

## Importance of After Purchase Services in Online Business and Customers

### Satisfaction: A Study from Pakistan

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*Keywords:*

Customer Satisfaction, Online Shopping, Customer Services, Post-purchase Activity

#### **ABSTRACT**

This research paper is focused on the understanding of post-purchase customer services and their impact on customer satisfaction and future purchase intention. This paper emphasized the importance of logistic services like shipping, return, and tracking of the order to provide managerial guidance in e-commerce in Pakistan. This study is intended to support and facilitate managerial insights about post-purchase activities regarding shipping, tracking, and e-commerce returns. Hence, it is a useful study for the practitioners to design their e-commerce services by focusing on the logistic services to satisfy the customers. This study can be further extended to other countries as well. The results reveal that post-purchase services lead to the increased customer satisfaction, which helps the e-commerce entrepreneurs to retain their customers and consequently increased market share and profitability.

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#### **INTRODUCTION**

Online shopping is a process by which customers can acquire goods or services through the internet without using any intermediaries. Since the inception of the World Wide Web (WWW), traders have found ways to sell the products to buyers who can access the internet. Nowadays internet has emerged as the most convenient way to purchase the product or service, and an order is just a click away as the buyer is sitting in front of a computer or any other electronic gadget e.g. tablet, cell phone, etc. and can access a variety of product and analyze the offers of different traders. By using internet technology millions of companies are now started their business to trade goods and services from the internet that is a major contribution of this technology. Many well-established brands have started their business over the

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internet that helps the customers to get their desired products. The online shopping experience has successfully enhanced the relationship between customers and suppliers. In this way, consumers have to rely on the cyberspace database (like images, pictures, video clips of the product) without any physical appearance of the product. The rapid expansion in e-business in the future is also dependent on post-purchase services and customer satisfaction (eMarketer, 2016) This has emerged as a global phenomenon and the number of internet users has estimated to be 1.8 billion whereas in Pakistan the total population has been reached to 44.6 million by January 2018 according to the world internet stats. The awareness of the use of the internet is growing day by day and this sharp growth of the internet population means that people have now quick access to their desired product or service. This sharp growth of internet use has developed a new market for both customer and the trader. The internet is not only a platform to get connected with the customers, but it has proven a successful source to find out new customers even to retain the existing customers. The internet is a name of a convenient mode of shopping. In this way, the customer can save their precious time and money rather than wander in the market in search of a product or service by just using few clicks on their electronic gadgets. Moreover, this also breaks the frames of time and geographical boundaries as a customer can order from anywhere and at any time. Popular online shops available in Pakistan are “Daraz, Kaymu, goto, home shopping, shopping, yayo, 24hours, symbols, shopping, shop daily, smart, Nepal, BNB accessories, cheezmall, loot, tele mark”.

Jain, Gajjar, Shah, & Sath (2017) suggest in their comprehensive review of the literature that timeliness, facility of return, and availability, coupled with the product quality, pricing, all are related to customer satisfaction and consequently their future purchase intention. However, as stated in the literature review of (Jain, N. K. et al., 2017) that there are very few studies that described the relationship between customer behaviour and post-purchase customer services like shipping, tracking, and return services.

Though it is still unclear that what the real impact of post-purchase activities on customer retention and customer satisfaction. However, it has also been reported by (Tuttle, 2011) that many online customers withdraw their orders if shipping is not free of cost, and “78% of consumers regarded free shipping as either ‘very important or ‘somewhat important in their decision to make an online purchase”. According to the study, it is found that a key to customer satisfaction includes free shipping and delivery (Moth, 2012). Moreover, same-day delivery is much expensive whereas customers do not want to pay extra charges for such delivery. Therefore, companies are extending their supply chain to provide this facility to the customer with the minimum cost (Cao, Ajjan, & Hong, 2018). According to the (Lee, 2001) post-purchase activities like shipment, can be ranked as one of the five most important strategies in supply chain management. To differentiate to get a competitive advantage and to enhance the profit margin, companies need to play strategically by providing the delivery and shipping services (Yao, 2012). In the other researches, this phenomenon has been further supported that to provide best post-purchase services including proper and secure shipping, timely delivery, and related after-sale return services are highly recommended (ComScore, 2014).

## **Research Objective**

The objective of this study is to identify the factors of customer satisfaction and to understand the post-purchase services that influence the re-purchase decision and intention of the customer. These post-purchase activities mainly include shipping, return, and tracking.

