

## Self-Escapism Motivation: A Determinant of E-Cart Use and Abandonment

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### *Abstract*

*E-shopping engagement has become a significant user activity in cyberspace. Prior scholarship has found self-escapism a crucial user motivation to engage in e-shopping. The current research identifies dimensions of self-escapism motivation to engage in e-shopping and their influence on shoppers' attitude, e-cart use, and abandonment. Data were collected from 305 shoppers in Pakistan via an offline survey. Results reveal self-suppression and self-expansion as dimensions of shoppers' self-escapism motivation to engage in e-shopping. These dimensions of self-escapism motivation determine shoppers' positive affective attitude towards e-shopping. Nonetheless, they have a differing influence on shoppers' e-cart use and abandonment.*

**Keywords:** *Self-Escapism Motivation, E-Shopping, Affective Attitude, E-Cart Use; E-Cart Abandonment.*

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### **Introduction**

Introduction of the internet for general public in mid 1990s (Hoffman, 2000) provided firms an efficient and cost effective platform to conduct commercial activities (Corbitt et al., 2003). E-tailing in particular has become a very common e-commerce activity (Burt & Sparks, 2003). E-tailers such as ebay.com, amazon.com, and alibaba.com have become a household name worldwide. Daily millions of users engage in e-shopping (Chaffey, 2019; Enberg, 2018; Yazdanifard & Li, 2014). Continuous advancements in digital technology have augmented the users' e-shopping engagement (Ahamat & Ali, 2019; Bilgihan, Kandampully, & Zhang, 2016; Gera et al., 2021). E-shopping is generally defined in terms of online buying behavior (Monsuwe, Dellaert, & de Ruyter, 2004). However, users' e-shopping engagement necessarily does not mean actual buying behaviour. Many users engage in e-shopping for hedonic reasons (Close & Kukar-Kinney, 2010). Several researches (e.g. Bui & Kemp, 2013; Kim & Kim, 2005; Kirezli & Arslan, 2019) found that users' engage in e-shopping to escape the self and regulate emotions. Such escapist shoppers deem e-shopping engagement a mean to regulate their thoughts and emotions rather than acquiring a product (Wolfenbarger & Gilly, 2001). Thus, users' e-shopping refers to an activity engagement, instead of a task to be completed (Close & Kukar-Kinney, 2010; Overby & Lee, 2006). Understanding hedonic motivations (e.g. self-escapism) is necessary because they lead to users' online non-buying behaviour. One such users' non-buying behaviour is e-cart abandonment (Kukar-Kinney & Close, 2010; Mathwick, Malhotra, & Rigdon, 2001). E-cart abandonment is a big challenge for e-tailers (Huang, Korfiatisa, & Chang, 2018; Krithika & Rajini, 2018; Tang & Lin, 2019; Rausch, Derra, & Wolf, 2020). Nearly, more than half of all online transactions are abandoned by users before completion (Bell et al. 2020) which causes substantial loss to e-tailers (Egeln & Joseph, 2012; Rausch et al., 2020).

The current research assesses the underlying dimensions of self-escapism motivation to engage in e-shopping and their influence on users' affective attitude, e-cart use and abandonment. To escape the painful-self caused by poor circumstances, people engage themselves in immersing activities (Heatheron & Baumeister, 1991). Despite this fact, scarce studies assessed the association between self-escapism

motivation and users' e-shopping engagement behaviour. Prior e-shopping studies (e.g. Dharmesti et al., 2019; Kirezli & Arslan, 2019; Kukar-Kinney & Close, 2010) treated self-escapism either an item or factor of entertainment motivation or one-dimensional variable. Especially, in the context of e-cart abandonment it has rarely been studied. According to prior scholarships (e.g. Maltby & Day, 2017; Stenseng, Rise, & Kraft, 2012) self-escapism motivation to engage in an activity is a multidimensional construct. E-shopping studies (e.g. Bui & Kemp, 2013; Kirezli & Arslan, 2019) defined self-escapism motivation as suppressing negative self or diversion from problems. Yet, self-escapism motivation specific literature (e.g. Stenseng et al., 2012) shows users engage in an activity not only for escaping the self but also to expand it. Identifying dimensions of self-escapism motivation is crucial because they may have divergent effects on users' attitude and behavior (Bloch, Ridgway, & Sherrell, 1986).

Till date no study examined the influence of dimensions of self-escapism motivation to engage in e-shopping on shoppers' affective attitude, e-cart use and abandonment. Affective attitude is defined as overall drives, feelings or emotions that an individual hold about an entity or object (McGuire, 1969). E-cart is a specific space located in an e-store or shopping website (e.g. Amazon.com or Daraz.com) designed to facilitate users to store items prior to finalizing the transaction (Close and Kukar-Kinney, 2010). Once users engage in e-shopping, they may or may not use the e-cart. They may merely browse the items on the shopping website (Close, Kukar-Kinney, & Benusa, 2012). When users actively engage in putting items into the e-cart, it is called e-cart use (Close & Kukar-Kinney, 2010). Even after putting the items into the e-cart user may not proceed to complete the transaction. In other words, they may abandon the e-cart and log out. This user behavior is known as the e-cart abandonment (Kukar-Kinney & Close, 2010).

