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A STUDY ON ONLINE SHOPPING AND BUYING BEHAVIOR OF CONSUMERS

Abstract: In today's interconnected world, the ubiquity of information and technology has established the internet as a dominant platform for sharing ideas and accessing global knowledge effortlessly. Capitalizing on the widespread availability of internet services and the bustling lifestyles of residents Mandi Distt. in Himachal Pradesh, online shopping has emerged as a preferred and convenient mode of retail. Online shopping, the process of procuring goods and services over the internet leverages the vast expanse of the World Wide Web, allowing online retailers to cater to a diverse audience. Consumers can effortlessly browse and purchase a wide array of products from the comfort of their location. Over the years, online shopping has experienced substantial growth worldwide. This research endeavour aims to explore the motivations behind online shopping, evaluate the associated risks, delve into consumer attitudes, and assess their level of satisfaction. A comprehensive survey is conducted, featuring a random sampling technique that encompasses various age, gender, income, education, and technology familiarity. The collected data was analysed and interpreted using statistical methods, tables, graphs, and charts. The study's findings underscore that the ease of internet access and the convenience of online shopping have led the people of Mandi distt. in Himachal Pradesh to increasingly embrace this digital retail trend. Nevertheless, challenges such as the inability to physically interact with products, phishing scams, and deceptive practices are noted as significant concerns among online shoppers. Overall, the level of satisfaction among online shoppers falls short of expectations. The study recommends that businesses explore innovative strategies to address these concerns, thereby gaining a competitive edge and delivering complete customer satisfaction, ultimately fostering customer retention.

Index Terms – Consumers, online shopping, factors influence, Buying behaviour.

Introduction:

In the digital age, online shopping has become a dominant force in the global retail landscape, driven by several key factors influencing consumer behavior. The rapid growth of e-commerce has raised the importance of understanding the factors that shape consumers' online shopping decisions. This study aims to examine various factors that influence the decision-making process of online shoppers, as well as the role of demographic characteristics in shaping online shopping behaviors. Additionally, the study seeks to explore gender-based differences in attitudes toward online reviews, which have become a crucial element of the online shopping experience. With the convenience of browsing a variety of products, the competitive pricing, and the growing reliance on online reviews, consumers are increasingly turning to digital platforms for their shopping needs. However, despite the proliferation of online shopping, various elements like product variety, pricing, convenience, delivery options, and customer service play different roles in shaping consumer preferences. Furthermore, the influence of demographic factors—such as age, gender, income, education, and technology familiarity—on shopping habits is an area of growing interest. These variables may affect how often individuals shop online, what influences their buying decisions, and how they interact with online reviews.

The role of online reviews is particularly noteworthy, as they help bridge the gap between consumers and products in a virtual marketplace. The way in which online reviews shape purchasing behavior, and how gender influences this process, represents a key focus of this research.

Objective of the Study:

The primary objectives of this study are:

1. To identify the factors that influence consumers' decision to online shopping.
2. To examine the demographic factors that most affect online shopping behaviour.
3. To analyse gender-based differences in awareness of online reviews and their role in purchasing decisions.
4. To test hypotheses regarding gender differences in the influence of online reviews on purchasing decisions.

SCOPE OF THE STUDY

Online Shopping have some scope that is customers does the web research about the products he needs and finds the products listed on the sites of different market or stores. He can check

specification of products and features of the products, such as price, quality, delivery status etc. Various studies have been conducted in urban and rural area, the present research study particularly emphasizes on consumer behaviour of online shopping, factors influence on consumer about online shopping. There is a huge demand and scope for online shopping in global market. The present study is focused on Mandi Distt. in Himachal Pradesh region to found what are the problems faced by customer during online shopping.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