This study is primarily focused on investigating the customer satisfaction level about their online shopping experience. This research is helpful to find out the factors of customers' post-purchase satisfaction. These factors and causes have been analyzed in this research. This study revolves around the residents of Pakistan that represent the residents of all cities, traditions, languages. Hence, the entire respondents were assumed to have internet knowledge and usage experience.

The study of this research topic will provide insights into customers' perception of the after-sales service provided by the supplier during online shopping. This study will also highlight customer behavior in a highly competitive market. The study can spread to the regions and cities of Pakistan. The results of this research would be helpful for the online service traders to focus on the consumer satisfaction factors while entering the online world. With the information provided in this research, online shopping providers would be able to design those initiatives that not only would satisfy the consumers but also can improve the company's performance and can maintain the market share.

This research would also be able to provide the factors that cause the satisfaction level of the customers. As the online service provider has achieved the best mix of factors that can satisfy the consumer. It will save the research and development cost in the business and the trader can be more focused on the need and wants of the consumer that finally enhances customer satisfaction. By this study, online shopping providers can focus on the best combinations of the product and service to meet the need and wants of the customer and can maintain long-term relationships with them. Resultantly, shopping providers can achieve more satisfied and more loyal customers.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **E-commerce and Online Shopping**

Electronic commerce is defined as the activities about the information about buying and selling of products and services, via the internet and the online platform. Primarily there are four such activities: (1) entertainment, (2), necessary service (like shopping from home) (3) education and training, and (4) financial service and information (Kalakota & Whinston, 1997). From a customer point of view, online shopping is the core part of electronic business. Where shopkeepers sell the products and customers purchases the information, products, and services from an online store differentiating it from a physical shop or store. According to (Gensler, Verhoef, & Böhm, 2012), there can be three different steps of purchase activities: 1) pre-purchase activities, 2) purchase activities, and 3) post-purchase activities.

### **Logistics Service Quality**

The Internet has a vital role in the development of e-business, the logistics services quality has

established and enhanced relationships between the service provider and the customer. The previous studies have found the “business” into “shippers” (e.g. manufacturers, suppliers, and wholesalers/retailers) and “logistics service provider” (like courier service, warehouse firms, and the logistics companies) as a core factor. (Cao, Ajjan, & Hong, 2018) Defined logistic services provide an organization to perform some or all of the logistics features of a company. Past studies also define logistic services as a connection between customers and the provider and fulfill the logistic needs (Bagchi & Virum, 1998). Logistics management services commonly have five components:

- (i) Communication
- (ii) Storage facilities
- (iii) Inventory
- (iv) Transportation
- (v) Unitization and packaging.

The research is focused on testing the below-stated hypotheses:

### **Customer Service and Satisfaction**

Service characteristics are commonly used to represent the customers’ satisfaction, like as sales teamwork in service provider selection and support and to address the frequently asked questions (FAQ) through emails and other mediums, distribute required information, process the payment and transaction completion, and logistic after-sales activities (like handling of returns) (Park & Kim, 2003); (Zeithaml, Parasuraman, & Malhotra, 2002). This study will separate the after-sales activities (post-purchase logistics services like return, shipping, and tracking) from other customer services activities like a prompt response, quality of interaction, and ease of access. According to (Kassim & Asiah Abdullah, 2010) the perceived customer service and logistics quality have a substantial impact on customer satisfaction, which influences the customers’ future purchase intention. It is also found in the research that post-purchase customer support services are a core factor for customer satisfaction (Reibstein, 2002). In line with the research, it is believed that customer services influence customer satisfaction.

***H1: Customer service has a positive impact on customer satisfaction.***

### **The Post Purchase Logistic Services and Satisfaction**

Timely shipping and delivery are moderately important to foresee the customer satisfaction level as compared with the price of the product or service, which is emphasized by e-commerce philosophy (Reibstein, 2002). Previous literature explained that delivering or providing goods or services to customers’ destinations appropriately and dealing with returned goods are precisely two key factors that impact the online customers’ satisfaction ((Hsu, 2008)). In the studies, according to (Ho & Wu, 1999) logistics activities are the critical factors that impact customer satisfaction. The characteristics mainly include timely delivery, warranty availability, after-sales service and repairs, and the ability to return (unwanted products). It is explained that the post-purchase logistic activities like shipping, delivery, tracking, and return services are directly associated with customer satisfaction, therefore, this research hypothesis can be stated as below:

