13 is synonymous to Cohen's  $f^2$  moderate effect size of 0.15 (Cohen, 1998 as cited in Memon *et al.*, 2013). The Global Goodness-of Fit (GoF) statistic value (see Tab. IV) for the structural model as a whole exceeds the baseline value (GoF small = 0.1), hence it is fairly moderate given that it is marginally below the GoF medium cut-off value of 0.25. Based on our output (see Tab. IV), there is a strong evidence to show that the two stated hypotheses (H1 and H2) were supported by the estimated model.

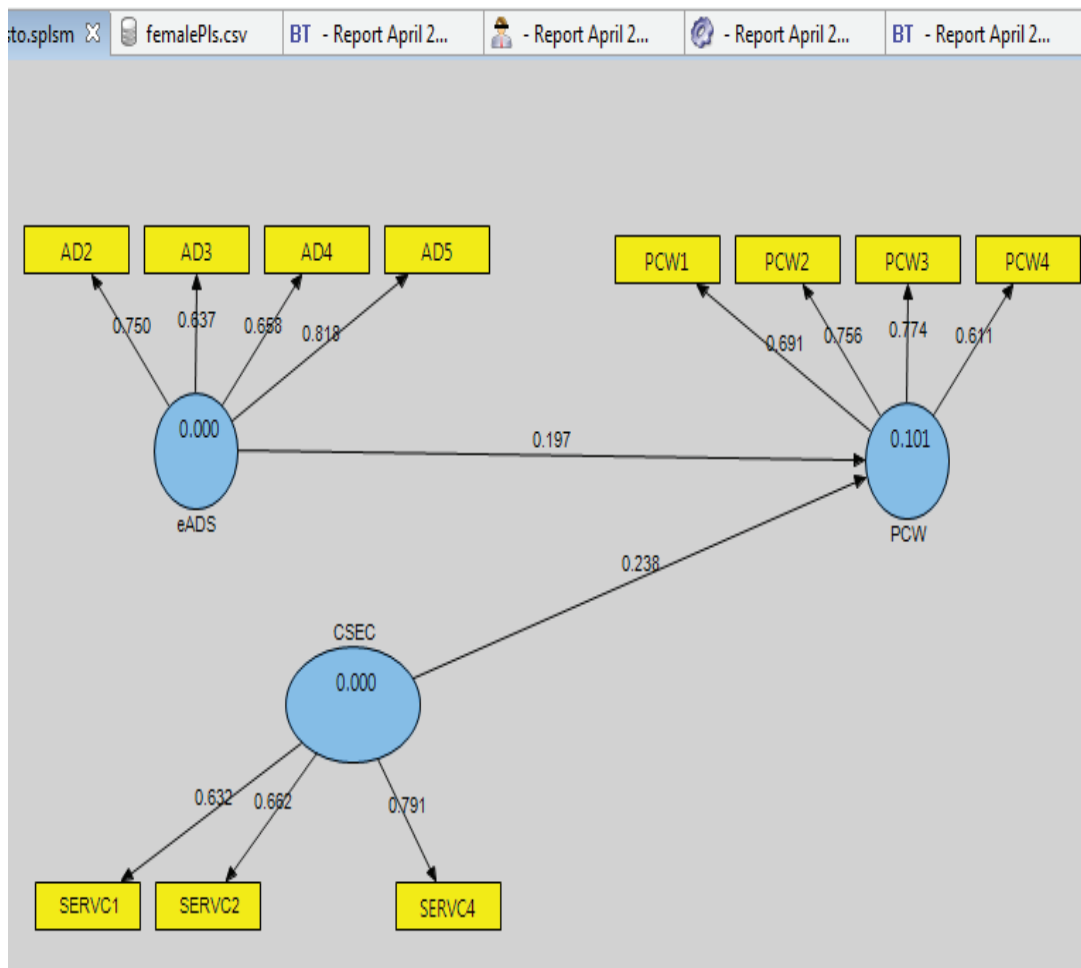
From the above table (Tab. IV), it is evident to state that a higher exposure with perceptual receptiveness to online Ads (eADs) is directly and positively related to young female online shoppers' intention to use PCWs as a purchase decision-making tool (statistically significant at p-value < 0.01). Similarly, a higher inclination to customer service experience consciousness (CSEC) by young female online shoppers is directly and positively related to the usage of PCWs as a purchase decision-making tool (statistically significant at p-value < 0.01). It appears that CSEC is a better predictor of intention to use PCWs compared to online Ads (eADs). By and large, for online Ads, in general, to be an inducer of online shoppers' intention to use PCWs, it must be seen to have these foursome appeals – engaging, empowering, informative, and credibility.

