

# Explaining the model of key consumer competencies in online shopping with the Thematic analysis

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**Abstract**

The purpose of this research is to explain the model of key competencies of consumers in online shopping. This research is a type of qualitative research, which is applicable in terms of purpose, and descriptive in terms of data collection. The statistical population of the research is buyers with high experience in online shopping, all of whom have at least 5 years of experience in online sales, and have business management education. The tool for collecting information is an interview. To investigate the validity of the qualitative part, the content validity and intra-coder and inter-coder reliability models were used. In the qualitative part of data analysis method, thematic analysis approach was compiled with MAXQDA software and using coding method. The research results first categorized and modeled the competencies of consumers in 6 stages of the online shopping process. Then, by combining these competencies, five key competencies of consumers in online shopping were identified, which included product identification, self-control, power of choice, consumer support, and decision support. The results of this research, with a combined analysis of the different competencies of consumers in online shopping, can provide important help both to consumers to increase the quality of their purchases, and to the managers of online shopping platforms to improve their services and increase their sales.

**Keywords:**

Competence,  
Consumer  
competence,  
Online shopping,  
Power of choice,  
Consumer protection

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## **Extended Abstract**

### **Introduction**

Theoretically, online shopping can benefit consumers due to the wide variety of products and convenient shopping. However, insufficient competence may prevent consumers from enjoying the benefits of online shopping. For example, incompetent consumers may suffer from poor decision-making, impulsive consumption, and online fraud (Chopdar & Balakrishnan, 2020). The effects of consumer competence on consumer satisfaction and well-being have been repeatedly investigated in traditional offline consumption (Fernandes et al, 2020; Lee et al, 2023). However, studies of consumer competence in online shopping have been very limited. Furthermore, the difference between online and offline shopping prevents the transfer of information about the offline shopping experience to online shopping. Therefore, it is important to examine the structure and performance patterns of consumer competence in online shopping. Consumers' personalities such as their gender, age, health status, education level and social status significantly affect their level of financial competence (Andronie et al, 2021). Education is a valid way to improve the financial competence of consumers, especially for college students. This trend is consistent with the fact that online shopping platforms tend to launch consumer credit products to entice low-income consumers. Therefore, improving the competence of consumers and increasing their ability to identify risks will help them make rational decisions (Guofang Liu et al, 2023). Therefore, according to the gap expressed in the research literature, the main question of the research is as follows: What is the model of the key competencies of the consumer in online shopping?

### **Theoretical framework**

#### **Consumer competence**

Consumer competence indicates the competence needed by consumers to function effectively and rationally in the market (Park et al, 2011). For example, competent consumers must have the ability to think, identify their needs, recognize essential products, compare prices based on value, and be fully aware of salespeople (Lachance & Choquette-Bernier, 2004).

#### **Intention to buy**

Grewal et al, (1998) define purchase intention as a possibility that consumers will find a tendency to buy a product. Purchase intention refers to the fact that the consumer is likely to buy a certain brand of a product category during the purchase (Bonyadi Naeini et al, 2015).

Babashahi et al, (2021) conducted a research entitled "Designing a Competency Model for Digital Marketing Managers" with thematic analysis method. In this study, researchers conducted 17 interviews with digital marketing experts. The findings of the research, which is the final model of the research after the triple steps of open, central and selective coding, show that the competency model of digital marketing managers was formed with 114 codes and 26 concepts in three categories of technical-specialist competencies, human-behavioral competencies, and analytical competencies.

Wang et al, (2019) conducted a research titled "Understanding Emotional and Informational Impact on Customer Knowledge Contribution through Quantitative Content Analysis". Participants in the online community reviewed Xiaomi. The research findings show that informational support (information recognition and credibility of sources) and emotional support (emotional stability and emotional difference) significantly affect customer knowledge participation.

### **Research methodology**

This research is a type of qualitative research, which is applicable in terms of purpose, and descriptive in terms of data collection. The statistical population of the research is buyers with high experience in online shopping, all of whom have at least 5 years of experience in online sales, and have business management education. The tool for data collecting is an interview. To investigate the validity of the qualitative part, the content validity and intra-coder and inter-coder reliability models were used.

### **Research findings**

In the qualitative part of the data analysis method, the theme analysis approach is compiled with MAXQDA software and using the coding method. The research results first categorized and modeled the competencies of consumers in 6 stages of the online shopping process. Then, by combining these competencies, five key competencies of consumers in online shopping were identified, which included product identification, self-control, power of choice, consumer support, and decision support. The results of this research, with a combined analysis of the different competencies of consumers in online shopping, can provide important help both to consumers to increase the quality of their purchases and to the managers of online shopping platforms to improve their services and increase their sales.

### **Conclusion**

The current research was conducted with the aim of explaining the model of key competencies of consumers in online shopping. The results of this research are in line with the results of Babashahi et al, (2021), Wang et al, (2019), De Pelsmacker et al, (2018), Ballestar et al, (2017) Ramanathan (2016), and Day (2011). Babashahi et al, (2021) showed that the competency model of digital marketing managers was formed with 114 codes and 26 concepts in three categories of technical-expert competencies, human-behavioral competencies, and analytical competencies.

From the point of view of consumers, customer service is an important element in online shopping, so it is expected that online shopping platforms will try to improve this part as much as possible. This will be very important in empowering consumers' power of choice. Also, in supporting consumer decision-making, platforms can help empower and support consumer decision-making by developing and improving the comments section of their websites both during and after purchase.