



The Impact of COVID-19 on the Electronic Commerce User's Behaviour

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ABSTRACT: The worldwide coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic has rendered establishing business extremely challenging. As international borders collapse, brick-and-mortar shops lock their doors, and consumers are advised to stay home alone, enterprises are faced with a number of new issues. With personnel facing seasons of financial uncertainty and anxieties, several enterprises are considering temporary or even permanent closure. Massive changes in consumer behavior had to be made right away. People in isolation or on lockdown are unable to go about their normal business because nearby stores were compelled to close their doors for everyone's protection. This study aims to investigate the effects of COVID-19's scope on Indian e-commerce companies. This study investigates if the coronavirus caused an increase in e-commerce.

KEYWORDS: COVID-19, Consumer, E-commerce

INTRODUCTION

Online shopping allows consumers to buy goods and services directly from the seller over the internet. It is a perfect substitute for physical purchasing of goods and services. E-commerce has come a long way in a decade mainly because of technological advancement, high speed internet and increased number of smartphone users. Online shopping platforms enable consumers to browse a wide range of products, view product images, product details, features, price and reviews. Nowadays, with the boom of e-commerce, most consumers, especially youngsters, prefer to do online shopping. Gradually, small business owners are diversifying their businesses on online platforms by creating ecommerce websites so that they can have wider reach and capture the customers who prefer online shopping. Many small and medium enterprises are choosing to start their business firstly on online platforms because of the advantage of no extra costs that are needed in physical stores (Mandal et. al., 2022).

With the spread of Covid-19 virus since March 2019 the world went into lockdown with all shops, factories, businesses, offices, industries being shut. Consumers preferred doing online shopping because of contactless delivery. Even after the pandemic, people will be

cautious and will prefer online shopping for the sake of safety. By May of 2020, ecommerce transactions reached \$82.5 billion, a 77% increase from 2019. So as to analyses the trends of E-commerce, we are doing research.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The COVID-19 pandemic has caused economic shocks, serious influence in demand and supply throughout global economies and it has affected the income and lives of people worldwide. The demand for consumer goods increased and a cut down in consumption of non-essential goods was observed. Panic buying was also seen among people in whom they purchased goods in bulk quantities in advance due to nationwide lockdown. For safety purposes, they purchased the essential items online and home delivery of the goods enabled them to access the products without contact.

Gokila (2021) the survey was conducted which revealed that 66% of the respondents considered e-commerce advantageous post-pandemic too. There is an increasing trend in e-commerce and the pandemic caused a hike in e-commerce trends, increasing the popularity of online stores globally. Online offers catch the eye of the buyers and most of the consumers report to continue using both online and offline platforms in the future as well.

Tyagi & Pabalkar (2021) Covid 19 is an infectious disease that rapidly spread among the masses and has impacted the lives of humans drastically. Due to lockdown and social distancing norms, people have been staying in their homes and distinctly there is a significant growth in the demand for household, grocery items, etc. All types of business industries worldwide have been affected differently by the deadly virus.

Koch et al. (2020) found that youngsters spend more time on social sites for getting information related to news, trends, and updates. The media coverage has an influence over their decision-making and buying behavior. It was found in the previous research studies that Gen Z people visit online shopping sites and buy online for pleasure and enjoyment in their spare time to pass up the boredom.

Ali (2020) mentioned in their study that the sales of Samsung electronics durable goods plummeted in Iran during the lockdown. As the incomes of people fell, they cut down their expenses in buying non-essential items, while spending more on essential goods. Due to the safety precautions and social distancing norms, more people have switched to online shopping platforms rather than going outdoors to buy from brick-and-mortar stores. Rising growth trends have been marked in online shopping globally.

Kunchaparathi (2021) All types of businesses whether big or small are related to e-commerce. E-commerce has supported them in boosting their business opportunities and turning them into reality. Customers have a lot of advantages from online shopping (Gupta et al., 2022). They can shop 24*7 online and choose among a wider variety conveniently from the comfort of their homes. E-commerce attracts consumers because of factors like attractive sales and discount offers; relatively lower prices, time savvy, home delivery, convenience in shopping, and others. There has been a fall in the travel, entertainment, and hotel industries since Covid-19.