## Research Questions

The current research addresses following research questions:

- Is self-escapism motivation to engage in e-shopping a multidimensional construct?
- Do underlying dimensions of self-escapism motivation to engage in e-shopping influence users' affective attitude, e-cart use and abandonment.

## Research Objectives

The specific objectives of the current research are as follows:

- To identify the underlying dimensions of self-escapism motivation to engage in e-shopping.
- To assess the influence of underlying dimensions of self-escapism motivation to engage in e-shopping influence users' affective attitude, e-cart use and abandonment.

## Literature Review

### Shoppers' Self-Escapism Motivation

To escape the negative self is human nature. When people fail to meet the demands of life, the self-awareness of these failures is painful. To escape the painful-self people engage in immersing activities (Baumeister, 1990; Chatard & Selimbegovic, 2011; Heatherton & Baumeister, 1991). When people fail to meet the demands of life, they internalize these failures by self-blaming. Self-blaming lowers their self-worth. The feelings of low self-worth make the self-awareness painful. To escape the painful self, people engage in activities which they deem would help them in avoiding meaningful thought and emotions (Baumeister, 1990). According to Heatherton and Baumeister (1991) self-escapism motivation is based on an individual's need to free the self from awareness of meaningful thought and repulsive feelings triggered by unmet demands of life. Individuals adopt different strategies to escape the negative self (Baumeister, 1992). They may adopt self-destructive strategies (e.g. binge eating, alcohol abuse, sex addiction, drug

addiction, self-injury, suicide attempts) (Baumeister, 1990) or self-rewarding strategies (e.g. playing sports, watching TV, listening to music, reading books) (Longeway, 1999; Ryan & Deci, 2000). The internet provided people a dynamic avenue to escape the self. Today, people escape the self by engaging in online activities such as browsing content, using social media, writing blogs, playing e-games (Xu, Turel, & Yuan, 2012). Most importantly, people engage in e-shopping to escape the self (Bui & Kemp, 2013).

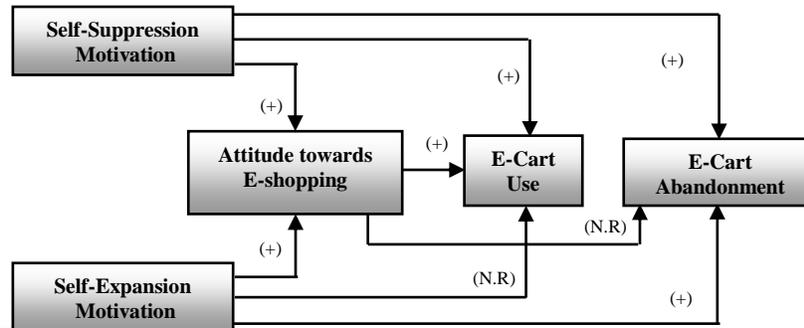
Generally, self-escapism is theorized as a component of entertainment motivation or one-dimensional construct. However, few self-escapism motivation specific studies (e.g. Stenseng et al., 2012) offered that users engage in an activity not only for escaping the self but also to expand it. Rooted in regulatory focus theory (RFT) by Higgins (1997: 1998), these studies conceptualized self-suppression and self-expansion as underlying dimensions of self-escapism motivation to engage in an activity. Self-suppression motivation is an individual's desire to avoid self-evaluation by fully engaging in an activity. On the other hand, self-expansion is an individual's desire to expand the self by engaging in an activity. Neutralization of abhorrent thoughts and feelings triggered by undesirable circumstances is the drive behind self-suppression motivation. Thus, an individual is likely to engage in an activity when he or she finds themselves in some distressing situation (Gross & Levenson, 1993) and it may not maximize well-being (Stenseng, 2009). Ingen, Utz, and Toepoel (2016) identified that people use the internet to regulate the negative emotional state caused by social problems. Conversely, self-expansion motivation is unrelated to any undesirable social situation, event, or emotional distress. It is directed by the motive to expand the self. The people who are directed by self-expansion motive engage in an activity for experiencing ideal outcomes which are attainable via momentary self-escapism (Stenseng et al., 2012). To expand self by exploring and learning about new things as well as identifying growth opportunities is one of the fundamental human motivations (Aron et al., 2013). Carpenter and Spottswood (2013) found that self-expansion motivation influences people to use the internet.