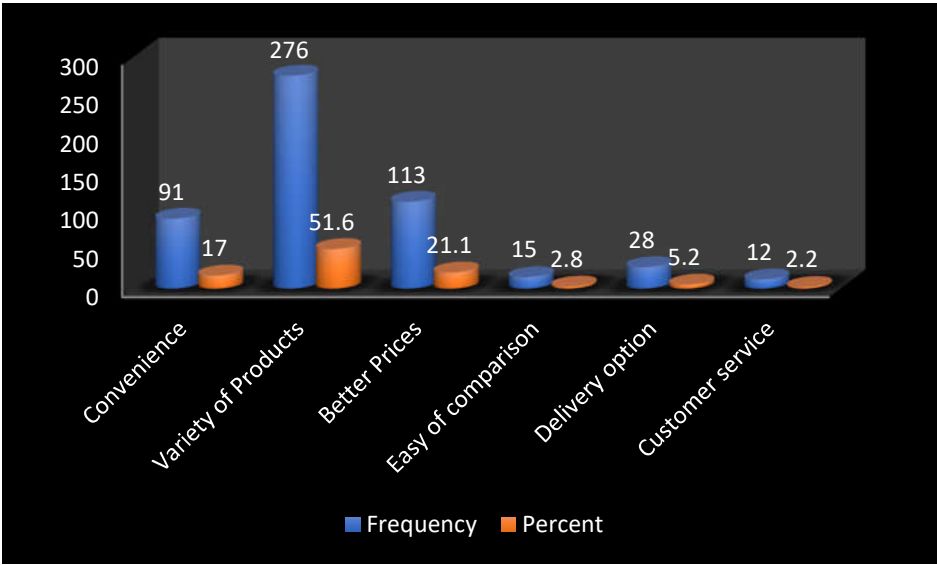
The methodological aspect includes selection of study area, sample size, sources and collection of data and statistical tools for analysing the data.

- **Primary sources:** - The first-hand information is collected from the respondents directly through self-constructed questionnaire and through personal interaction.
- **Secondary Sources:** - Secondary source of information was gathered from published documents, websites, reference books and journal

Table -1
Status of respondents with respect to factors influencing decision of online shopping

Factors influence decision to shop online	Frequency	Percent
Convenience	91	17.0
Variety of Products	276	51.6
Better Prices	113	21.1
Easy of comparison	15	2.8
Delivery option	28	5.2
Customer service	12	2.2

Source: Primary data

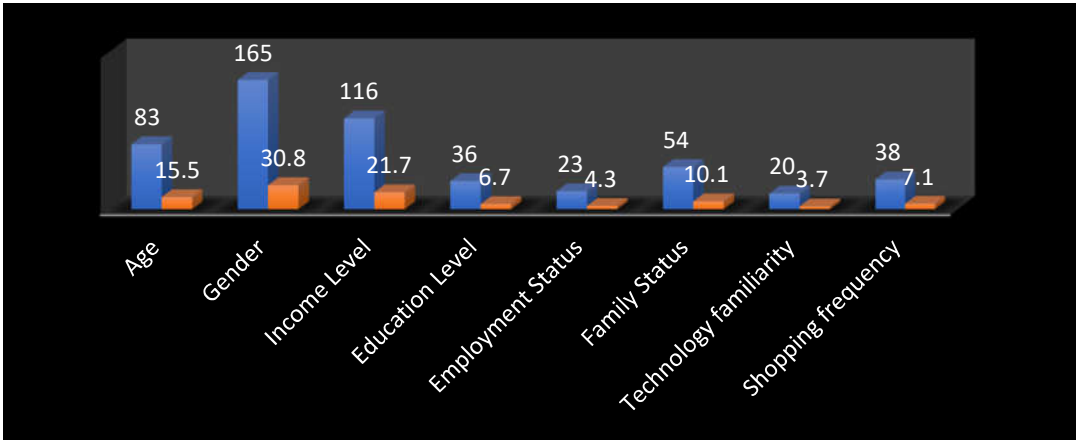


Interpretation: The data reveals key factors that influence consumers’ decisions to shop online. A majority of respondents, 51.6%, cited the variety of products available as the primary factor for online shopping, indicating that having a wide selection is a top priority for online consumers. Better prices also play a significant role, with 21.1% of respondents highlighting cost advantages as a reason for shopping online. Convenience ranks third, influencing 17% of respondents, suggesting that ease and accessibility are also important. Factors like delivery options (5.2%), ease of comparison (2.8%), and customer service (2.2%) had a lesser impact, indicating these may be viewed as secondary considerations by most online shoppers. This data underscores the importance of product variety, pricing, and convenience in attracting online customers.