Mehta et al. (2020) observed that the level of satisfaction and overall wellbeing of people is affected and determined by their health. The Indian government also launched the Aarogya Setu mobile application to facilitate the public to take medical consultation during the time of pandemic and track the risk of exposure to the virus in their joint fight against Coronavirus. This pandemic has prompted the firms to think about developing ideas, innovating, reshaping, and bringing out new strategies to reach cognizant customers.

Aggarwal & Kapoor (2020) specified in their study that the demand for fast-moving consumer goods and perishable goods like vegetables, fruits has increased in the lockdown period. The demand for consumer goods increased and a cut down in consumption of non-essential goods was observed. Panic buying was also seen among people in which they purchased goods in bulk quantities in advance due to nationwide lockdown. People preferred to buy online keeping in view of their safety in the pandemic.

Khosla et al. (2017) in their analytical report stated that in the near future various e-commerce trends are expected to come and can lead to the growth of niche businesses, mergers, rural areas, digital payments, and supply chain management. The COVID-19 pandemic has caused economic shocks, serious influence in demand and supply throughout global economies and it has affected the income and lives of people worldwide.

Shahjee R (2016) stated that e-commerce has been a very useful platform for companies to expand their businesses and sell their varied products by providing customers with the quick review but along with that e-commerce is also creating new problems related to infrastructure, lack of internet, lack of awareness and knowledge among customers.

Mahipal D (2018) in his paper mentioned that there will be tremendous growth in the e-commerce sector in the coming years and security will be maintained not only in the legal framework but also strengthening the domestic and international trade. For safety purposes, people purchased the essential items online and home delivery of the goods enabled them to access the products without going out of their homes. In India, prevalent e-commerce stores were Amazon, Flipkart, ebay, and for purchase of groceries, Bigbasket, Grofers, etc.

Goele et al. (2012) mentioned in their study that e-commerce will have a sustainable impact on industries like travel and tourism, electronic, hardware products, and apparel. Factors like replacement guarantees, different payment modes, logistics, and shipment options play a major role in the growth of the above industries.

Fernandes (2020) specified that the COVID-19 crisis is something the world has never seen before. Everyone including countries, institutions, and business leaders is facing tough choices with unprecedented levels of uncertainty. Societal trends related to working, learning, shopping and the use of technology are changing rapidly and have been increasing even before the crisis, yet we are able to see a rapid surge in everything that will lead to a new normal emerging from the crisis (Mittal 2020a, 2020b). Companies involved in investing courageously in pivoting their businesses towards behavioral changes may capture large market shares and emerge as market leaders post-pandemic.

Neger and Uddin (2020) mentioned in their study that post-covid-19, there are various factors like limited contact with people, the rapid growth of mobile devices, convenience, less time consuming, unavailability of products in physical stores, time-saving, digital transformation of local Kirana shops are the major reasons which motivated the customers for online shopping. Even though the convenient mode of payment, less time-consuming and other organizational factors influenced the online purchasing behavior earlier as well.

Saravanan and Devi (2015) specified that due to more rigorous use of the Internet, the purchasing trends of customers have changed and their interest in E-buying has increased day by day. This has led to a tremendous hike in the number of online buyers. The panic of COVID-19 has turned the lives of people upside down in various ways like work, shop, communication, purchasing habits, behavior, preference of products, etc.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

People have changed their way of shopping from conventional buying to online shopping. Due to an increase in the risk of the spread of coronavirus, customers were avoiding going out of their homes to shop even for daily essentials. Instead, they were more inclined towards buying goods from online websites available.

Keeping various other factors in mind, the objective of this study is-

- To know about the change in buying behavior of consumers pre and post-pandemic.
- To understand the barriers that hinders the buying process.

DATA SOURCES

Sample Size - Data of 168 respondents from Indian states has been collected. Maximum (50%) of the respondents belong to the Delhi NCR region.

Age group: Data of people from all the age groups has been collected where most of the people (86.3%, 145 out of 168) belong to the age group of 18-25 years.

Both primary and secondary data were collected.

Sampling Technique - The study is descriptive and quantitative in nature so the Random Sampling technique is used for this study from the population from which all the respondents have an equal chance to get included.

FINDINGS

As the COVID -19 hit our lives we were forced to stay at our homes ensuring no physical contact with the people. Times like these with everything being shut, how do consumers manage to shop? There it comes - ONLINE SHOPPING. To evaluate the final results and to obtain the opinion of the people about the same we conducted a survey in which we found that the majority of people prefer both online and traditional stores for shopping with 69.5% while 20.4% people prefer traditional stores and 10.2% of people prefer online shopping.

