

# Online shopping



Online shopping or online retailing is a form of electronic commerce which allows consumers to directly buy goods or services from a seller over the Internet using a web browser. Alternative names are: e-web-store, e-shop, e-store, Internet shop, web-shop, web-store, online store, and virtual store. An online shop evokes the physical analogy of buying products or services at a bricks-and-mortar retailer or shopping center; the process is called business-to-consumer (B2C) online shopping.

In the case where a business buys from another business, the process is called business-to-business (B2B) online shopping. The largest of these online retailing corporations are eBay and Amazon. com, both based in the United States. Retail success is no longer all about physical stores, this is evident because of the increase in retailers now offering online store interfaces for consumers. With the growth of online shopping, comes a wealth of new market footprint coverage opportunities for stores that can appropriately cater to offshore market demands and service requirements.

Consumers find a product of interest by visiting the website of the retailer directly or by searching among alternative vendors using a shopping search engine. Once a particular product has been found on the website of the seller, most online retailers use shopping cart software to allow the consumer to accumulate multiple items and to adjust quantities, like filling a physical shopping cart or basket in a conventional store. A "checkout" process follows (continuing the physical-store analogy) in which payment and delivery information is collected, if necessary.

Some stores allow consumers to sign up for a permanent online account so that some or all of this information only needs to be entered once. The consumer often receives an e-mail confirmation once the transaction is complete. Less sophisticated stores may rely on consumers to phone or e-mail their orders (although full credit card numbers, expiry date, and Card Security Code,[4] or bank account and routing number should not be accepted by e-mail, for reasons of security). A successful web store is not just a good looking website with dynamic technical features, listed in many search engines.

In addition to disseminating information, it is also about building a relationship with customers and making money. Businesses often attempt to adopt online shopping techniques without understanding them and/or without a sound business model; often times, businesses produce web stores that support the organizations' culture and brand name without satisfying consumer expectations. User-centered design is critical. Understanding the customer's wants and needs is essential. Living up to the company's promises gives customers a reason to come back and meeting their expectations gives them a reason to stay.

It is important that the website communicates how much the company values its customers. Customer needs and expectations are not the same for all customers. Age, gender, experience and culture are all important factors. For example, Japanese cultural norms may lead users there to feel privacy is especially critical on shopping sites and emotional involvement is highly important on financial pension's sites. Users with more online experience

focus more on the variables that directly influence the task, while novice users focus on understanding the information.

To increase online purchases, businesses must expend significant time and money to define, design, develop, test, implement, and maintain the web store. It is easier to lose a customer than to gain one. Even a "top-rated" website will not succeed if the organization fails to practice common etiquette such as returning e-mails in a timely fashion, notifying customers of problems, being honest, and being good stewards of the customers' data. Because it is so important to eliminate mistakes and be more appealing to online shoppers, many web shop designers study research on consumer expectations.