Response with respect to demographics most affect online shopping behaviour

Demographics most affect online shopping behaviour	Frequency	Percent
Age	83	15.5
Gender	165	30.8
Income Level	116	21.7
Education Level	36	6.7
Employment Status	23	4.3
Family Status	54	10.1
Technology familiarity	20	3.7
Shopping frequency	38	7.1

Source:Primary data



Interpretation: The data suggests that demographic factors have varying levels of influence on online shopping behaviour. Gender appears to be the most significant factor, with 30.8% of respondents indicating its importance. This is followed by income level, affecting 21.7% of respondents, suggesting that economic capacity strongly impacts online purchasing decisions. Age also plays a notable role, influencing 15.5% of shopping behaviours, which may reflect generational differences in comfort with online platforms. Family status, accounting for 10.1%, highlights the impact of family obligations or dependents on buying patterns. Meanwhile education level and shopping frequency influence behaviour to a lesser degree, at 6.7% and 7.1%, respectively, while employment status and technology familiarity are seen as less impactful, with only 4.3% and 3.7% respectively. These findings underscore the complex interplay of demographic factors in shaping online consumer behaviours.

Mean difference analysis of Gender w.r.t Awareness

Statements	Gender	Mean	S. D	t-value	Sig
I often read online reviews before making a purchase	Male	3.16	1.48	37.036	.000
	Female	2.38	1.04		
Online reviews significantly influence my purchasing decisions.	Male	3.36	1.40	0.292	.589
	Female	2.64	1.39		
I trust online reviews as much as personal recommendations from	Male	2.90	1.49	5.265	.022
	Female	2.99	1.42		

friends and family.					
I prefer to buy products with a high number of positive online reviews	Male	3.16	1.63	35.184	.000
	Female	2.62	1.27		
Negative reviews often deter me from purchasing a product	Male	3.02	1.39	0.950	.330
	Female	2.70	1.39		
I consider the overall rating of a product before making a purchase	Male	2.69	1.44	0.108	.742
	Female	2.86	1.45		
I believe that online reviews provide an accurate representation of a product's quality	Male	3.18	1.34	73.521	.000
	Female	2.90	0.99		
I feel more confident about my purchases after reading online reviews	Male	2.71	0.99	5.323	.021
	Female	2.61	1.14		
I regularly write reviews for products I purchase online	Male	2.06	0.97	38.762	.000
	Female	3.06	1.34		
I rely more on online reviews than on advertisements when deciding what to buy	Male	2.51	1.10	2.197	.139
	Female	2.70	1.12		
I compare products based on online reviews before making a purchase	Male	3.02	1.39	0.950	.330
	Female	2.70	1.39		
Online reviews are a critical part of my decision-making process when shopping online	Male	2.69	1.44	0.108	.742
	Female	2.86	1.45		
I often rely on online reviews from multiple sources before purchasing	Male	2.97	0.83	15.248	.000
	Female	4.03	0.88		

The data provided offers insights into gender-based differences in attitudes toward online reviews and their influence on purchasing decisions following hypothesis were formulated.

Null Hypothesis (H₀): There is no significant difference in awareness levels between genders.

Alternative Hypothesis (H₁): There is a significant difference in awareness levels between genders.

