



Covid-19 and its impacts: Online shopping in rural areas of Idukki district

R D Arjunraj, Franco Tom, Abin Abraham

Research Scholars, Mahatma Gandhi University, Kottayam, Kerala, India

Abstract

E platform-based businesses are gaining wide popularity in the current decade. A large number of consumers are attracted to these kinds of online shopping sites as a result of huge offers, convenience for shopping, wide variety of products, etc. In spite of the above-said reasons the present scenario of Covid-19 also boosts online sales or e Commerce. While we give prime importance to safety, we prefer to get the goods and services delivered at our doorstep, but in rural areas, the reach of e-commerce platforms or shopping sites is relatively less as compared to urban areas. In this study, we try to find answers to some questions related to the present scenario of Covid-19 and its impact on online shopping in rural areas by collecting the required data from 100 respondents in Chakkupallam Grama panchayath using a self-made questionnaire.

Keywords: Covid-19, online shopping, e-commerce

Introduction

Electronic commerce or e-commerce is a business model that lets firms and individuals buy and sell things over the internet. E-commerce has helped businesses establish a wider market presence by providing cheaper and more efficient distribution channels for their products or services. For example, the mass retailer Target has supplemented its brick-and-mortar presence with an online store that lets customers purchase everything from clothes to coffeemakers to toothpaste to action figures [1]. This business model is getting more popular in the modern world. E-commerce platforms make the shopping process easier and more convenient. The Covid-19 pandemic has led people in different countries to limit physical interactions. We know that people try to minimize their visit to shops, parks, tourist destinations, etc. in order to keep themselves away from the disease or the virus attack. This has led to an increase in demand for products in online shopping sites and reduced the demand for products in traditional brick-and-mortar retail outlets. People living in urban areas are aware of e-commerce platforms and they have the facilities to access them and they use the potential of these virtual stores than people in rural areas, especially people in rural areas of Kerala may have some technical limitations such as lack of internet connectivity, problems faced in making online payments, problems faced with product delivery, etc. are some of the limitations faced by the rural population in online shopping. In spite of these limitations, there is a changing trend in rural consumer's preference towards online shopping. So here we try to identify the changing trend in online shopping in rural areas due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Statement of the Problem

This study focuses on addressing different questions related to covid-19 and its impact on online shopping in rural areas of Kerala. The research problem here is to study the changing trend of online shopping in rural areas, to identify more demanded products over online shopping, and to identify the major factors influencing online shopping habits.

This study is conducted among 100 residents of Chakkupallam Grama panchayath in the Idukki district.

Significance of the Study

The study is very much relevant in the present scenario. Consumer behavior has changed a lot during the last year during the Covid period. The Covid-19 pandemic has forced the globe to go into the four walls bringing a lot of changes in our daily life and behaviour. This situation has led to a tremendous change in the buying behaviour of the people, where a large number of people have gone online for shopping.

Online shopping was then mostly done by city living people and the youths, but the situation has driven the rural living people to an online shopping culture irrespective of youth and old, men and women, etc. so the present scenario is very much relevant to discuss the research problem and the study can put some light into the gaps.

Objectives

- To study the changing trend of online shopping in rural areas as a result of Covid-19
- To identify more demanded products over online shopping
- Identify the major factors influencing online shopping habits

Methodology

This study was quantitative and explanatory in nature with a sample size of 100. The sample frame of the study is all the residents in Chakkupallam Gram panchayath from which 100 samples were selected using a convenient sampling method.

The self-made questionnaire was used for collecting primary data required for the study and secondary data was collected from different journals, websites, etc... Tables, graphs, and percentage analysis were used for the analysis of data. This study followed all ethical considerations of the research.

Sample Profile

Of the 100 respondents 68% of the respondents were male and the rest 32 % were female. 56% of the respondents belong to the age group 20 – 30 years and the rest 44% were of the age group 30 - 40 years. 60% of the respondents were

single and 40% were married. 62% of the respondents were graduates followed by 18% with post-graduation and the rest 20% of the respondents have completed higher secondary.