***H2: Shipping services have a positive impact on customer satisfaction.***

***H3: Tracking services have a positive impact on customer satisfaction.***

*H4: Return services have a positive impact on customer satisfaction.*

### **Future Shopping Intention and Customer Satisfaction**

Many studies have elaborated that service quality and customer satisfaction are directly associated with the future shopping intention of the customer. It is believed that the customer satisfaction with online store service quality will result in re-purchase of the product and customers usually recommend to peer group, friends, and family (Lee & Lin, 2005). Hence, this study hypothesizes that:

*H5: Customer satisfaction has a positive impact on future online shopping.*

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

### **Research design and Data Collection**

This study has been conducted by using a survey to obtain electronic customers' experience and an idea about online shopping and the post-purchase services in Pakistan. A questionnaire was adopted to collect information from online customers (ComScore, 2014); (Hsu, 2008); (Reibstein, 2002). The non-probability convenient sampling was used by visiting different cities of Pakistan and different locations were selected to gather data like institutes, banks, and malls through forms that floated to the random public. More than 350 questionnaires were distributed to the public through the response rate was 70% and almost 192 feedbacks were validated and accepted for research.

### **Sampling Selection**

Generally, two types of sampling techniques are adopted while conducting research i.e. probability technique and non-probability technique. According to (Bell, E & Bryman, 2007) there is an equal chance of selection of each element in a population when deploying a probability technique using a random method. These techniques include "simple random sample, systematic sample, stratified random sampling, and multi-stage cluster sampling" (Bell, E & Bryman, 2007), whereas, in non-probability technique, random selection is not applied. It includes "convenience sampling, snowball sampling, and quota sampling" (Bell, E & Bryman, 2007). Therefore, as the name suggested that convenience sampling is the most convenient method to get the samples due to its accessibility and flexibility. But considering the time limits, mass population, and the available resources to conduct the research we decided to opt for a convenient sampling technique in our study. Though 100% of responses were not collected due to the short timelines and fewer resources, 70% of questionnaires were considered good for research as described above.

### **Measurement Instrument**

The questionnaire is composed of three sections: (i) the first section provides the demographic information of respondents; (ii) the second section collects the response on the five sub-scales of

customer satisfaction (iii) the third section provides a brief statement to evaluate the overall the customer satisfaction towards the services offered by electronics service providers in Pakistan. These items consist of a five-point Likert scale. Options would be ordered as; “Least Agree to Strongly Agree”. The answers would be ordered accordingly by grading them from 1 to 5.

**Statistical Technique**

The statistical method used in this study is the ordinary least square simple regression model for testing the hypotheses which are most commonly used predictive analysis as the data is based on the numerical and this technique can be ideal for testing the results.

**Conceptual Framework**

A conceptual framework has been created based on the SERVQUAL model given by (Parasuraman, 1998) and previous literature in the context of the study. The framework is presented in Figure. The assumptions of individual constructs are developed and discussed by the conceptual framework. As shown in the below model, the left-hand side representing independent variables (IDV) that includes customer services, shipping, tracking, and return whereas the middle one is representing the dependent variable i.e. Customer Satisfaction. On the right-hand side, consequences have been provided i.e. future purchase intention of the customer. However, four control variables are also included i.e. gender, age, income, and frequency of the purchase. Thus, this model is developed to understand and analyze the impact of dependent and independent variables and to draw the interpretation and conclusion.