### Proposed Model

The current research applies Higgins' (1997: 1998) RFT theory to explain the proposed relationship of self-escapism motivation of e-shopping engagement with user attitude towards e-shopping, e-cart use, and abandonment. RFT has been found effective in understanding marketing issues such as advertising effectiveness (Jain, Agrawal, & Maheswaran, 2006; Shao, Grace, & Ross, 2015), e-WOM persuasiveness (Zhang, Craciun, & Shin, 2010), users' mood regulation via retailing (Arnold & Reynolds, 2009), and impulsiveness (Das, 2015). RFT provides a framework to understand motivation led user behaviour (Higgins, Nakkawita, & Cornwell, 2020). It argues that users' hedonic needs differ in nature (Brockner & Higgins, 2001); thus, they adopt different strategies to regulate them (Higgins, 1997). Specifically, RFT offers two motivational strategies known as prevention and promotion foci (Higgins et al., 2020). Users adopt prevention focus strategy to regulate security needs and promotion focus strategy to deal with nurturance needs (Higgins, 1997: 1998). Individuals adopt prevention focus strategy to minimize negative consequences (Higgins, 2000; Higgins et al., 1994; Verplanken & Sato, 2011). It is related to one's responsibilities (Brockner & Higgins, 2001). On the contrary, promotion focus strategy is related to one's hope and aspirations (Brockner & Higgins, 2001; Higgins, 1997). Individuals adopt promotion focus strategy to achieve growth and advancement; thus, experience positive outcomes (Higgins, 2000; Higgins et al., 1994; Verplanken & Sato, 2011). These self-regulation strategies significantly affect an individual's emotions, thoughts, and behaviours (Higgins, 1998). They are applicable to understand a wide range of user situations and behaviours such as socialization and self-escapism (Higgins, 1997).

Based on prevention and promotion foci, Stenseng et al. (2012) conceptualized two dimensions of self-escapism motivation of activity engagement known as self-suppression and self-expansion. Self-suppression motivation is one's attempt to escape the negative self momentarily caused by some unfavourable situation. For instance, failure to fulfill a responsibility. The motive behind self-suppression motivation is to minimize ill-being. Self-expansion motivation is one's desire to immerse in an activity for experiencing positive outcomes such as personal development. The motive behind self-expansion

motivation is to maximize well-being. These dimensions of self-escapism motivation have been researched in the areas such as sports and celebrity interest (See Al Ganideh & Good, 2015; Maltby & Day, 2017). The current research offers that self-suppression and self-expansion motivations drive users' e-shopping engagement behaviour. Specifically, the current research postulates that self-escapism motivation to engage in e-shopping determines users' attitude towards e-shopping, e-cart use, and abandonment. Since the motives behind self-suppression and self-expansion motivations differ, their influence on users' attitude towards e-shopping, e-cart use, and abandonment will be different (See Figure 1). This argument is consistent with RFT (Higgins, 1997: 1998).



Note: N.R denotes no relationship

Figure 1 Self-escapism motivation based e-cart use and abandonment model

### Self-Suppression Motivation Influences

Self-suppression motivation directs users to immerse in an activity such as e-shopping to avoid self-evaluation (Stenseng et al., 2012). When an individual faces an unfavorable life situation or event, it causes his or her negative psycho-emotional state. To neutralize the negative psycho-emotional state, an individual may engage in an activity (Gross & Levenson, 1993). Literature (e.g. Faber, 2004) indicates that users engage in shopping activities to suppress unpleasant aspects of self-awareness. For instance, users engage in e-shopping to escape from problems, worries, and negative thoughts (Mathwick et al., 2001). Prior research (e.g. Close & Kukar-Kinney, 2010; Novak, Hoffman, & Duhachek, 2003; Wolfinbarger & Gilly, 2001) found that the shoppers who engage in e-shopping activity for hedonic reasons add items to their e-carts. These experiential shoppers deem adding items to e-cart a pleasurable activity (Close & Kukar-Kinney, 2010). Consistent with prior scholarship, the current research postulates that self-suppression motivation to engage in e-shopping positively influences users' behavior to use e-cart (See Figure 1). Escapism theory suggests that when individuals encounter unpleasant circumstances, they narrow down their focus to an activity that helps them in escaping the self-evaluation (Heatherton & Baumeister, 1991). The activity of selecting items and placing them in e-cart is a more focused activity than just browsing webpages on an e-shopping website. It needs higher user involvement and focus (Kukar-Kinney & Close, 2010); thus, helps users in avoiding self-evaluation and regulating negative thoughts and emotions.

Furthermore, prior scholarship (e.g. Anand et al., 2019; Childers et al., 2001; Chiou & Ting, 2011; Mazaheri, Richard, & Laroche, 2011) found a positive association between hedonic motivations and users' attitude towards e-shopping. Specifically, escaping the adverse realities, problems and worries are important predictors of users' positive attitude towards e-shopping (Kim & Kim, 2005; Monsuwe et al., 2004). Consistent with prior scholarship, the current research offers that self-suppression motivation to engage in e-shopping has a positive influence on users' attitude toward e-shopping (See Figure 1). Besides, the current research proposes that self-suppression motivation to engage in e-shopping has a positive influence on shoppers' e-cart abandonment behavior (See Figure 1). Prior researches such as Kukar-Kinney

and Close (2010) and Song (2019) found that users' hedonic motivations have a positive impact on their e-cart abandonment behavior. The purpose of escapist shoppers to engage in e-shopping activities like adding items to the cart is a mean to control and regulate their thoughts and emotions instead of acquiring the products (Wolfinbarger & Gilly, 2001). Therefore at the end of the e-shopping engagement, they abandon the e-cart (Kukar-Kinney & Close, 2010). Based on the above theorization, the following hypotheses are offered:

- H1 Self-suppression motivation to engage in e-shopping has a positive influence on users' e-cart use behavior.
- H2 Self-suppression motivation to engage in e-shopping has a positive influence on users' attitude towards e-shopping.
- H3 Self-suppression motivation to engage in e-shopping has a positive influence on users' e-cart abandonment behavior.

