Research Article

Shift in Shopping Behaviour of Customers during COVID-19

Dr.K. Suguna[1]

Abstract

Spread of Corona virus around the world, fear of contamination and government rules forced public to stick to their homes. For essential goods, medicines, sanitizers, PPE kits, masks, learning and teaching, work from home and other requirements majority of the people relayed on internet supported online services. Majority of people started shifting their buying behaviours from traditional methods to online methods. Though the pandemic affected adversely all the sectors, only e-commerce sector witnessed visible change during lockdown. Penetration in internet, increased use of smart phones, covid pandemic necessitated shoppers to shift from offline to online. The present paper focuses on shift in shopping behaviours of customers during Covid-19. Using a structured questionnaire, 316 online shopper's opinion was collected and used statistical methods to analyze the responses.

Keywords: *Shopping behaviour, online, offline, covid-19.*

Introduction

Shopping is an activity in which a customer looks the available goods or services presented by one or more retailers with the intent to purchase a suitable selection of them. In some situations, it may be considered as an economic as well as a leisure activity. The shopping experience may range from window shopping, delightful to terrible, based on a variety of factors including the type of goods being purchased, the customer experience, convenience and mood.

The acceptance of shopping as a cultural activity and the growth in consumption drove to the rise of 'shopping' - the dissemination of retail shops selling particular goods. The next stage in shopping was the evolution from 'single-function' shops which sell one type of good, to the department store where a great variety of goods were sold, ordered by department. With improvements in manufacturing technology and transport, opportunities for buying and selling became quicker and more efficient than ever before. The rapid growth of towns and cities, has made shopping an important part of everyone's daily activity.

Online Shopping

The emergence of Internet has been the biggest manifestation of the century. E-commerce in India has come as a revolution where one can sell and find online, all sorts of stuff from a high-end product to a

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[1] Professor, Department of Business Management, Rishi UBR PG College for Women, Kukatpally, Hyderabad, Telangana, India, sugunakonda6a@gmail.com

low end. Most of the corporations are using Internet to denote their product range and services so that it is accessible to the global market and to reach out to a larger range of their customers.

Shift in Shopping behaviour from Offline to Online

Large variety of products, attractive designs, deals, discounts, offers, no long waiting in queue to pay bills, digital payment systems are available in online shopping. No need to step out of homes, no need to travel for shopping in online shopping. 'Anywhere any time' can shop online feature made peoples' life easy. Internet penetration, use of smartphones, cheap data packs, and digitalization helped public to shift to online shopping.

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Literature

Different studies have examined the influence of Covid 19 on online shopping and consumer behaviour during pandemic.

Priyadarshani Tyagi and Dr. Vanishree Pabalkar (2021) in their review article "impact of Covid-19 over purchasing behaviour of the consumers" expressed that consumer is more conscious about their spending during Covid 19 pandemic. Consumer behaviour is dependent on psychological, social and economic factors. The purchasing behaviour of the consumers changes based on individual perception and perspectives.

Anupam Sharma and Deepika Jhamb (2020) explored on different issues and perspectives of online marketing due to COVID-19. They found the impact of the covid on various products like toilet tissue rolls, baby product, pet food, daily essentials and many more. They also discussed how some of the companies managed through social commerce, how social networks helped in information sharing. The results are indicated that online marketing and shopping will soon go back to normal.

C Jamunadevi, S Deepa, Dr.K.T. Kalaiselvi, R Suguna and A Dharshini (2020) found that the majority holding 21-30 age group of customers prefer shopping while free shipping. All the age users like to use their cart as loading up with product until they get privilege of free shipping. They also found that different age group consumers purchasing decision revolves around they load their carts with products until they get the privilege to free shipping. Consumer faces dissatisfaction with customer care negligence while purchasing the product on online.

Objectives

The present study has made an attempt to find shift in shopping behaviour of customers during Covid 19. The study mainly focuses on the following objectives:
1. To know the reasons to shift to online shopping over offline shopping.
2. To identify the factors that are causing difficulty in online shopping.
3. To identify the features which help customers to continue online shopping after covid pandemic.

Sampling

Convenience sampling method is used for the present study. Collected 316 samples through a structured questionnaire using online data forms. The study is descriptive in nature and makes use of survey method. A Structured questionnaire is used to know the opinion of customers on online shopping specially during covid 19 pandemic through data forms. The questionnaire consists of two categories: (i) demographic factors of the respondents and (ii) questions on online shopping. Likert 4-point scale of agreement is used to measure the level of agreement with each of the statements.