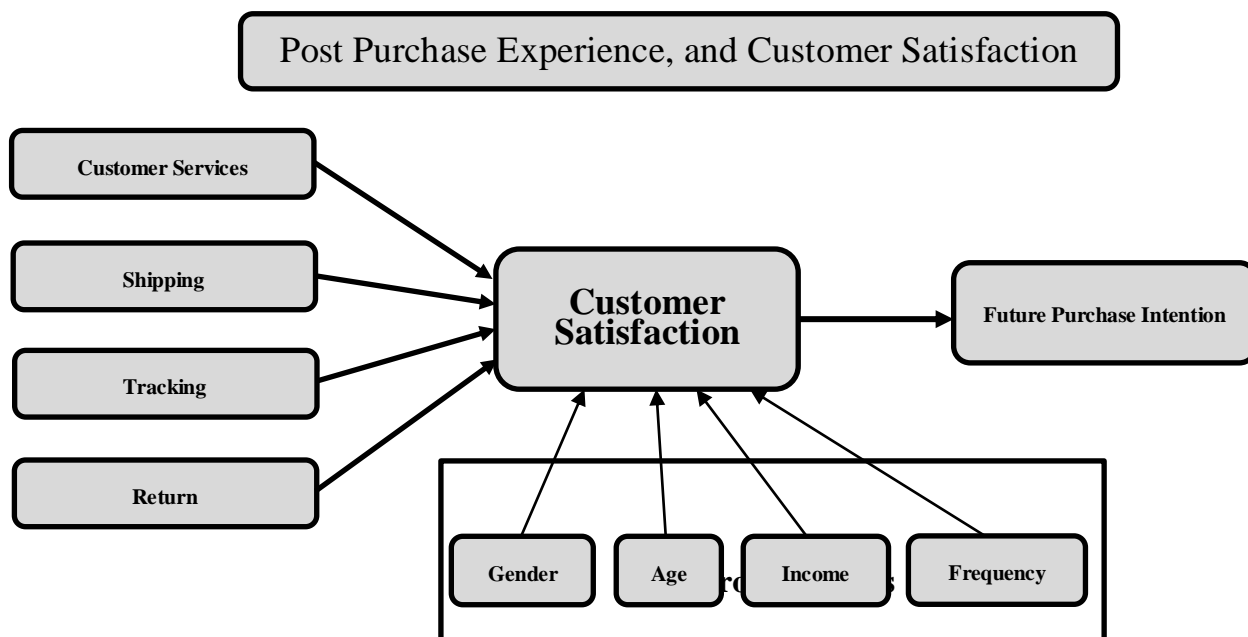


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework adopted from Cao, Y., Ajjan, H. and Hong, P. (2018)

**Data analysis**

To analyze the data 5 Point Likert Scale has been adopted (Cao, Ajjan, & Hong, 2018); (ComScore,

2014); (Hsu, 2008). Though this scale has been applied to the unipolar direction that is 1=Not Satisfied, 2=Slightly Satisfied, 3=Moderately Satisfied, 4=Very Satisfied, and finally 5=Completely Satisfied. As it is very common that the Likert scale is generally accepted and used for questionnaires for the survey to complete the research or study (Parasuraman, 1998). It is also found by the studies (Rajarajan & Vetriveeran, 2016) that the Likert Scale creates the interest of the respondent as they find it interesting to complete the form through the second advantage of this scale is simple and convenient to use. After developing the questionnaires, these have floated to the random respondents. This questionnaire was also taken as a hard copy whereas an online form was also prepared to get the results more conveniently. The completed questionnaires were obtained from both sources and papered an excel sheet to gather it to run the test. The test was run by using SPSS “Statistical Package for the Social Sciences” for analysis purposes to obtain the results of the simple regression method. It is worth mentioning here that Regression Analysis is used when the research involves multiple variables. This test run provides the relationship of dependent and independent variables.

Here independent variable = X

Dependent variable = Y

Whereas unknown parameter = b

Hence,

$$y^* = a + bx$$

$$b = \frac{n \sum xy - (\sum x)(\sum y)}{n(\sum x^2) - (\sum x)^2}$$

$$a = \frac{\sum y - b \sum x}{n}$$

Where to run linear regression analysis following assumptions has been taken to complete the conclusion:

1. Linearity: there is a linear relationship between both the variable sets (dependent and independent).
2. Homoscedasticity. Both the variable sets have equal data value variances.
3. Absence of Collinearity / Multicollinearity. No correlation is between any of the independent variables.
4. Normal distribution. For both the dependent and independent variable sets, all data is normally distributed.

Table 1  
Demographic Profile of Respondents

<b>Demographics</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>	
<b>Gender</b>	Male	74	38.5
	Female	118	61.5
<b>Age</b>	21-20	100	52.1
	31-40	89	46.4
	41-50	3	1.6
<b>Education Level</b>	undergraduate	31	16.1
	Graduate	140	72.9
	doctorate	21	10.9
<b>Income</b>	less than 20K	9	4.7
	20K-45K	42	21.9
	45-60K	43	22.4
	more than 60K	98	51.0
<b>Employment Status</b>	employed	146	76.0
	unemployed	29	15.1
	own business	17	8.9
	every month or less	72	37.5
<b>Purchase Experience</b>	every one month to 3 months	44	22.9
	3 months to 6 Months	5	2.6
	Every month above	71	37.0
	Total	192	100.0

It could be well observed that 61% of our respondents were females and one-third were males. Graduates supersede all categories with vast domination of 72%.50% of the respondents were having income above 60,000. 76% were employed. All the respondents were having mixed purchase experiences with at least having 3 to six months of the purchase experience.