### **Self-Expansion Motivation Influences**

Self-expansion motivation is unrelated to any undesirable social circumstance or situation which an individual faces. Directed by self-expansion motivation, a user engages in an activity to experience desirable effects which are attainable via escaping the self momentarily (Stenseng et al., 2012). Consistent with promotion focus strategy (See Higgins, 1997:1998), the motive behind self-expansion motivation is growth and advancement (Verplanken & Sato, 2011). To attain growth and advancement, an individual may attempt to utilize any possible opportunity, including risky actions and trying out new things (Sassenberg & Scholl, 2019). Individuals, who desire to expand the self, enjoy exploring and evaluating new things. They do not restrict themselves to a specific activity (Arnold & Reynolds, 2009) such as e-cart use. Using e-cart is a more focused activity than browsing e-store webpages (Kukar-Kinney and Close, 2010). Self-expansion by exploring and learning about new things is a fundamental human motivation (Aron et al., 2013). Users who engage in e-shopping for hedonic reasons may simply browse product content in an e-store instead of adding some items to their e-carts (Close & Kukar-Kinney, 2010). The current research proposes that the shoppers, who engage in e-shopping to expand their self, do not limit their activity in adding items to the e-cart. Instead, they may prefer to browse more and more product content in an e-store such as daraz.com. Thus the current research offers that self-expansion motivation to engage in e-shopping has no influence on shoppers' e-cart use behavior (See Figure 1). Furthermore, the current research proposes that even if self-expansionist shoppers use the e-cart, they abandon it at the end of the e-shopping session. Thus self-expansion motivation to engage in e-shopping has a positive influence on users' e-cart abandonment behavior (See Figure 1). Prior scholarship such as Kou and Powpaka (2017) found that self-expansion via e-shopping activities promotes the positive user attitude towards e-shopping. Thus the current research postulates that self-expansion motivation to engage in e-shopping has a positive influence on users' attitude towards e-shopping (See Figure1). Specifically, the following hypotheses are offered:

- H4 Self-expansion motivation to engage in e-shopping has no influence on users' e-cart use behavior.
- H5 Self-expansion motivation to engage in e-shopping positively influences users' attitude towards e-shopping.
- H6 Self-expansion motivation to engage in e-shopping has a positive influence on users' e-cart abandonment behavior.

### **Attitudinal influences**

Self-suppression and self-expansion motivation are positively associated with users' affective attitude towards an activity engagement (Stenseng et al., 2012). Prior research (e.g. Kim & Kim, 2005; Kou & Powpaka, 2017) found escaping the negative self and expanding the self, two important motivations that positively influence user attitude towards e-shopping. Affective attitude is a significant predictor of user

behavior (Rizvi & Oney, 2018). The current research proposes that shoppers' attitude towards e-shopping has a positive influence on their behavior to use e-cart (See Figure 1). Furthermore, the current research proposes that shoppers' positive affective attitude towards e-shopping is unrelated to their e-cart abandonment behavior. This postulation is consistent with past research such as Dhar and Shrivastava (2018) that found no association between users' attitude towards e-shopping and their e-cart abandonment behavior. Specifically, the following hypotheses are offered:

H7 Shoppers' affective attitude towards e-shopping has a positive influence on their e-cart use behavior.

H8 Shoppers' affective attitude towards e-shopping has no influence on their e-cart abandonment behavior.

## Method

Via an offline survey, data were collected from a purposive sample of 305 shoppers in Pakistan. To record the responses self-administered questionnaire was used. Sampled shoppers were frequent visitors of e-stores like daraz.com and aliexpress.com. Sampled respondents' ages ranged between 18 to 40 years. All respondents were computer literate and regular internet users. Sampled respondents included 53.2 per cent male and 46.8 per cent female.

### Self-Escapism Motivation Measurement Source and Assessment

To measure self-escapism motivation, a scale was developed using eight items from Stenseng et al. (2012). Theoretical definitions were used to establish the content validity of items measuring shoppers' self-escapism motivation to engage in e-shopping. Responses of respondents were registered on a 5 point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly agree) to 5 (strongly disagree). To assess the self-escapism motivation measurement model's fit to data, the confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was conducted. The self-escapism motivation measurement model to engage in e-shopping with a chi-square ( $\chi^2$ ) = 26.575, degree of freedom (df) = 19, P = .115 (p > .05) (See Hoe, 2008),  $\chi^2/df$  = 1.399 (See Kline, 1998) indicated a goodness of fit. The CFA confirmed two dimensions of self-escapism motivation to engage in e-shopping consisting of eight valid and reliable items. Table 1 presents self-escapism motivation dimensions, items, path statistics, and reliability ( $\alpha$ ).