Profile of the Respondents

The sample has dominated by female (79%) over male (21%). The education qualification of respondents is post graduates (78%), under graduates (11%), Ph.D (2%) and others education qualifications like diploma, ITI etc., (9%).
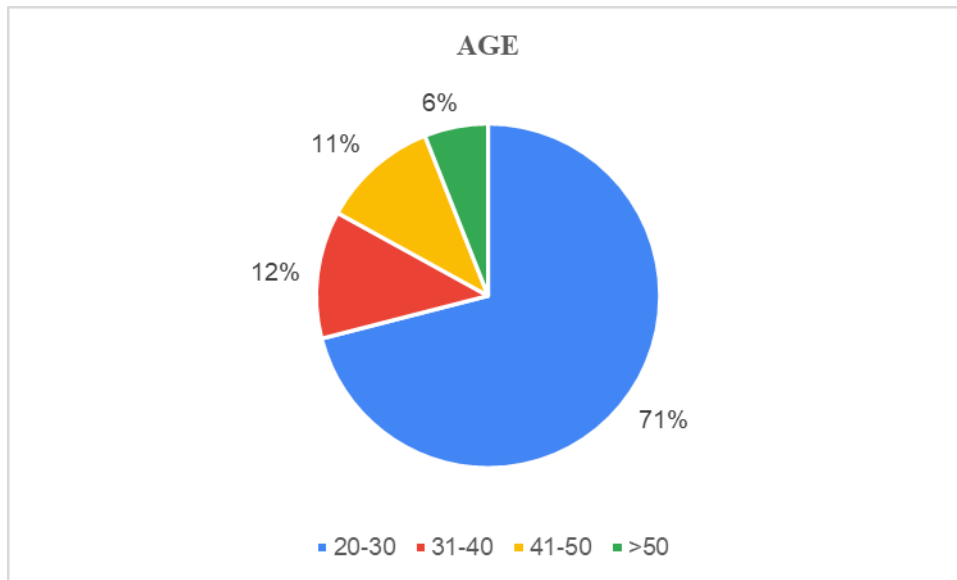

Figure 1. Age group
From Figure 1 it is clear that the age group of respondents i.e 20-30 years(71%) is dominated over 31-40 years (12%), 41-50 years (11%) and more than 50 years (6%).
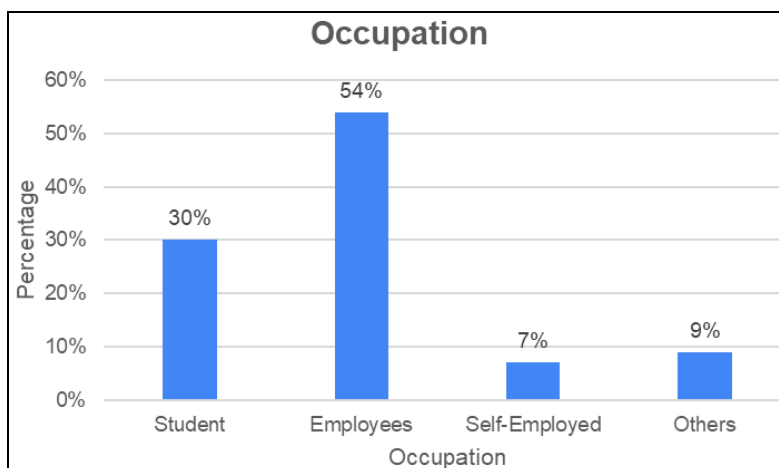

Figure 2. Occupation

From above figure 2, it is found that most of the respondents are employees(54%) by profession followed by students (30%), self-employed (7%) and others (9%).

- (57%) Most of the youngsters (20-30 years of age) purchased apparels, electronic goods, food & beverages, cosmetics, books, toys through online shopping during lockdown.
- (43%) Elderly (40-50 years) people purchased essentials, groceries, medicines and other services (like on line learning, fitness, yoga etc.,) during lockdown.
- Regarding the amount spent on online purchase by customers, ranges from Rs. 1,000 to Rs. 3,000 with at least 5 purchases in a year.
- The major online platforms used for shopping online are Amazon (30%), Flipkart (24%), Snapdeal (8%), Zomato (12%), pharma and healthcare platforms (20%) and other sites (6%).