There is no gainsaying the fact that so many online Ads, especially banner and pop-up Ads are very offensive to most online users. Hence, online Ads that could possibly be used by PCWs to attract online shoppers to their sites should endeavor to take into cognizance the aforementioned foursome appeals. It is equally worth mentioning that the more online shoppers become more desirous of exceptional service-delivery experiences from web-bases stores, the more the likelihood that those consumers who are always inclined to getting a higher level of customer experience might become easily put off by online retailers' service failures. Hence, they might resolve in using PCWs as a tool they could rely upon to compare service dimensions across various

## IV: Estimates of the Hypothesized Structural Path Model Significance

Hypothesis	Hypothetical Path	Coefficient	S.E.	T-Statistics	Test Outcome
<b>H1</b>	eADs → usage intention of PCW	0.197	0.076	2.583	<b>Supported</b>
<b>H2</b>	CSEC → usage intention of PCW	0.238	0.087	2.754	<b>Supported</b>
GoF = $\sqrt{(\text{AVE} * \text{R}^2)} = 0.226$					
$\text{R}^2 = 0.101$					

Source: Own Elaboration with output extracted from SmartPLS



2: Pictorial Description of Estimated Structural Model  
Source: Own Elaboration with output extracted from SmartPLS

eStores. It is very plausible to state that apart from the fact that PCWs are used by consumers in getting better deals (more specifically, pricing), it could also serve as a tool for the comparison of service dimensions across multifarious eStores. It is very imperative to state that PCWs do not necessarily provide the best deals online owing to the fact that not all online retailers are supposedly registered with PCWs. Hence, in terms of the trustworthiness of the information provided by a price comparison website, online consumers might be in doubt of such websites (PCWs). Also, see Fig. 2 for a pictorial description of the estimated structural model using SmartPLS.

### Limitations and Future Research Possibilities

Even though the key findings of the study present profound and interesting results to the study of consumer behaviour, most especially on young female online shoppers' intention to use PCWs

as a purchase decision making tool. It is equally pertinent to point out that due to the small sample size of the survey, one cannot fully generalize that both online Ads and customer service experience consciousness are determinants of female online shoppers' usage intentions of price comparison websites. As had earlier been stated, this is still a preliminary study. Hence, further research is called for so as to fully ascertain if these two factors would play out in both male and female online shoppers' intention to use PCWs. More so, a larger sample size and the inclusion of other factors such as word of mouth, Internet (browsing) experience, trust, and deal proneness could be other important determinants that should be looked into in subsequent research works. It is our hope that the current research will set the tone for future research work in this area being that there is currently a dearth of research work on how the use of price comparison websites might possibly have an impact on online shopping behaviour.



## CONCLUSION

This study was primarily set out to investigate the influence of both online Ads and customer service experience consciousness on young female online shoppers' intention to use price comparison websites as a purchase decision-making tool within the online retail landscape. Based on a sample survey of 123 female respondents, we found out using the Partial Least Square Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM) that online Ads and customer service experience consciousness were fairly strong predictors of the intention to use price comparison websites by young female online shoppers. Hence, our two stated hypotheses were supported based on the outcome of the structural model. Apparently, customer service experience consciousness is a better predictor of female shoppers' intention to use price comparison websites compared to online Ads. Nonetheless, we have highlighted the need for a further research based on the study's limitations.

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