Table 1 Self-escapism motivation dimensions, items, path statistics and  $\alpha$

| Items  | $\beta$ | S.E  | t    | $\alpha$ |
|--|---------|------|------|----------|
| <b>Self-Suppression Motivation</b>   |         |      |      |          |
| 1. When I engage in e-shopping I try to suppress my problems                               | 0.63*** | -    | -    |          |
| 2. When I engage in e-shopping I try to prevent negative thoughts about myself             | 0.68*** | 0.14 | 7.78 |          |
| 3. When I engage in e-shopping I shut out the difficult things I don't want to think about | 0.62*** | 0.13 | 7.08 | 0.72     |
| 4. When I engage in e-shopping I want to escape from reality                               | 0.60*** | 0.12 | 7.09 |          |
| <b>Self-Expansion Motivation</b>   |         |      |      |          |
| 1. When I engage in e-shopping I continually try to learn new things about myself          | 0.65*** | -    | -    |          |
| 2. When I engage in e-shopping I try to get to know myself better                          | 0.68*** | 0.14 | 7.29 |          |
| 3. When I engage in e-shopping I often surprise myself in a positive way                   | 0.61*** | 0.12 | 6.87 | 0.70     |
| 4. When I engage in e-shopping I open up for experiences that enrich my life               | 0.50*** | 0.13 | 5.47 |          |

Note: \*\*\*p < 0.001,  $\beta$  (standardized estimates),  $\alpha$  (reliability), S.E (standardized error)

**Construct Validity**

Construct validity is a statistical assessment that measurement scales truly represent the theoretical constructs (Smith, 2005). Convergent and discriminant validity are two components of construct validity. Convergent validity assesses the strength of correlation between the measures of a specific construct (Gefen & Straub, 2005). Standardized estimates ( $\beta$ ) and t-statistics of measurement items of a construct are evaluated to establish convergent validity (See Anderson and Gerbing, 1988). The  $\beta >$  standard error (S.E) (Koufteros, 1999) and  $t < -1.96$  or  $> 1.96$  (Byrne, 2001) indicate convergent validity of a construct measurement scale. The  $\beta >$  S.E and  $t > 1.96$  of items measuring underlying dimensions of self-escapism motivation of e-shopping engagement validated the convergent validity (See Table 1).

Discriminant validity indicates that measures of a construct differ from the measures of other constructs in the proposed theory (Churchill, 1979). To establish discriminant validity square root of average variances extracted (AVEs) of dimensional measures of self-escapism motivation was compared with their correlation (See Fornell & Larcker, 1981). The square root of AVE  $>$  Inter-factor correlation demonstrates discriminant validity (Hair et al., 2010). The square root of AVEs of self-suppression motivation (i.e. 0.633) and self-expansion motivation (i.e. 0.614) measures exceeded their inter-factor correlation (i.e. 0.089). Thus, confirmed discriminant validity.

**Endogenous Variables**

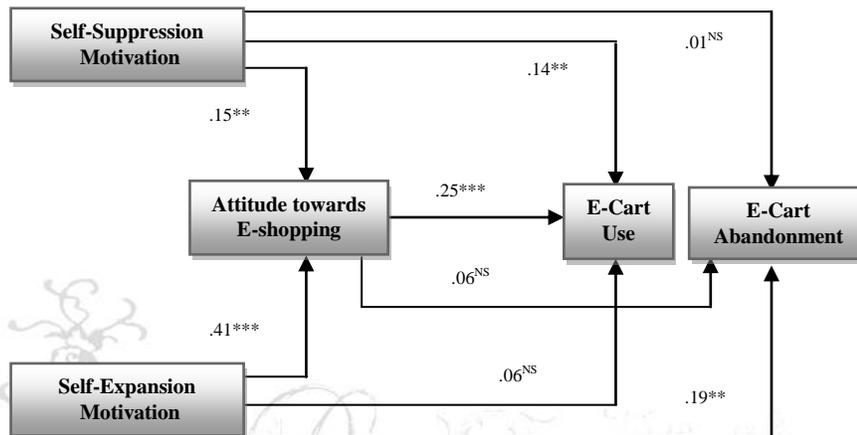
Five items were adapted from Ragheb and Beard (1982) and Spears and Singh (2004) to measure the users' affective attitude towards e-shopping. Respondents' responses were recorded on a 5 point Likert scale. The measures of users' attitude towards e-shopping were refined via internal consistency tests. Internal consistency confirms whether each item in a scale measures the same theoretical construct (Tavakol & Dennick, 2011). The internal consistency was evaluated by judging the corrected item to total correlation (CITC) and reliability statistics. The CITC values  $> 0.50$  (See Zaichowsky, 1985) were used as cut-off criteria to retain measurement items of users' attitude towards e-shopping. The CITC values of all items measuring users' attitude towards e-shopping were  $> 0.50$  (See Table 3). Thus, satisfied pre-condition for assessing reliability. The Cronbach's alpha test was conducted to establish the reliability of attitude towards e-shopping measures. The value of alpha ( $\alpha$ ) was  $> 0.70$  (See Nunnaly, 1978). Thus, confirmed the internal consistency of scale measuring users' attitude towards e-shopping (See Table 2). E-cart use construct was operationalized on one item adapted from Close and Kukar-Kinney (2010) (See Table 2). Similarly, e-cart abandonment construct operationalized on one item adapted from Kukar-Kinney and Close (2010) (See Table 2). Respondents' responses were recorded on a 5 point Likert scale.