Reasons for Shift

Majority of people started shifting their buying behaviours from traditional methods to online methods due to attractive features. Attractive online features, penetration in internet, increased use of smart phones, covid pandemic necessitated shoppers to shift from offline to online.
Most of the respondents (82%) said that they prefer online shopping over offline. Few of the customers (18%) like to go for both online and offline shopping based on type of product and convenience to buy.
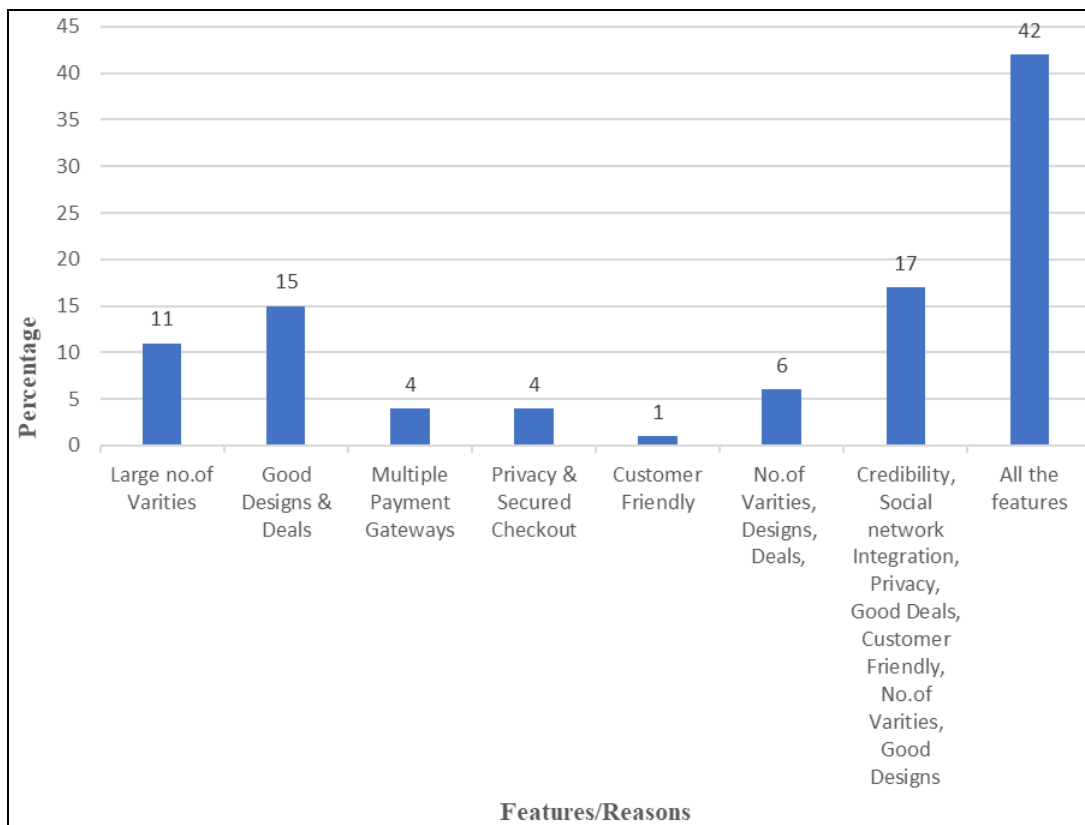

Figure 3. Features/ Reasons that are attracting customers towards online shopping

To find out the reasons or features that are attracting the customers towards online shopping percentage analysis is done. 42% of the respondent customers answered that, 'Large number of

varieties', 'Good Deals', 'Good Designs', 'Multiple Payment Gateways', 'Privacy & Secured Checkout', 'Customer Friendly' features in online shopping are attracting more than traditional methods of shopping.

Difficulties in Online Shopping

Few of respondent customers forced to buy online due to government rules, fear of contagious of corona virus. When respondent customers are asked about any difficulty they faced during online shopping, 49% of the respondents said that, they faced difficulty in online shopping. The reasons/factors for difficulty in online shopping are 'cheap quality', 'receiving damaged or wrong products', 'delay in delivery', 'afraid of online fraud' and 'product not delivered' (40%). 'Missing the touch and feel of products' and 'not able to get correct size and fit' (47%), fear of identity theft (13%) are the reasons for preferring to buy offline.

Continue to Buy Online/Offline After Pandemic

Table 1.
Features which influence continuation of online shopping

Reason	Weighted Average
Saves Time	3.30
Better Prices/Discounts/Cash Back Offers	3.02
Easy to Compare Products/Prices	3.25
Long Delivery Time	2.98
Online Shopping is Risky	2.46
Enjoy going out for shopping	3.41
Worried about cost / hassle of returning the product	3.08
Over all online shopping satisfaction	3.20

The above table furnishes the weighted average values of opinion on continuation of online shopping after covid pandemic. For this Likert 4- point scale of agreement- Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, Strongly Disagree is used to measure the level of agreement with each of the statements. Most of the respondents agreed to continue to shop online because it 'saves time' (3.30), 'easy to compare products and prices' (3.25) and 'better prices/ discounts/ cash backs' compared to offline line shopping.

Few of the respondents agreed to shop offline over online after covid pandemic, because they 'want to go out' (3.48), 'online shopping is risky' (2.46), 'take long time to deliver' (2.98) and 'worried about cost- and hassle-free shopping' (3.08).

Conclusion

The fear of spread of Covid 19 insisted public to stay at home. For day-to-day necessities like dairy products, fresh vegetables, fruits, medicines and many more people shifted to buy online. The present study ensured that most of the youngsters (20-30 years of age) purchased apparels, electronic goods, food & beverages, cosmetics, books, toys through online shopping during lockdown. 'Large number of varieties', 'Good Deals', 'Good Designs', 'Multiple Payment Gateways', 'Privacy & Secured Checkout', 'Customer Friendly' features in online shopping are attracting more than traditional

methods of shopping. Customers facing difficulty in online shopping due to 'Missing the touch and feel of products' and 'not able to get correct size and fit'. The experience of physical touch and feel of product, risks and no immediate delivery of products in online shopping, respondent customers want to go out for shopping after removal of restrictions on lookdown due to covid pandemic.

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