## RESULTS

Table 2  
*Descriptive Statistics*

	<b>N</b>	<b>Minimum</b>	<b>Maximum</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Std. Deviation</b>
Customer service	192	1.33	4.00	2.5122	.73464
Shipping	192	1.00	3.57	2.4792	.75408
Tracking	192	1.00	4.50	2.5156	.97871
Return	192	1.75	2.50	1.8555	.22068
Satisfaction	192	1.50	4.25	2.6615	.68690
Future purchase intention	192	1.67	5.00	3.0156	1.02345

The mean of the responses can be accessed at a scale of 5 since the 1-5 Likert scale is used. It can be seen that all constructs except future purchase intention are having less than an average response of less than 3 which means less than 60% of agreement on customer service, shipping, tracking, return, and satisfaction from online shopping. The future purchase intention is greater and almost 60% that means that respondents are convinced that they would repurchase.

Table 3  
*Reliability Statistics*

<b>S.No</b>	<b>Construct</b>	<b>Cronbach's Alpha</b>	<b>N of Items</b>
<b>1</b>	Customer services	.829	4
<b>2</b>	Shipping	.827	7
<b>3</b>	Tracking	.831	4
<b>4</b>	Return	.598	3
<b>5</b>	Satisfaction	.896	4
<b>6</b>	Future purchase intention	.966	3

It can be seen that the entire construct except return is satisfying the criteria of appropriate i-e Cronbach's Alpha value of reliability are greater than 0.6. We can conduct our analysis after removing returns from the model.

### **Inferential Analysis**

For analysing our model we have applied model 4 of Andrew f Hayes by adding independent, dependent, mediating, and control variables.

## 1. Hypothesis 1:

Customer Satisfaction mediates a causal relationship between Customer services and future purchase intention if the effects of income, age, and Gender, and purchase frequency are controlled.

Y = Future Purchase Intention

X = Customer

M = Satisfactions

### Statistical Controls:

CONTROL VARIABLES = Gender, Age, Income, and Purchase Frequency

Outcome: Customer Satisfaction

#### Model Summary

<b>R</b>	<b>R-sq</b>	<b>MSE</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>p</b>
<b>0.5897</b>	0.3478	0.3160	19.8362	0.0000

It could be observed that when the satisfaction is taken as an outcome variable then Customer service is significantly predicting satisfaction as the sig value is less than 0.05 and t is greater than 2. Whereas a positive relationship is also predicted since the Coefficient value is also positive (.4842)

Outcome: Future Purchase Intention

#### Model Summary

<b>R</b>	<b>R-sq</b>	<b>MSE</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>p</b>
<b>0.8423</b>	0.7095	0.3141	75.3202	0.0000

It could be observed that when the Customer Service and satisfaction are combined taken as a predictor's variable then Customer service is still significantly predicting Future purchase intention as the sig value is less than 0.05 and t is greater than 2. Additionally, the comparison of coefficient value could determine that effect has been reduced which is a condition of partial mediation.

The direct effect of X on Y

<b>Effect</b>	<b>SE</b>	<b>t</b>	<b>p</b>
<b>0.385</b>	0.0668	5.7670	0.0000

It can be seen that the direct effect of customer service on future purchase intention is also significant as the sig value is less than 0.05.

The indirect effect of X on Y

<b>Effect</b>	<b>Boot SE</b>
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<b>Customer Satisfaction</b>	0.3676	0.0424
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It can also be seen that the indirect effect of customer service on future purchase intention is significant as the boot strap confidence interval does not contain 0. Hence there exists mediation.

## 2. Hypothesis 2:

Satisfaction mediates a causal relationship between Shipping and future purchase intention if the effects of income, age, gender, and purchase frequency are controlled.

Y = Future Purchases Intention

X = Shipping

M = Satisfaction

### Statistical Controls:

CONTROL VARIABLES = Gender, Age, Income, and Purchase Frequency

Outcome: Customer Satisfaction

Model Summary

<b>R</b>	<b>R-sq</b>	<b>MSE</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>p</b>
0.6278	0.3941	0.2936	24.1978	0.0000

It could be observed that when the satisfaction is taken as an outcome variable then Shipping is significantly predicting satisfaction as the sig value is less than 0.05 and t is greater than 2. Whereas a positive relationship is also predicted since Coefficient, value is also positive (.5108).

