

Online shopping: Perception on Prices, Products, and Problems encountered

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Abstract

There has been a whopping increase in the number of people who uses internet and own electronic devices and comfortably uses it to purchase online even for their daily groceries. This study examines the online purchase behaviour of the consumers, factors those influence online consumers and the problems encountered. Data was collected through a well-structured questionnaire and was analysed using descriptive statistics and percentages. Friedmans rank test, one sample t test, Kruskal wallis and Mann Whitney U test were used in appropriate conditions to test the hypotheses. The study revealed interesting facts about online behaviour of consumers and most of the findings were similar to the earlier studies and vast contradictions were not found. Consumers were found to be indulging in online purchases of one product or other including food items, at least once monthly. The respondents had clear idea about the real prices of the online products and those online prices were lower than traditional shop prices but believed that discounts are made after a price hike. Regarding the types of products purchased through internet it was found that most of them purchased textiles and footwear and the least purchased item was automobile accessories. Availability of brands, convenience, variety of products were the factors that mostly influenced the respondents to purchase online. About the problems faced while shopping online, it was found that that misleading images of the products and lack of opportunity to physically verify the product were considered to be biggest risk felt by the respondents to indulge in online shopping.

Keywords

Consumer behaviour, online shopping, online retail shops, e commerce

1. Introduction

E-commerce has been developing since the 1990's and its evolution is directly linked to the advancement of information technology. The internet has created a new generation of consumers who like to shop online and due to its benefits, more and more people are found to prefer online shopping over traditional shopping. It is hard to believe that a generation ago, most people bought almost everything from a local retailer. Customers shop online using a range of devices including computers, laptops, tablets, smartphones and smart speakers. Access to the internet and a valid method of payment are the pre-requisites to complete a transaction. Hundreds of websites and applications are being created to cater to the rising demand of shopping trends. The growth in e-shops could be attributed to discounts and

offers provided by the retailers, option to make payment by cash-on-delivery mode, busy lifestyle, rising internet penetration and broadband availability and increase in the use of smartphones.

Through this research the expectation is to find the buying behaviour of internet shoppers, why customers prefer internet shopping, what problems do they encounter, what factors do impact their online buying behaviour and whether the online buying behaviour vary across age, gender, income and profession or employment.

2. Review of Previous Studies

2 (a) International Studies

Online consumer behaviour is affected by the value of the product, shopping experience provided to the customer by the website and the risk perceptions of internet shopping (Jarvenpaa & Todd, 1997). Demographic variables like income, education and age had a moderate impact while studies pinpoint

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that previous shopping experience as the most important determinant (Bellman, Lohse, & Johnson, 1999). Good product selection, competitive prices, ease of use were considered by consumers as attractive features but research studies also point out concerns about shipping costs, lack of opportunity to prior examining the products and confidentiality of personal information (Ernst and Young, 2003) as the major factors determining online shopping. Studies suggested that the companies should focus satisfaction of customers and perceived value (Yang, 2004). eBay was the most preferred site for online shopping followed by rediff, google and yahoo (Juxt Consult, 2007) and found that factors like wider choice and availability of products and better prices and offers are important than just convenience factors that (Juxtconsult, 2007) impact online buying behaviour. Wang and Yang (2010) reported difference in the perception between inexperienced shoppers and experienced shoppers that buying intention of experienced shoppers are stronger (Wang & Wang, 2010) (Zhang, 2011).

2 (b) National Studies

It was revealed that the popular products that were purchased online included books followed by music Compact Disks and web space or domain names. Mahesh et al., (2008) found that convenience, choices and prior shopping experience, unfamiliarity with internet, preference for physical inspection of products, lack of bargaining were the most common factors influencing online buying (Upadhyay & Kaur, 2010). Studies found that majority of online purchases were travel-related and that there is an increasing demand to buy jewellery (trinkets, fashion jewellery, etc.) and small electronic goods such as cell phones and digital cameras through online retail shops (Rajan, Ken, G, Brien, & Louie) (Upadhyay & Kaur, 2010). Earlier Indian studies found online shopping was not found to being the most preferred form of shopping in India (Vijay, T, & M.S, 2009) (Richa, 2012) Brinda and Kavitha (2009). Among the payment options, payment on delivery through cash was found to be the safest choice of payment, while credit card was the next preferred choice and online bank transfer was the least preference choice (Upadhyay & Kaur, 2010). Studies also found that men were more attracted to online shopping than women Sanjay and Manika (2011).