Table 2 Construct measures, CITC and  $\alpha$  statistics

| Variable                     | Items  | CITC | $\alpha$ |
|------------------------------|--|------|----------|
| Attitude towards e- Shopping | 1. When I engage in e- shopping I feel pleasant                            | 0.66 | 0.86     |
|                              | 2. When I engage in e- shopping I feel pleasure                            | 0.75 |          |
|                              | 3. When I engage in e- shopping I feel delighted                           | 0.71 |          |
|                              | 4. When I engage in e- shopping I feel good                                | 0.68 |          |
|                              | 5. When I engage in e- shopping I feel refreshed                           | 0.60 |          |
| e-Cart Use                   | 1. When I engage in e- shopping I place items of my interest in the e-cart |      |          |
| e-Cart Abandonment           | 1. When I engage in e- shopping I often abandon my e-cart                  |      |          |

**Theory Testing**

The model offered in the current research was tested using data from 305 shoppers of daraz.com and aliexpress.com. The offered model was assessed using the ‘maximum likelihood estimation method’ in Amos version 21. It yielded good fit to the data with  $\chi^2$  (0.138), df (1), and P (0.710) > 0.05 values. The  $\chi^2$  test is a frequently used statistical test for assessing the model goodness of fit. The low value of  $\chi^2$  and p-value > 0.05 indicates the model goodness of fit (Hoe, 2008). The theoretical model also fitted the data on the  $\chi^2$ /df ratio which is an alternative of  $\chi^2$  test. Its value should be 3 or < 3 (Kline, 1998). In the current case, the ratio of  $\chi^2$ /df was 0.138 < 3. Figure 2 shows the empirical model.



Note: \*\*\*p < .001, \*\*p < .01, NS denotes not significant

Figure 2 Self-escapism motivation based e-cart use and abandonment empirical model

The empirical model contained eight paths (See Figure 2). To examine the association between the underlying dimensions of self-escapism motivation of e-shopping engagement and endogenous variables, their path statistics i.e.  $\beta$  (standardized estimates) with associated t and p values were judged. The significant  $\beta$  along  $t < -1.96$  or  $> +1.96$  implies statistically significant association between two variables (Byrne, 2001). The path statistics between self-suppression motivation to engage in e-shopping and users’ e-cart use behaviour were statistically significant. Thus, supported H1 (See Table 3). Likewise, the path statistics between self-suppression motivation to engage in and users’ attitude towards e-shopping were statistically significant. Thus, supported H2 (See Table 3). On the contrary, the path statistics between self-suppression motivation to engage in e-shopping and users’ e-cart abandonment behaviour were statistically insignificant. Thus, rejected H3 (See Table 3).

As theorized, the path statistics between self-expansion motivation to engage in e-shopping and users’ e-cart use behaviour were statistically insignificant. Thus, supported H4 (See Table 3). The path statistics between self-expansion motivation to engage in e-shopping and users’ attitude towards e-shopping were statistically significant. Thus, supported H5 (See Table 3). Similarly, the path statistics between self-expansion motivation to engage in e-shopping and users’ e-cart abandonment behaviour were statistically significant. Thus, supported H6 (See Table 3).

The path statistics between users’ attitude towards e-shopping and e-cart use behaviour were statistically significant. Thus, supported H7 (See Table 3). As theorized, the path statistics between users’ attitude towards e-shopping and their e-cart abandonment behaviour were statistically insignificant. Thus, supported H8 (See Table 3).

Table 3 Summary of Hypotheses Testing

| Proposed Path |   | Path Coefficients<br>β (t) p  | Decision |
|---------------|---|-------------------------------|----------|
| H1            | Self-suppression motivation to engage in e-shopping → e-cart use behavior         | 0.14**<br>(2.632)             | Accepted |
| H2            | Self-suppression motivation to engage in e-shopping → attitude towards e-shopping | 0.15**<br>(2.963)             | Accepted |
| H3            | Self-suppression motivation to engage in e-shopping → e-cart abandonment behavior | 0.01 <sup>NS</sup><br>(0.228) | Rejected |
| H4            | Self-expansion motivation to engage in e-shopping → e-cart use behavior.          | 0.06 <sup>NS</sup><br>(1.022) | Accepted |
| H5            | Self-expansion motivation to engage in e-shopping → attitude towards e-shopping   | 0.41***<br>(8.064)            | Accepted |
| H6            | Self-expansion motivation to engage in e-shopping → e-cart abandonment behavior   | 0.19**<br>(3.113)             | Accepted |
| H7            | Attitude towards e-shopping → e-cart use behavior                                 | 0.25**<br>(4.162)             | Accepted |
| H8            | Attitude towards e-shopping → e-cart abandonment behavior                         | 0.06 <sup>NS</sup><br>(1.030) | Accepted |