For several statements, significant differences are observed between male and female responses. Men report reading online reviews before purchasing (Mean = 3.16), and the t-value (37.036, $p < .001$) indicates a statistically significant difference compared to women (Mean = 2.38), suggesting men engage more frequently in this behavior. However, both genders showed similar mean responses for the influence of reviews on purchase decisions, with no significant gender-based difference ($t = 0.292$, $p = .589$). When it comes to trust in online reviews, males (Mean = 2.90) and females (Mean = 2.99) have similar levels of trust, with a slight, though significant, difference ($t = 5.265$, $p = .022$). Both genders generally prefer products with positive reviews, but men (Mean = 3.16) are significantly more influenced ($t = 35.184$, $p < .001$) than women (Mean = 2.62). Men also tend to view online reviews as an accurate representation of product quality (Mean = 3.18) more than women (Mean = 2.90), with a significant difference ($t = 73.521$, $p < .001$). Interestingly, women are more likely to write online reviews (Mean = 3.06) compared to men (Mean = 2.06), with a highly significant difference ($t = 38.762$, $p < .001$). Additionally, females rely more on reviews from multiple sources before purchasing (Mean = 4.03) than males (Mean = 2.97), also with a significant t-value (15.248, $p < .001$). These findings suggest that while both genders value online reviews, men are more likely to read and trust them for decision-making, whereas women are more active in contributing reviews and consult multiple sources before making a purchase. This shows that alternate hypothesis H_1 holds true and there is significant difference in awareness levels between genders.

FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

- The majority of consumers in Distt. Mandi (H.P) have internet access, allowing them to effortlessly shop online.
- Only half of customers purchase online on a regular basis, and people aged 20 to 30 are the most likely to do so.
- Most customers despise internet shopping because they can't touch or feel the things, and there are risks such as technological glitches, phony online stores, and phishing scams.
- Professionals and young people are the most frequent internet buyers, and the perceived benefits encourage them to shop online.
- Customers aren't entirely satisfied with online buying.
- Shopping in Distt. Mandi (H.P.) is often a family outing, and people do not feel pressured while they are shopping with loved ones.

SUGGESTIONS

- Employ social networks like as Facebook and Twitter for promotional purposes, allowing customers to 'Like' or 'Follow' merchants for discounts and deal insights. Online businesses must adopt strategies to reduce hazards associated with online shopping and enhance customer trust.
- Companies want to diversify their product portfolios to captivate and retain online consumers, guaranteeing total delight.
- Motivate individuals to augment their proficiency in computer and mobile applications as society transitions towards digitalization Provide a complimentary one-week trial time for internet consumers to assess products, with money required only upon satisfaction or return if unsatisfactory.
- E-commerce enterprises should focus initiatives to improve technological literacy among those who are unfamiliar with the industry.
- The majority of consumers perceive e-commerce as advantageous for providing an enhanced purchasing experience. Consequently, supplying initial information to each customer can improve their website navigation experience.
- The poll revealed that customers engage in e-commerce for multiple objectives, including banking, travel, stock trading, apparel, and daily necessities.
- To cultivate a robust degree of trust among these consumers, firms must prioritize the establishment of a secure and dependable transaction framework.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

- The study is confined to District Mandi (H.P) and cannot be generalized.
- The variables identified in this study may be inadequate.
- Temporal and additional resources are constrained during the study period.
- The respondent's perspective may vary due to diminished recall capacity or inherent prejudice that cannot be eradicated.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this study primarily examines factors influencing consumer behaviour in E-Commerce. The younger generation is more inclined towards online shopping due to their tech-savings, with platforms like Flipkart and Amazon being their preferred choices. The variety of options at reasonable prices is driving the increasing demand for online shopping, especially in clothing and fashion accessories. Key factors such as website quality, trust, and privacy were investigated, along with prior research to gain clarity on the subject. The customer's purchase decision-making process emphasizes the importance of information search for finding suitable products or services. Online retailers should focus on providing detailed product information and efficient search capabilities. During the purchase stage, customers consider the reputation of the e-commerce website and payment security, while post-purchase, after-sales service becomes vital. To enhance online consumer behaviour, internet-based factors must be carefully addressed by online retailers through effective marketing communications to support the customer's decision-making process and improve overall performance. The percentage of online customers is steadily increasing day by day, driven by the convenience it offers compared to traditional shopping methods. However, businesses face challenges in retaining customers, primarily due to the absence of face-to-face interactions, a lack of product familiarity, and the inherent risks associated with online shopping. Suppose businesses can develop innovative strategies to mitigate these risks and address the factors customers dislike. In that case, there is great potential for Bangalore residents to catch up with the global market in online shopping adoption. In such a scenario, people in Bangalore would not only be willing to embrace online shopping but also recommend it to others, potentially transforming the local e-commerce landscape.

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