3. Objectives of the study

- 1) Examine the perception of consumers on prices of online products
- 2) Examine the buying behaviour of the consumers across gender, age and income levels.

- 3) Identify the factors influencing online shopping
- 4) Identify problems faced in online shopping

4. Hypothesis of the study

Based on the objectives, the following hypothesis are framed.

- 1) H_{01} Perception about price is same across gender.
- 2) H_{02} There is no significant difference in perception about price across different income levels.
- 3) H_{03} There is no significant difference in perception about price across various employment.

5. Research methodology

The population of the study comprises of the online consumers of Ernakulam District. The sample size is 134. The primary data required for the study were collected from respondents through a structured questionnaire. The primary data were classified and analysed using statistical tools like percentages, descriptive statistics, mean etc. Mann-whitney U test and Kruskal-Wallis test were applied to test the hypotheses.

6. Results from analysis

A. Respondent Profile

Table 1: Descriptive frequencies of the respondents

Dimension	Profile	Frequency	Percent
Gender	Female	60	44.8
	Male	74	55.2
	Total	134	100.0
Educational Qualification	High School	2	1.5
	Higher Secondary	19	14.2
	Graduate	84	62.7
	Post Graduate	29	21.6
	Total	134	100
Occupation	Student	75	56
	Professional/ Business	38	28.4
	Total	134	100
Monthly Income of the family	Employed	12	9.0
	Unemployed	9	6.7
	Total	134	100
	Below 25000	84	62.7
	25000-50000	21	15.7
Monthly Income of the family	50000-75000	7	5.2
	75000-100000	10	7.5
	Above 100000	12	9
	Total	134	100

Source: Primary data.

The sample size was 134. Out of the 134 respondents, 44.8 % female and 55.2 % are male. The highest educational qualification of the respondents revealed that the majority of the respondents (62.7%) are graduates, 21.6% post graduates, 14.2% have passed higher secondary and 1.5% have passed only high school level. The occupational status of the respondents Majority of the respondents 56 % were students, 28.4 % in business or profession, 9 % employed and remaining 6.7 % were unemployed.

B. Online Buying Behaviour

6(a). Respondents Preference to various Shopping Websites

The most important online shopping websites in India are Amazon.in, Flipkart.com, Snapdeal, Myntra, eBay, Olx etc. We enquired into the most preferred online shopping site.

Table 2: Respondents Preference to various Shopping Websites

Shopping websites	Mean Rank
Amazon	2.80
Flipkart	2.82
Snapdeal	3.07
Myntra	3.09
Ebay	3.22
<hr/>	
N	134
Chi-Square	8.310
Df	4
Asymp. Sig.	.081
a. Friedman Test, Level of significance 5%.	

Source: Primary data.

Table 2 show whether there is any preference for a particular shopping site over another using Friedman's rank test which indicate that no one site was preferred over the other ($p = .081$) at 5 % level of significance but at 10 % level it was found that amazon was the most preferred shopping web site (the lowest mean is considered as the most preferred) followed by Flipkart.

6(b). Respondents' years of experience in online shopping

Table 3: Respondents' years of experience of online shopping

Dimension	Profile	Frequency	Percentage
Years of Experience	1 year	29	21.6
	1-3 years	40	29.9
	Above 3 years	65	48.5
	Total	134	100
Frequency of online shopping	Daily	0	0
	Once or twice in a Week	7	5.2
	Once or twice in a Month	127	94.8
	Total	134	100

Source: Primary data

Shopper's experience in online buying has been studied by many researchers and found to be a determining factor. The majority, 48.5 % has been purchasing online for more than 3 years, 29 % between 1 and 3 years and 21.6% of the respondents has been experiencing online buying for about a year. An enquiry was made into the frequency of online shopping of the respondents. 5.2 % of the respondents purchase once or twice in a week, whereas the rest 94.8% purchase products and services once or twice in a month.