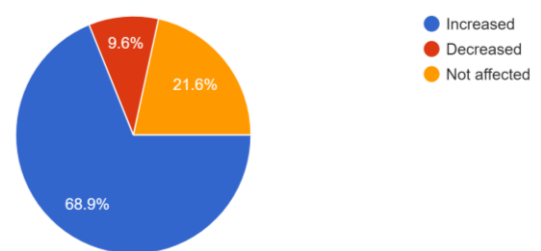
On asking how frequently people shop online it reveals that 43.7% of people do it occasionally, 35.3% do it regularly, 8.4% do it rarely, and 12% do it frequently. It means that the majority of people prefer shopping occasionally; one of the biggest reasons is that online platforms provide round the clock services.

Consumers buy products from different websites according to their preference and taste. Most widely used apps for online shopping are Amazon(94%), Flip kart(62.3%) and Myntra (55.1%). Other websites like Nyka, Snap deal, Myntra, Grofers, Big basket, Ebay are also used. But, a large proportion of people prefer amazon, flipkart and myntra. This clearly shows that these are the leading apps and the most reliable apps to shop from.

As we got to know that consumers buy frequently from online shops .They are satisfied with the products purchased so they tend to buy more of it. Electronics (57.5%), fashion products (84%), books (56.3%) are the most purchased items. Whereas groceries, furniture, food, baby products, home appliances, luxury items are least purchased.

Online shopping has several advantages like 24*7 availability, time saving, wide range of products, zero contact delivery, easy to access and many other options to offer to the consumers. Among this time saving (68.9%), easy to access (68.3%), 24*7 availability (65.3%) attracts consumers the most. Online shopping saves a lot of time for consumers as it's always on your fingertips to just click and select the items. And especially keeping in mind the present situation of pandemic online shopping also provides consumers no contact delivery which makes it even more convenient.

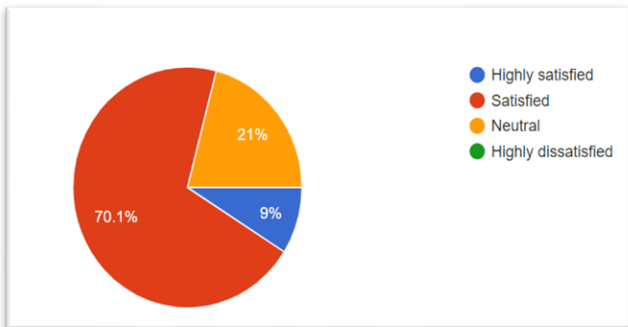
Due to increased use of the internet e- commerce is attracting new customers every day. Since the pandemic, people have started using e-commerce websites even more as it reduces the risk of getting infected by COVID. It is evident from the responses kr survey that 68.9% people have increased their buying behaviour due to the pandemic whereas it has declined for only 9.6% of people.



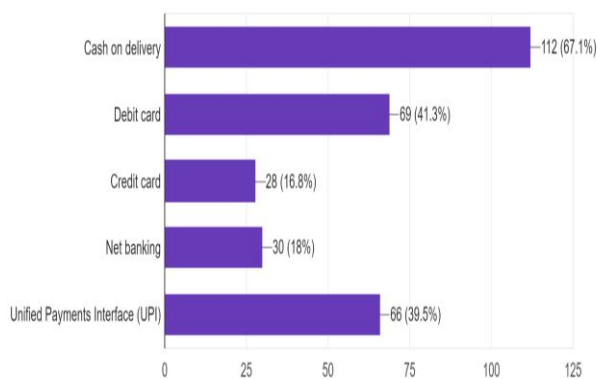
Along with the change in shopping trends there comes a very essential decision of choosing the suitable mode of payment. There are different modes of payment available depending upon the type of business. Thanks to technology now there are various options available other than just cash payment. The multiple payment options provided to customers makes it time saving for them to actually decide upon how to pay. According to our survey 67.1% of the people believe that cash on delivery is the most convenient mode of payment followed by 41.3% for Debit card and 39.5% for (UPI)Unified Payment Interface.

Shoppers who generally buy within their financial limits prefer to use debit cards while online shopping. Use of digital money during covid -19 has increased as now more people make online payments. 64.1% of people agreed upon using debit or credit cards while shopping whereas 35.9% did not use either.