Note: \*\*p < .01, \*\*\*p < .001, <sup>NS</sup>p = Not significant

## Discussion

Self-escapism is an undeniable aspect of human life (Heatherton & Baumeister, 1991). To escape the painful-self caused by unpleasant circumstance, users' often engage in entertaining activities (Heatherton & Baumeister, 1991; Longeway, 1999; Mathwick et al., 2001). Research (e.g. Bui & Kemp, 2013; Kirezli & Arslan, 2019) indicates that users engage in e-shopping to escape the self and regulate their emotions. Escapist shoppers perceive e-shopping as an immersing and pleasant activity (Bilgihan et al., 2016; Childers et al., 2001). Prior research (e.g. Stenseng et al., 2012) on self-escapism motivation indicates that users engage in an activity not only to escape the self but also to expand it. Earlier e-shopping research (e.g. Bui & Kemp, 2013; Kim & Kim, 2005; Kirezli & Arslan, 2019) focused only on the self-suppression or escaping the negative self-dimension of the self-escapism motivation, which is directed by some unpleasant situation. Users' motive to expand the self is independent of any unpleasant situation (Stenseng et al., 2012). Thus, the current research assessed the underlying dimensions of self-escapism motivation to engage in e-shopping and their influence on users' affective attitudes toward e-shopping, e-cart use, and abandonment.

Consistent with prior scholarship (e.g. Ganideh & Good, 2015; Maltby & Day, 2017), the current research found users' self-escapism motivation to engage in e-shopping a two dimensional construct made up of self-suppression and self-expansion motivations. Results indicate that users engage in e-shopping activities like browsing product content and using e-carts on e-tailing websites such as daraz.com to regulate the negative-self caused by poor circumstances. Prior studies such as Kim and Kim (2005), Bui and Kemp (2013), and Kirezli and Arslan (2019) support this finding. Shoppers engage in e-shopping to escape from problems, worries, and negative thoughts or suppress the negative self temporarily (Mathwick et al., 2001). E-tailing websites provide shoppers pleasant and engaging environment (Wu et al., 2014) which helps them to escape the negative self (Bui & Kemp, 2013; Kirezli & Arslan, 2019). Furthermore, results indicate that users engage in e-shopping to broaden their perspective by exploring and learning about new product content in e-stores like daraz.com and alibab.com. Self-expansion by exploring and learning about new things is a basic human motivation (Aron et al., 2013). These findings indicate that escapist shoppers engage in e-shopping not only to regulate the negative thoughts and emotions but also to expand the self. Consistent with prevention focus strategy (See Higgins, 1997:1998), self-suppressor shoppers engage in e-

shopping to move away from the undesirable self-state caused by poor social circumstances, unmet obligations, and responsibilities. In line with promotion focus strategy (See Higgins et al., 1994), self-expander shoppers engage in e-shopping to get close to the desired or positive self-state.

Results reveal that self-suppression motivation to engage in e-shopping influences users' e-cart use behaviour positively. This finding is consistent with prior studies (e.g. Close & Kukar-Kinney, 2010; Novak et al., 2003; Wolfenbarger & Gilly, 2001). These studies discovered that the users who engage in e-shopping for hedonic reasons (e.g., to escape the self) place items in the e-carts. Escapism theory suggests that when people face unpleasant circumstances, they narrow down their focus to activities which they deem would help them in escaping the self-evaluation (Heatherston & Baumeister, 1991). Selecting and placing items in the e-cart is a focused activity. It needs higher user involvement (Kukar-Kinney & Close, 2010). Thus, it helps users in avoiding self-evaluation and regulating negative thoughts and emotions. Consistent with prior research (e.g. Anand et al., 2019; Chiou & Ting, 2011; Mazaheri et al., 2011), the current research found that self-suppression motivation to engage in e-shopping has a positive influence on users' affective attitude towards e-shopping. When users' hedonic needs are satisfied during e-shopping activities, it forms their positive attitude towards e-shopping (Childers et al., 2001). Inconsistent with prior research (e.g. Kukar-Kinney & Close, 2010; Song, 2019), the current research found that self-suppression motivation to engage in e-shopping does not influence users to abandon the e-cart. This finding implies that if shoppers use e-cart to suppress their negative self, it may influence them to buy the items placed in the e-cart, not to abandon it. Some prior studies support this finding. For instance, Kim and Eastin (2011) and Bui and Kemp (2013) found that hedonic motivations positively affect users' online buying behaviour. According to Monsuwe et al. (2004) if escapist users experience pleasure during e-shopping engagement, they will engage in unplanned buying.