6(c) Perception about the Prices of Online Products

Observation shows that generally people have a misconception about the pricing of online products. Therefore, the study examined the respondents' perception about the prices of online products. The responses of the respondents on the statements, regarding the price perception about online products, were collected on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 'strongly disagree, to strongly agree'.

Table 4: One-Sample Statistics Perception on the prices of online products

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
No idea about real price of the product	134	2.58	1.092	.094
Discounts are made after hike in prices	134	3.18	.949	.082
Prices are higher than retail shops	134	2.36	.799	.069

Source: Primary data.

Table 5: One-Sample Test on the Perception on prices of online products

	t	df	Test Value = 3			
			Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
					Lower	Upper
No idea about real price of the product	-4.430	133	.000	-.418	-.60	-.23
Discounts are made after hike in prices	2.185	133	.031	.179	.02	.34
Prices are higher than retail shops	-9.304	133	.000	-.642	-.78	-.51

Source: Primary data. Level of Significance 5%.

Table 4 and 5 depicts the one sample test on the respondents' perception about the prices of online products. The mean score of 2.58 on the statement "No idea about real price of the product" is significantly less than the central value of the scale of measurement 3 ($p = .000$), which shows that the respondents had a good idea about the real prices of the products, so as to make them efficient in deciding whether the online prices are higher than traditional shop prices. The respondents also disagree to the opinion that the prices of online products are higher as the mean value derived was 2.36 ($p = .000$), which is significantly lesser than then central score 3. In case of the opinion about discounts, that it was made after a price hike, the

mean score was 3.18 ($p = .031$) which indicates that the respondents agree that the discounts are made after a price hike. The respondents opined that the prices of online products are not higher than the traditional retail shops and that they had a fairly good idea about the real prices of various products available online. They also believed that the discounts made on the products to attract the consumers are done after a price hike.

6(d). Perception about prices across gender

With reference to latest trends running in Indian online market according to report produced by sokrati.com in June 2016 Indian men shop online three times more than Indian women.

Table 6: Perception about the prices across gender

Sl. No	Variables	Gender	Frequency	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks
1	No idea about the real price of the products	Female	60	72.04	4322.50
		Male	74	63.82	4722.50
		Total	134		
2	Discounts are made after price hike	Female	60	76.16	4569.50
		Male	74	60.48	4475.50
		Total	134		
3	Prices are higher	Female	60	70.34	4220.50
		Male	74	65.20	4824.50
		Total	134		

Source: Primary Data

Table: 7 Perception about Price across Gender

	No idea about the real price of the products	Discounts are made after price hike	Prices are higher
Mann-Whitney U	1947.500	1700.500	2049.500
Wilcoxon W	4722.500	4475.500	4824.500
Z	-1.261	-2.446	-.827
Asymp.sig (2-tailed)	.207	.014	.408

Source: Primary data. Level of Significance 5%.

H_{01} Perception about price of online products is the same among male and female respondents.

The test statistics of Mann-Whitney U Test (Table 7) indicate that there is significant evidence to retain the null hypothesis as the p value in case of "no idea about the real price of the products" is 0.207. Also, about the statement "Prices are higher", ($p = 0.408$), we retain the null hypothesis that there is no difference in the opinion of the males and females. The null hypothesis that there is no significant difference in the opinion of both male and female respondents that

discounts are made after a price hike, cannot be accepted ($p = .014$). The results indicate that females (mean =76.16) tend to agree more than male (mean=60.48) that the prices are made after a price hike.

Both male and female respondents believe that they have fairly good idea about the prices of online products and that the prices are not higher than the traditional shops. However, they differ in their opinion on that statement that prices are first raised and discounts are given on these price levels and females agree more to this statement.

6(e) Perception about prices among different classes of income.