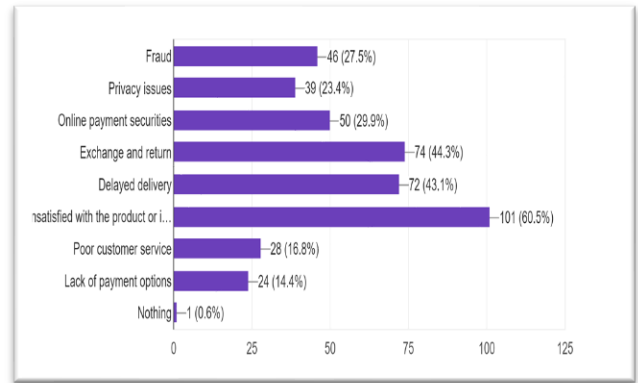
Safety and security has increased a lot during the pandemic not only in terms of health but also in terms of online payments due to increased use of e-commerce websites. Bank account details are something that are quite personal to everyone and people are hesitant while sharing them on any website. But there should be more awareness about the rights consumers have in case of any loss. Here if we talk about sharing card



details then only 4.8% of people said that they feel very safe while shopping online. Also 41.1% people are not even concerned about sharing details because they are well aware about their rights.



E-commerce comes with the fear of e-security because there have been cases of mishappenings in shopping online. There are cases of delay in delivery, low product quality, fake product, no return or exchange policy, issues related to payment, fraud calls and engagement of unnecessary enquiries. Major issues faced by 60.5% people were unsatisfied with the product quality as what is promised or shown isn't really delivered the same.



Not only goods people also prefer online services, about 79.6% of the respondents, use online food services, followed by transport (74.9%). Online food delivery platforms like Zomato, showed up during the crisis as they provided necessary home food delivery services. It also encouraged micro startups to partner with local restaurants and operate their business such as DotPe, Thrive, which initially operated on a small scale and are emerging gradually with growth in their business. People also avail online services like educational services, entertainment services, medical, Urbanclap etc. Only 1.2% of people don't use any online service.

The customer reviews and testimonials play a crucial role in online shopping as they play a key role in justifying the quality of product and value for money. Out of the people surveyed, 70.1% always read customer reviews before purchasing a product but 25.7% people sometimes read reviews.

It is evident from the resources that 70.1% of people are moderately satisfied with online shopping whereas 21% are neutral about their satisfaction from online shopping, no one is dissatisfied with online shopping.

LIMITATIONS

As we conducted our research on how there was a change in consumer behavior towards e-commerce during the pandemic, we found some limitations while collecting a survey. We used primary data for our research work so we prepared a questionnaire and it was circulated among as many people as we could. Due to the limited time available, we had only 169 respondents. Our sample size of the respondents was preferably females. As we are from girls college, most of the respondents were females as compared to men, also the age group that filled the questionnaire were between 18-21 majorly. If the sample size was supposed to be bigger, then our research paper would have a wider reach in every aspect. Since people who are not very active in online shopping, we weren't able to capture their views regarding e-commerce due to lack of one-to-one interaction. So, our research is a little on the biased side.

There are also some points we can list down for the benefit of sellers which they can improve to have better reach.

It is important for online sellers to work towards seeking customer feedback and reviews. The work of a seller doesn't get over after the product has been reached to the final customer. In the 21st century, "marketing" is a wholesome concept that also includes being responsible for providing after-sales-service, gathering customer feedback, and consumer redressal as well. If the sellers work well in these areas, they would get success in creating a good brand image and gain customer loyalty and trust. If an online seller gets positive customer reviews in these areas as well, it would surely increase the likelihood of the product getting purchased by the user.

CONCLUSION

The responses that we got from the respondents clearly state that online shopping is beneficial especially at the time of pandemic and our research is having a positive result. As we circulated the questionnaire among people we got a variety of responses. As COVID-19 hit our lives, people preferred to continue online shopping over traditional shopping as there are a lot of factors affecting this statement that it provides contactless delivery with fewer chances of getting infected by coronavirus. Also, the e-commerce provides a wide range of products, discounts, 24*7 availability, and many more. Thus, we conclude that there was an increase in the sales of e-commerce platforms during the pandemic and e-commerce is a convenient form of shopping. Keeping in mind the other limitations that come along, it still gets the advantage of providing the convenience of getting everything within a stipulated time at the doorstep just in a click.

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