Abstract

The development of infrastructure that fuels technology based interactions has indeed given a huge push to the e-tailing activities in India. Despite the fact that India is emerging as one of the largest e-tailing markets globally, e-tailers in India have not been able to register high profits. And, one of the major challenges which can be attributed to the same relates to the switching behavior of the consumers across e-tailers. Owing to the fact that customers in computer mediated enviornments can easily switch e-tailers with minimal cost and effort, one area that warrants enormous attention for creating loyal customers is e-fulfillment. Despite the realized importance of e-fulfilment and its perceived impact on post-purchase behaviour of the consumers (consumer loyalty), studies on the subject are sparse. Addressing the same, the thesis aims at examining the impact of e-fulfillment processes on post-purchase behaviour of the consumers (phase 1). The study additionally contributes to the e-fulfillment literature by proposing a distribution strategy evaluation framework for assisting e-tailers in selecting the best distribution strategy (phase 2) along with establishing a e-fulfillment performance evaluation framework (phase 3). In the first phase of the study, the impact of five core e-fulfillment components (customization strategy, website quality, distribution strategy, last mile delivery and return management) on customer loyalty across two different product types (standard, regular and physical; standard, non-regular and physical) has been investigated via PLS-SEM. The empirical results in phase 1 indicated that all e-fulfillment components positively impacted the consumer loyalty for the standard, non-regular and physical product type. However, for standard, regular and physical product, customization strategies emerged as an exception (insignificant). The second phase of the study aimed at proposing a distribution strategy evaluation framework for assisting e-tailers in selecting the best distribution strategy using hybrid multi criteria decision making technique (MCDM), which combines Decision Making Trial and Evaluation Laboratory (DEMATEL), DEMATEL based Analytic Network Process and VIsekriterijumsko Kompromisno Rangiranje (VIKOR) method. The adopted methodology provided scope for prioritisation of the distribution strategies: "DC (Distribution centre) shipment", "drop shipment", "click and collect", "store shipment" and "click and reserve", which in turn is expected to provide basis to e-tailers for selecting the best distribution strategy. In the final phase, e-fulfillment performance evaluation framework has been established by identifying the important performance class and aspects of an e-tailer by conducting an extensive literature review. DEMATEL based ANP (DANP) has been employed to investigate the relationship among performance aspects and to calculate weights of these performance aspects. The designated weights of performance aspects are expected to help the managers in finding out the important aspects, which call for further improvement. The results of the study revealed "return policy", "pickup method" "innovativeness", "assortment type", "assortment width", "trust (privacy and security)" and "promised delivery date" as important performance aspects for e-fulfillment performance. Altogether, the study makes significant theoretical and methodological contribution to the e-fulfillment literature by establishing that the impact of various e-fulfilment on customer loyalty across two product type varies. Additionally, the study contributes by proposing a distribution strategy evaluation framework for selection of the best distribution strategy. As per results observed in Phase 2 of the study, DC shipment was observed as the best distribution strategy considering the different criteria related to the performance, product, external and

e-tailer's characteristics. Finally, e-fulfillment performance evaluation framework has been proposed which carries a huge managerial significance.