To study differences in perception about price among various income groups a Kruskal-Wallis non parametric test is performed.

H_{02} There is no significant difference in perception about price among different classes of income.

Table: 8 Perception about Price-Income wise (Kruskal-Wallis Test)

Perception about Price	Monthly income	N	Mean Rank
No idea about real price of the product	below 25000	84	65.23
	25000-50000	21	60.83
	50000-75000	7	33.00
	75000-100000	10	51.55
	Total	122	
Discounts are made after hike in prices	below 25000	84	63.15
	25000-50000	21	71.90
	50000-75000	7	19.43
	75000-100000	10	55.25
	Total	122	
Prices are high	below 25000	84	60.97
	25000-50000	21	69.36
	50000-75000	7	47.86
	75000-100000	10	59.00
	Total	122	

Source: Primary data. Level of Significance 5%.

Table 9: Test statistics for perception about price among different income levels

Perception about Price	No idea about real price of the product	Discounts are made after hike in prices	Prices are high
Chi-Square	6.708	13.506	2.491
Df	3	3	3
Asymp. Sig.	.082	.004	.477

Source: Primary data. Level of Significance 5%.

Kruskal–Wallis test (Table 7) shows how the opinion of respondents of different income levels differ in their perception on the prices of online products. In case of “no idea about the real price of the product” ($p = .082$), and “Prices of online products are higher” ($p = .477$) we accept the null hypothesis that there is no significant difference in the perception of respondents belonging to different

income classes. However, in case of “Discounts are made after a price hike”, there is a statistically significant difference among different income classes ($p = .004$). Therefore, this null hypothesis is not accepted. It shows that respondents of income group 25000-50000 (mean rank = 71.90) agree more to the statement that the prices are made after a price hike.

6(f). Perception about Prices and Employment

Table 10: Perception about Price – Employment wise

Perception about Price	Employment	N	Mean Rank
no idea about real price of the product	Student	75	76.07
	Employed	38	52.17
	business/profession	12	74.54
	Unemployment	9	51.44
	Total	134	
discounts are made after hike in prices	Student	75	74.34
	Employed	38	54.13
	business/profession	12	66.04
	Unemployment	9	68.89
	Total	134	
prices are high	Student	75	66.78
	Employed	38	64.00
	business/profession	12	82.50
	Unemployment	9	68.28
	Total	134	

Source: Primary Data

Table 10: Test Statistics: Perception about price and employment

	No idea about real price of the product	Discounts are made after hike in prices	Prices are high
Chi-Square	12.308	7.597	2.501
Df	3	3	3
Asymp. Sig.	.006	.055	.475

Source: Primary data. Level of Significance 5%.

H_{03} There is no significant difference in Perception about Prices and Employment

Table 9 and 10 shows statistics for Kruskal-Wallis test. In case of “No real idea about the price” ($p=.006$) we have sufficient evidence to reject the null hypothesis and this indicates that students (mean rank=76.06) tend to disagree more than other employment groups therefore the respondents who were students believed that they know about the real prices of products. The test also proved that in case of “Discounts are made after a price hike” ($p=.055$) we can accept the null hypothesis that there is no

significant difference in the perception among various employment groups.

C. Use of Online Shopping Sites

Online shopping sites are used by people not only for buying but also for price/product enquiry. The various purposes are price comparison, searching for exclusive products, checking for availability of products, new trends, and variety etc. The opinion was collected on a five-point likert scale ranging from “strongly disagree to strongly agree”.

Table 11: Purpose of using Online Shopping Sites

Sl.No	Objectives	Mean	Ranks
1	Price Comparison	3.66	5
2	Check for Exclusive Products	3.7	3
3	Check for Availability of Products	3.83	2
4	Check for New Trend	3.69	4
5	Check for Variety	3.86	1

Source: Primary data.

H_{04} : There is no significant difference in objectives of using online shopping sites and gender.

To study the difference in objectives of using online shopping sites among the gender categories a Mann-

Whitney test was performed. There is no significant difference between the gender in the purpose for which they use online shopping sites (all p values are not significant) (Table 12 and 13).