Outcome: Future Purchase Intention

Model Summary

<b>R</b>	<b>R-sq</b>	<b>MSE</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>p</b>
<b>0.8262</b>	0.6825	0.3433	66.2869	0.0000

It could be observed that when the Shipping and satisfaction are combinedly taken as a predictor's variable then Customer service is still significantly predicting Future purchase intention as the sig value is less than 0.05 and t is greater than 2. Additionally, the comparison of coefficient value could determine that effect has been reduced which is a condition of partial mediation.

The direct effect of X on Y

<b>Effect</b>	<b>SE</b>	<b>t</b>	<b>p</b>
<b>0.2693</b>	0.0703	3.8322	0.0002

It can be seen that the direct effect of Shipping on future purchase intention is also significant as the sig value is less than 0.05.

The indirect effect of X on Y

	<b>effect</b>	<b>Boot SE</b>
Customer Satisfaction	0.4126	0.0548

It can also be seen that the indirect effect of Shipping on future purchase intention is significant as the boot strap confidence interval does not contain 0. Hence there exist mediation.

### 3. Hypothesis 4:

Satisfaction mediates a causal relationship between Tracking and future purchase intention if the effects of income, age, gender, and purchase frequency are controlled.

Y = Future Purchase Intention

X = Tracking

M = Satisfaction

#### Statistical Controls:

CONTROL VARIABLES = Gender, Age, Income, and Purchase Frequency

Outcome: Customer Satisfaction

Model Summary

<b>R</b>	<b>R-sq</b>	<b>MSE</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>p</b>
<b>0.521</b>	0.2714	0.3530	13.8569	0.0000

It could be observed that when the satisfaction is taken as an outcome variable then Tracking is significantly predicting satisfaction as the sig value is less than 0.05 and t is greater than 2. Whereas a positive relationship is also predicted since the Coefficient value is also positive (.3086).

Outcome: Future Purchase Intention

Model Summary

<b>R</b>	<b>R-sq</b>	<b>MSE</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>p</b>
<b>0.8133</b>	0.6614	0.3661	60.2336	0.0000

It could be observed that when the Tracking and satisfaction are combined taken as a predictors variable then Tracking is not significantly predicting Future purchase intention as the sig value is Greater than 0.05 and t is greater than 2. Additionally, the comparison of coefficient value could determine that effect has reduced which is a condition of full mediation.

## FINDING AND DISCUSSION

It can also be seen that the indirect effect of customer service on future purchase intention is significant.

It could also be observed that Shipping is significantly predicting satisfaction as the sig value is less than 0.05 and t is greater than 2. It can be seen that the direct effect of shipping on future purchase intention is also significant as the sig value is less than 0.05. It can also be seen that the direct effect of tracking on future purchase intention is not significant. It can also be seen that the indirect effect of Tracking on future purchase intention is significant. Thus, this can be observed that Shipping and Tracking have a positive impact on future purchase intention. A similar observation was drawn by (Cao, Ajjan, & Hong, 2018), where it has been concluded after the comprehensive analysis that Shipping, Tracking and Customer services directly influence customer satisfaction and future purchase intention

### **CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION**

In this study, the impact of post-purchase activities on online shopping customer satisfaction has been examined that further concluded on the future purchase intention in Pakistan. The outcome of this study leads to that the post-purchase services particularly including shipping and tracking of the product significantly impact customer satisfaction. Users' friendly return policy also influences the customer satisfaction level, though it has no significant impact as per the outcome of the analysis of the research of this paper.

### **LIMITATIONS OF THE RESEARCH**

As every study has some limitations, our study is also restricted by some boundaries. One of the major limitations was the time limit and resources to get the filled questionnaire from the far-flung areas about the customer's feedback. As in the start we planned to conduct the research of three biggest cities and three small cities of Pakistan and so that can help us to conduct comparative research as well but due to time limitations and other resources restrict to get the feedback only from major cities of Pakistan. Though, as described above, Karachi, Lahore, Islamabad are a major metropolitan city that represents almost the whole nation as the mixed public is residing here that belongs to different customs, tradition, and languages. So considering these facts, data collection only from these cities is found sufficient for the research analysis of this paper but limited to big cities. Hence the data was collected by spreading the online Google forms, by visiting some shopping centers, students of libraries, students visiting various cafeterias, class students, and office colleagues as well. The second limitation is the sample size, which is not representing a high number as only 192 samples were validated and selected for the analysis that can be increased to 400 for better analysis and results.

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