As theorized, the current research found that self-expansion motivation to engage in e-shopping does not influence users' behaviour to use the e-cart. The motive behind self-expansion is to broaden one's perspective by exploring and learning about new things (Aron et al., 2013). Self-expander shoppers receive pleasure in exploring and evaluating new things. They do not restrict themselves to a specific activity (Arnold & Reynolds 2009). For instance, when self-expander shoppers engage in e-shopping, they do not restrict themselves to e-cart use. To expand the self, users may engage in exploring all possible content by browsing webpages of e-store (Close & Kukar-Kinney, 2010) Even if self-expanders use e-cart while browsing product content, they abandon it at the end of the e-shopping session. Consistent with prior studies (e.g. Kou & Powpaka, 2017; Stenseng et al., 2012), the current research found that self-expansion motivation to engage in e-shopping has a positive influence on users' affective attitude towards e-shopping.

Furthermore, results reveal that both self-suppressor and self-expander shoppers hold a positive affective attitude towards e-shopping. In other words, users feel pleasant, pleasure, delighted, good and refreshed, when they engage in e-shopping. Prior research (e.g. Rizvi & Oney, 2018) identified that users' affective attitude has a positive influence on their behaviour. In line with prior research, the current research found that users' affective attitude towards e-shopping has a positive influence on their behaviour to use the e-cart. This finding implies that self-suppression and self-expansion motivations to engage in e-shopping form users' positive affective attitude towards e-shopping (See Kim & Kim, 2005; Kou & Powpaka, 2017), that in turn influence their behaviour to use e-cart. Moreover, consistent with Dhar and Shrivastava (2018), the current research found users' affective attitude towards e-shopping and their e-cart abandonment behaviour are not associated.

## Conclusion

Self-escapism motivation to engage in e-shopping is a two dimensional construct. It is composed of self-suppression and self-expansion motivation. It does mean that escapist shoppers engage in e-shopping not only to suppress their negative self but also to expand it. These dimensions of self-escapism motivation develop escapist shoppers' positive attitude towards e-shopping. However, they have a differing influence

on escapist shoppers' e-cart use and abandonment behaviour. For instance, self-suppression motivation does not influence escapist shoppers to abandon the e-cart and may lead to unplanned buying. Conversely, self-expansion motivation leads escapist shoppers to abandon the e-cart. Furthermore, understanding shoppers' attitude towards e-shopping is important because it influences both self-suppressor and self-expander shoppers to use the e-cart. Self-expansion motivation is positively associated with shoppers' e-cart abandonment behaviour, yet self-expander shoppers can be an important source of positive word of mouth about e-shopping websites.

## Contribution and Implications

The current research makes some significant contributions to the literature on e-shopping. Prior research (e.g. Bui & Kemp, 2013; Kim & Kim, 2005; Kirezli & Arslan, 2019; Monuwe et al., 2004) treated self-escapism either a single factor construct or an element of entertainment value or enjoyment motivation. Unlike prior studies, the current research theorized and operationalized dimensions of shoppers' self-escapism motivation to engage in e-shopping. Specifically, based on the Higgins' (1997:1998) RFT theory and work of Stenseng et al. (2012), the current research theorized and verified self-suppression and self-expansion as dimensions of shoppers' self-escapism motivation to engage in e-shopping. Furthermore, the current research extended the application of RFT by using it to explain the influence of self-escapism motivation on escapist shoppers' attitude towards e-shopping, e-cart use, and abandonment behaviour.

The findings of the current research indicate that escapist users engage in e-shopping not only to escape the negative self but also to expand it. These findings suggest that e-stores should make their websites attractive and equipped with novel product content. Attractive ambiance will appeal to self-suppressor shoppers (Kim & Park, 2005). On the other hand, novel product content will appeal to self-expander shoppers (Aron et al., 2013; Close & Kukar-Kinney, 2010). Especially, e-stores should use interactive product visualization technologies. It will help users to experience e-shopping as the doing offline (Wagner, 2019). Interactive product visualization technologies make shopping websites more attractive (Bui & Kemp, 2013). Results reveal that self-expanders do not use e-carts or use e-cart but abandon them. Despite it, e-stores should attract and engage self-expander shoppers because if they experience positive outcomes, they may visit the e-stores repeatedly (Bui and Kemp, 2013). In psychology, it is called hedonic adaptation or hedonic treadmill, an individual's tendency to return to the positive stimuli (Kaczmarek, 2017). If escapist shoppers return to an e-store time and again, it would increase the likelihood of purchasing products from that e-store (Bui & Kemp, 2013).

## Limitations and Future Research Directions

The current research made some significant contributions to the literature on e-shopping. Yet, there are some limitations of the current research. Data was collected from shoppers in Pakistan only. Pakistan is relatively a collectivistic culture. They future studies should replicate the model of the current research in individualistic cultural contexts to assess its generalizability. Previous studies (e.g. Sakarya & Soyer, 2013) found that cultural dimensions affect the hedonic and utilitarian shoppers' e-shopping behaviour. The current research did assess the moderating impact of interactive product visualization technologies. Thus, future research should assess whether product visualization technologies have any moderating effect on escapist shoppers' e-shopping engagement. Furthermore, gender moderates the users' e-shopping behaviour (Seock & Bailey, 2008). So, future studies should assess whether escapist shoppers' demographics (e.g., age and gender) have any moderating effect on their e-cart use and abandonment behaviour.

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