

Impact of Covid-19 Pandemic on Online Shopping in Kerala with Special Reference to Thiruvananthapuram District

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Abstract-The COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated the shift towards a more digital world. Retailers raised to the challenge, not just by supporting more online sales, but by accepting advanced technologies that created connections with shoppers or made their customer experience more convenient. As people admitted social distancing, they turned to online shopping more than ever before. As per the statistical data, more than 59 percent of customers were practicing social distancing and wanted to minimize their shopping time outside of the home. The present study examines how the pandemic has changed the way customers use online shopping and analyse customer satisfaction.

Keywords: COVID-19, pandemic, online shopping, customer satisfaction.

INTRODUCTION

In March 2020 much of the world went into lockdown. Countries are gradually imposing restrictions like social distancing, wearing of masks, and limits on entering one space at a time. When traditional shopping becomes difficult customers are increasingly inclined to shop online. Online shopping is a consequence of the revolutionary advancement of technology and communication. Online shopping represents the e-commerce activity of buying and selling goods and services over the internet. According to UN Conference on Trade and Development experts, UNCTAD, the e-commerce sector saw a dramatic rise in its share of retail sales from 16 percent to 19 percent in 2020. The online purchase did not surge during the coronavirus

Pandemic in India. According to a survey conducted by Rakuten Insight in May 2020, about 59 percent of respondents purchased online during the pandemic [1]. Amazon- one of the leading e-commerce players in the country and the world has announced on its site that

the customers are relying on them never before in their social distancing and self-quarantine effort [2]. Around 81 percent of customers in India admitted that the pandemic had changed their shopping habits too [3].

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Dr.H.D. Nandisha and Madhu G S (2021), A study on the impact of covid-19 on online shopping in Bengaluru city-states that 54% peoples responded that they are buying more products online during Coronavirus and 24% of the respondents that they are not buying products online during Coronavirus. Online shopping is a multi-billion business and is constantly growing. Much Indian favor this kind of shopping because of its ease. For shoppers who work for lengthy hours, it would be hard to visit a store during the standards trade hours.

Bharti Aggarwal and Deepa Kapoor (2020), A Study on Influence of COVID-19 pandemic on customer's online buying behavior mention that After COVID-19 in India, attitude toward online shopping is getting better. It will be very helpful in stopping the panic of spreading Corona from person to person. The Covid-19 pandemic has encouraged online shopping activities of consumers more active. Now a day, Shopping becomes a better source in this situation of Coronavirus, and E-retailers supply products that are normally purchased in the supermarket by customers. Yonghui Rao, Aysha Saleem, Wizra Saeed, and Junaid UI Haq (2021), Online Consumer Satisfaction during COVID-19: Perspective of a Developing Country states that the perception of the consumers shopping from direct e-stores is more confident, and their degree of satisfaction is much higher, as the actual experience of the consumers aligns with their perceptions. Instead, consumers feel dissatisfied or repelled to

choose an indirect e-store for shopping. Indirect e-store makes false promises and guarantees to their buyers, and eventually, when the consumers experience the product, it is against their perception.

OBJECTIVES

- To study the key elements influencing customers to shop online during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- To analyse customer’s preferences on products during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- To analyse the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on online shopping.
- To make suggestions based on the findings of this study.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

2020 has been a year of enhanced digitalization and we think that it is a shift to online lifestyles. It has helped the customers to access their preferred products from the convenience and safety of their homes and has enabled the firms to continue their operations. Meanwhile, the pandemic changes the buying behaviour from luxury goods to everyday necessities. So the study helps online retailers to improve their operations by knowing the behaviour of customers.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

COVID-19 has disturbed our routine as well as changed not only our sentiments but also our buying behavior. The situation has pushed many customers to make their purchases online as many physical stores in the city are either closed due to lockdown measures or have limited capacities to maintain social distancing. The study will give emphasis on what will be the key elements that influenced the customers to shop online, the preferred products, and their satisfaction levels.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study was descriptive in nature. Both primary and secondary data were used. Primary data were collected by using a structured questionnaire. The sample comprised 100 respondents from Thiruvananthapuram District. Convenience sampling was used whereby respondents who were easily accessible were chosen for the study.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Thiruvananthapuram is a highly populated district, can’t generalise the results based on only 100 respondents. The results were biased because few cooperated with the study and some did not. There is very little time available for the study that has too affected the outcome.

KEY ELEMENTS INFLUENCING ONLINE SHOPPING DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

- New trending product categories – With the broad expansion of product categories shoppers are likely to order from online retailers.
- Lower loyalty- Customers’ loyalty to their typical brands has fallen.
- Contactless payment- Customers prefer contactless payments.
- Social media shopping- Social media platforms are closely integrated with e-commerce operators so that they can easily promote products.
- Scarcity of products in the physical store- Customers fear that there were a shortage of products in the physical stores so they prefer online.
- Restrictions from the authorities
- Social distancing, Quarantine, Work from home

SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE

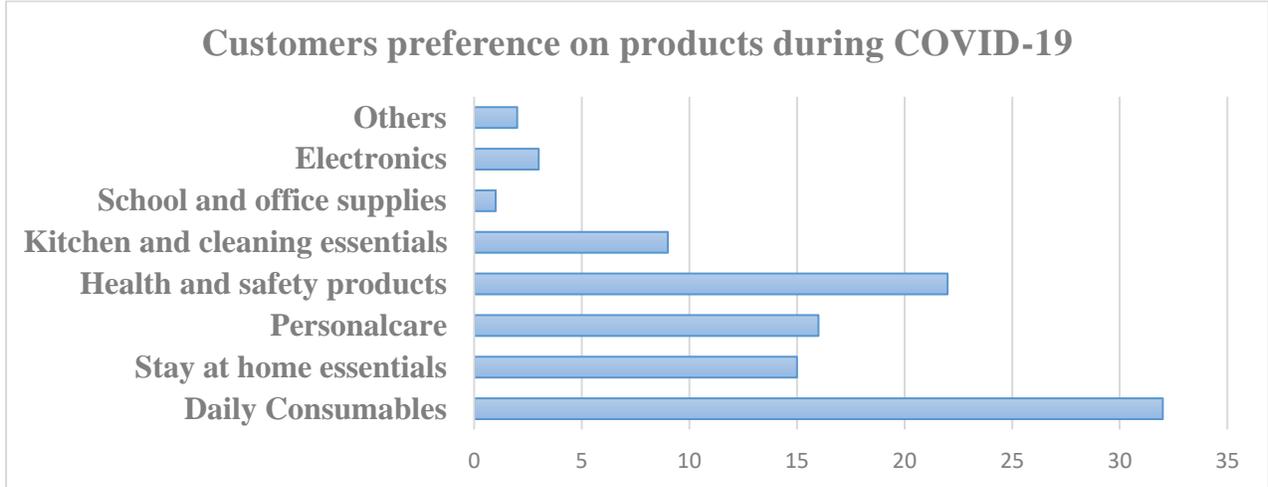
Table 1 reports the respondent’s socio-demographic characteristics like gender, age, etc.

Table 1 Socio-Demographic profile

Socio-Demographic characteristics	Particulars	Number of respondents	Percentage
Gender	Male	60	60
	Female	40	40
Total		100	100
Age	Below 25	20	20
	25-35	50	50
	35-45	18	18
	Above 45	12	12
Total		100	100

Analysis No. 1

Customers' preference for products during the COVID-19 pandemic.



(Percentage)

Source: Primary Data

Inference: Most of the respondents (32%) bought daily consumables (grocery, food staples, and pet food) online during the pandemic. Health and safety products like a mask, sanitizer medicines, and immune busters were consumed by 22% of respondents. 16% of respondents purchased personal care products (cosmetics, apparel, nightwear, diapers, and feeding items) online. Stay-at-home essentials like laptops, mobiles, fitness products, games, etc. were bought by 15% of respondents. Kitchen and cleaning essentials were purchased by 9% of respondents. Only one percent used to school and office supplies during the pandemic due to lockdown. Electronics and their

accessories were purchased by 3% of respondents. 2% of respondents purchased other items like furniture, clothing, jewelry, etc...

Analysis No. 2

An interview schedule has been conducted with 100 respondents about if there is an increase in the frequency of shopping online per month due to the COVID -19 pandemic. Wilcoxon Mann Whitney U Test is used to compare the frequency of online shopping before and during the pandemic to analyse the impact of COVID-19.

Wilcoxon Mann-Whitney U Test

H0 - The mean rank should be equal Before and During COVID-19.

		Ranks		
	group	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks
frequency	Before COVID-19	100	66.10	6610.00
	During COVID-19	100	134.90	13490.00
	Total	200		

Inference: The above table indicates that the mean rank During COVID-19 has the highest mean than Before COVID-19. So we have to reject the null hypothesis.

From the data, it is concluded that the p-value is less than 0.001 which shows that one group is greater than the other group and there is a significant increase in the frequency of online shopping during the COVID-19 pandemic.

FINDINGS

The major findings of the study are:

During the pandemic, online consumption habits increased. Among the total respondents, 40% were

Test Statistics	
	frequency
Mann-Whitney U	1560.000
Wilcoxon W	6610.000
Z	-8.702
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
a. Grouping Variable: group	

new to online. The customers switched different brands during the pandemic. Customers' desire to safeguard their health is a prominent reason for the shift in online shopping during a pandemic. The majority of the customers shop daily for consumables online because of their fear to go on lockdown. Sanitizers have a great demand during the pandemic. Customers searched for different types of immunity boosters for staying healthy during the pandemic. Work from home demands laptops and mobile accessories. Among the personal care products, apparel and diapers have great demand. The results of the Wilcoxon Mann-Whitney U Test show that COVID-19 has a great impact on online shopping. Customers sometimes faced poor internet connectivity and network issues during pandemics.

SUGGESTIONS

COVID-19 pandemic has undoubtedly had an effect on online business. While some industries have experienced difficult times, others have seen increased growth. In order to encourage the customers to shop online during post-pandemic some suggestions are here;

The web store is live and operational. Provide discounts or benefits such as free delivery. Provide accurate and real-time information. State real-time stock levels and pricing. Make sure out-of-stock items are marked as such and notify customers to know when to expect them back in stock. The government could expand affordable and quality internet facilities to rural areas to participate in online shopping.

CONCLUSION

More and more people now realize the convenience of online shopping. While the restrictions forced by COVID-19 may have made online shopping, even more, attracting this is actually a long-term trend that is likely to continue well into the post-pandemic future. COVID-19 pandemic is a driving force to shape a historic and dramatic shift in customer behavior. In order to make most of this business need to offer clarity, flexible policies, and convenience.

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