Table 12: Objectives of using Online shopping sites gender wise

Objectives	Gender	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks
Price comparison	female	60	66.68	4001.00
	male	74	68.16	5044.00
	Total	134		
Check for exclusive products	female	60	63.38	3803.00
	male	74	70.84	5242.00
	Total	134		
Check for availability of products	female	60	66.56	3993.50
	male	74	68.26	5051.50
	Total	134		
Check for new trend	female	60	72.90	4374.00
	male	74	63.12	4671.00
	Total	134		
Check for variety	female	60	66.99	4019.50
	male	74	67.91	5025.50
	Total	134		

Source: Primary Data

Table 13: Test statistics for Objectives of using online sites and Gender

	Price comparison	Check for exclusive products	Check for availability of products	Check for new trend	Check for variety
Mann-Whitney U	2171.000	1973.000	2163.500	1896.000	2189.500
Wilcoxon W	4001.000	3803.000	3993.500	4671.000	4019.500
Z	-.235	-1.188	-.275	-1.539	-.145
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.814	.235	.783	.124	.885

Source: Primary Data. Level of significance 5%.

6 (g). Purpose of using online shopping sites among various income class

H_{05} There is no significant difference in objectives of using online shopping sites among various income class.

Table 14: Objectives of using online shopping sites income wise.

Objectives	monthly income	N	Mean Rank
objectives of online purchasing platform-price comparison	below 25000	84	61.78
	25000-50000	21	54.55
	50000-75000	7	60.21
	75000-100000	10	74.65
	Total	122	
objectives of online purchasing platform-check for exclusive products	below 25000	84	61.20
	25000-50000	21	51.50
	50000-75000	7	62.93
	75000-100000	10	84.05
	Total	122	
objectives of online purchasing platform-check for availability of products	below 25000	84	59.80
	25000-50000	21	56.64
	50000-75000	7	67.86
	75000-100000	10	81.50
	Total	122	
objectives of online purchasing platform-check for new trend	below 25000	84	62.85
	25000-50000	21	56.76
	50000-75000	7	56.86
	75000-100000	10	63.40
	Total	122	
objectives of online purchasing platform-check for variety	below 25000	84	61.48
	25000-50000	21	60.02
	50000-75000	7	53.21
	75000-100000	10	70.60
	Total	122	

Source: Primary Data

Table 15: Test statistics for Objectives of using online shopping sites and income

	Price comparison	Check for exclusive products	Check for availability of products	Check for new trend	Check for variety
Chi-Square	2.537	6.779	4.835	.737	1.217
Df	3	3	3	3	3
Asymp. Sig.	.469	.079	.184	.864	.749

Source: Primary Data. Level of significance 5%.

To study the difference in the objectives of using online shopping sites among various income classes a Kruskal- Wallis test was conducted. Irrespective of the income level all respondents use the online shopping sites for similar purposes.

6(h). Types of Products/Services purchased through online shops

An enquiry was made in order to understand the various types of products and services purchased through internet. Some of the popular products are Food items, books, electronics, textiles and footwears, cosmetics and jewellery, automobile accessories, and furniture.

Table: 16 Types of Product or Services purchased through Internet

Product Category	Weighted Mean	Rank
Food Items	2.17	3
Books	2.09	5
Electronics	2.92	2
Textiles and Footwear	3.13	1
Cosmetics and Jewellery	2.16	4
Automobile Accessories	2.00	7
Furniture	2.07	6

Table 17: Factors influencing online shopping

Factors	Mean	t	df	Sig (2 tailed)	Mean difference
Low price	3.40	4.198	133	.000	.403
Quality	2.90	-1.272	133	.206	-.097
Offers available	3.76	9.853	133	.000	.761
Availability of brands	3.83	10.135	133	.000	.828
Convenience	3.84	9.809	133	.000	.843
Variety	3.89	10.191	133	.000	.888
New trend, Fashion etc.	3.71	8.126	133	.000	.709
Different payment options	3.74	7.354	133	.000	.739
Website design	3.25	2.608	133	.010	.246

Source: Primary data. Level of Significance 5%. N – 134.