Analysis and inference

Table 1: Classification on the basis of frequency of online purchase before Covid-19

Frequency of online purchase	Frequency	Percentage
Less than once a month	10	10
Once in a month	35	35
Twice in a month	40	40
Thrice in a month	10	10
Four times and more	5	5
Total	100	100

Source: Primary data

Table 2: Classification on the basis of frequency of online purchase in the present scenario

Frequency of online purchase	Frequency	Percentage
Less than once a month	2	2
Once in a month	28	28
Twice in a month	45	45
Thrice in a month	15	15
Four times and more	10	10
Total	100	100

Source: Primary data

Table 4: Opinion on different factors that affect your online shopping habits

Factors Leading to online shopping	Strongly Agree		Agree		Neutral		Disagree		Strongly Disagree		Total	
	F	P	F	P	F	P	F	P	F	P	F	P
Convenience	78	78	22	22	0	0	0	0	0	0	100	100
Wide variety of products	73	73	26	26	1	1	0	0	0	0	100	100
Competitive pricing	56	56	32	32	0	0	12	12	0	0	100	100
Saving Time	45	45	23	23	8	8	0	0	24	24	100	100

Source: Primary data

Inference

The above table analyses the various factors influencing the online shopping habits of the respondents: More than ¾ th of them strongly agree that convenience is a major factor leading them towards online purchases. Almost ¾ th of them strongly agrees that r the wide variety of products offered is a major factor leading them to purchase online. More than half of them strongly agree with the opinion that competitive pricing is a major factor leading to online purchasing. The majority agree that online purchasing saves time but about ¼ th of them strongly disagrees with the point.

Findings of the study

- Frequency of online purchase before Covid-19 and during the Covid-19 period shows a very significant increasing trend, there is a very significant growth in the purchasing trend. Beauty and health care products are the most purchased category of items over the internet followed Mobile Phones and computers, apparel, and the other categories like grocery and household supplies, electronics, and furniture show a very low percentage
- Convenience of shopping, Availability of a wide variety of products, and competitive pricing are the major

Inference

The above 2 tables clearly show that the frequency of online purchase before Covid-19 and during the Covid-19 period shows a very a significant increasing trend, there is a very significant growth in the purchasing trend, respondents who purchase online more than four times a month has doubled and thrice in a month shows 50% increase and twice a month shows 12% increase. The other categories have gone down significantly inferring the increasing trend of online purchase.

Table 3: What Category of products do you prefer to purchase over the internet?

Product Category	Frequency	Percentage
Apparels	20	20
Grocery & Household supplies	12	12
Beauty and health care products	38	38
Furniture	0	0
Mobile Phones and Computers.	20	20
Electronics	10	10
Total	100	100

Source: Primary data

Inference

Beauty and health care products are the most purchased category of items over the internet followed Mobile Phones and computers, Apparels and the other categories like grocery and household supplies, electronics, and furniture show a very low percentage.

factors that drive the respondents towards online shopping

- Most of the respondents prefer cash on delivery as the mode of payment while shopping through e-commerce sites
- From the study, it is clear that delay in delivery of products is one of the major drawbacks of online shopping, followed by inconvenience faced at the time of the return of products.
- Leading part of the respondents is satisfied with their online shopping experience
- Majority of the respondents strongly agree that shopping through e-commerce sites was really helpful in the present scenario of covid-19

Conclusion

Retail businesses around the world are being affected by Covid-19 through everything from rapidly changing customer behavior to supply issues [2]. This has led to an increase in the online shopping behavior of consumers. As people have embraced social distancing as a way to slow the spread of the pandemic, there has naturally been a drop-off in brick-and-mortar shopping. That would seem to mean there would likely be an increase in online shopping as people turn to e-commerce to purchase the items they might have otherwise purchased in person [2]. When we come to

the rural population, online shopping habits are comparatively low as compared to the urban population. In this study, we have discussed this scenario and analyzed whether there was a shift in the online shopping habits of the rural population, especially with reference to the residents of rural areas in the Idukki district, Kerala. From the study, it was clear that there was a significant increasing trend in the online purchasing habits among the respondents from whom the data were collected for the study. They preferred to shop more products online as the result of Covid-19.

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