Table 17 shows that the availability of brands, convenience, variety of products are the factors that mostly influence the respondents to purchase online

Source: Primary Data.

The study examined the preference on purchase of various products through internet (Table 16) The opinion of the respondents were collected on a Five point Likert scale ranging from “Never, Rarely, Sometimes, Often, and Always”. The most purchased item is Textiles and footwear and the least purchased item is automobile accessories. In case of Textiles and Footwear the mean score is 3.13. it shows that the purchase of this item through online websites is higher than moderate (Mean value=3.13> the central value of the scale 3). Electronic products also scored a mean of 2.92, which is also near to the central value of the scale 3. All other products like food items, books, cosmetics and jewellery, automobile accessories, and furniture scored below the central value of the scale which indicate that the purchase of these products is less than moderate.

D. Factors influencing Online Shopping

The respondents’ opinion about various factors influencing online shopping are collected on a five-point Likert scale ranging from “strongly disagree to strongly agree”.

(p=.000). Respondents also agrees that the low price of products influence their buying behaviour as the mean 3.40. In case of quality of products is

guaranteed, the respondents are neutral ($p = .206$). Respondents agree that the offers available, new trends, different payment options and website design also affects their online purchase decision.

E. Problems faced while shopping online

The major problems occurred while shopping online considered for the study are fake products, refund issues, tax issues, delay in delivery, no physical verification, misleading images, no payment safety and quality issues. The opinion of the respondents is collected on a five-point likert scale ranging from strongly disagree, disagree, neutral, agree and strongly agree and shown in the below table.

Table: 18 One-Sample Test- Problems Faced while Shopping Online

	Test Value = 3						
	Mean	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
						Lower	Upper
Fake products	3.28	3.043	133	.003	.276	.10	.46
Refund issues	2.90	-1.062	133	.290	-.104	-.30	.09
Tax issues	2.59	-5.311	133	.000	-.410	-.56	-.26
Delay in delivery	2.90	-1.194	133	.235	-.104	-.28	.07
No physical verification	3.49	5.262	133	.000	.485	.30	.67
Misleading images	3.51	5.504	133	.000	.507	.33	.69
Payment safety	2.61	-4.943	133	.000	-.388	-.54	-.23
Quality issues	3.25	2.966	133	.004	.246	.08	.41

Source : Primary Data. Level of significance 5%.

The study found that both *misleading images of the products* and *lack of opportunity to physically verify the product* are considered to be the negative aspects of online shopping sites. Many experienced, fake products and quality issues in online shopping. The respondents seem to be neutral to the issues like refunds and delay in delivery. They disagree to having faced issues like tax issues and payment safety.

7. Conclusion

There has been a whopping increase in the number of people who uses internet and own electronic devices and comfortably uses it as a result of the revolution in telecommunication and information technology sector. With more and more online stores and the onset of covid 19 more people are resorting to purchase online even for their daily groceries. This study examined the online purchase behaviour of the respondents, factors those influence consumers and the problems encountered. The study found that majority of the respondents had at least 3 years of experience on online shopping and they were indulging online purchases of one product or other including food items, at least once monthly. The study found that the respondents had clear idea about the real prices of the online products and that online prices were lower than traditional shop prices but believed that discounts are made after a price hike. The respondents' objectives of using online shopping sites were

analysed and it was found that that most of the respondents seems to agree that they use shopping sites more for browsing through the variety of products. Regarding the types of products purchased through internet it was found that most of them purchased textiles and footwear and the least purchased item was automobile accessories. Availability of brands, convenience, variety of products were the factors that mostly influenced the respondents to purchase online. Respondents seems to agree that the offers available, new trends, different payment options and website design also affects their online purchase decision. About the problems faced while shopping online, it was found that that misleading images of the products and lack of opportunity to physically verify the product were considered to be biggest risk felt by the respondents to indulge in online shopping.

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