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An Insight into Online Buying Behaviour of Customers in Punjab, India during Covid-19 Pandemic

Author

Dr. Puneet Kaur

Faculty, A.S College, Khanna, Punjab, India.

Abstract

In a short period of time, COVID-19 has changed the lives and livelihoods of people around the globe. Consumer's attitudes, behaviours and purchasing habits are changing and many of these new ways will remain post-pandemic. People are living differently, buying differently and, in many ways, thinking differently. Supply chains have been tested. Retailers are closing doors. Consumers across the globe are looking at products and brands through a new lens. The virus is reshaping the industry in real-time, rapidly accelerating long-term underlying trends in the space of mere weeks (Wright, 2020). While purchases are currently centered on the most basic needs people are shopping more consciously, buying local and are embracing digital/e-commerce. To manage isolation, consumers are using digital to connect, learn and play and they will continue to. This study helps to get an insight of the online buying behaviour of consumers residing in State of Punjab, India during Covid-19 pandemic period with the help of a structured questionnaire.

Key Words- consumers, Covid-19, buying behaviour, pandemic, digital, etc.

Introduction

Covid-19 has done something which no amount of advertising by brands could do: it has made consumers change their 'preferences'. 'Preferences' have never been easy to change; they are stubborn and often impervious to marketing communication pleas. But a pandemic changed the game faster than what brands could have ever imagined. Almost overnight, hardwired mall shoppers and reluctant fence sitters were pushed into the deep end of the online commerce pool. According to marketing professionals, the traces of new marketing models started emerging, for example, online ready-to-eat food-delivery companies immediately switching overnight to delivering essentials such as fruits, vegetables and groceries. Uncertainty is high, many businesses are shut, and people are concerned about recession. With these recession concerns, they are keeping a closer eye on spending: customers are focusing on essential goods rather than lifestyle and leisure products, for example. At the same time, with lockdown measures in place around the world, there has been a surge in the use of online channels. (Vijai, 2020) in his study identified that most of the respondents strongly agree that there is an impact on the buying behavior of consumers during Covid-19 period. The majority of the respondents spending the money only on essential goods and they have also changed their brand preferences. Covid-19 pandemic reduced the amount of their expenditure and saved income. Most of the respondents strongly agree Covid-19 changed entire life. The research identified five types of customers; The Worrier, The Individualist, The Rationalist, The Activist, and The Indifferent. These consumer types helped to study the changes that consumers are making to their purchases. The findings depicted that the biggest change is in the consumption of personal hygiene products followed by Cleaning products and Tinned Food (Wright, 2020).

When we talk about global experience, selling companies are focusing on healthy and hygienic packaging to ensuring safety of their employees. The study also investigated that globally the consumers are least concerned about activities that they likely have become accustomed to over the course of Covid-19, such as shopping for groceries/ necessities and non-necessities. By contrast, they are more concerned about resuming participation in travel and attending large gatherings (Bhargava et al., 2020). Appetite for online shopping and convenience will continue to grow after lockdowns are lifted. The COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated the significance of online channels. Today, consumers consider online as their primary shopping channel and this will persist in the immediate future. In that digital-first environment, operational agility, flexibility and consumer engagement assume huge significance (*A Pr i l 2020*, 2020).

Objectives of the Study

The study includes following research objectives:

1. To know about the frequency of online shopping during pandemic (Covid-19).
2. To know about the required category of goods during pandemic (Covid-19).
3. To know the most e-tailing websites/apps during pandemic (Covid-19).

Hypotheses of Study

1. H_0: Products purchased by consumer are significantly associated with their monthly income in online shopping during pandemic.

2. H_0: Products purchased by consumer are significantly associated with their occupation in online shopping during pandemic.

Research Methodology

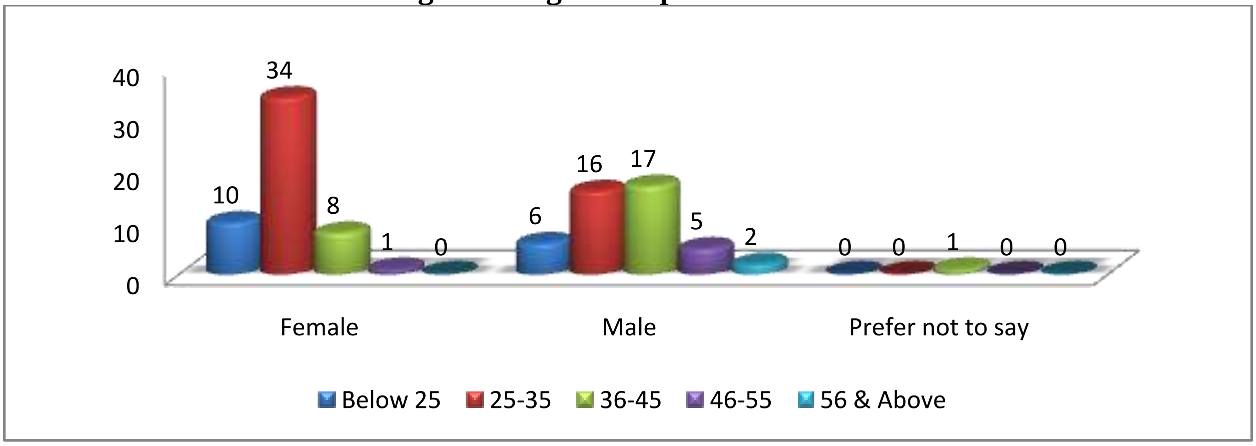
The present research work is descriptive based on empirical observation and comprehensive study. In order to test the above framed hypotheses, a survey of customers residing in State Punjab, India was carried out with the help of a 'structured non-disguised' questionnaire. The sample of study consists of 100 respondents residing in State Punjab, India during the outbreak of Covid-19 pandemic. The sample was drawn using convenience sampling method. The questionnaire developed for the study was administrated over the internet through emails, social networking sites like facebook, whatsapp, twitter, etc to more than 100 respondents with the help of 'Google Forms' in the month of June-July, 2020. Questions were prepared using nominal, ordinal and likert scales. Graphic method and Chi-Square method were used to analyse the responses.

Analysis of the Study

Demographic variables of the respondents: The respondents were categorised into several factors such as gender, age, educational qualification, occupation and income.

1. **Gender:** Among the respondents we found 53% were female, 46% were males, and 1% prefers not to say.

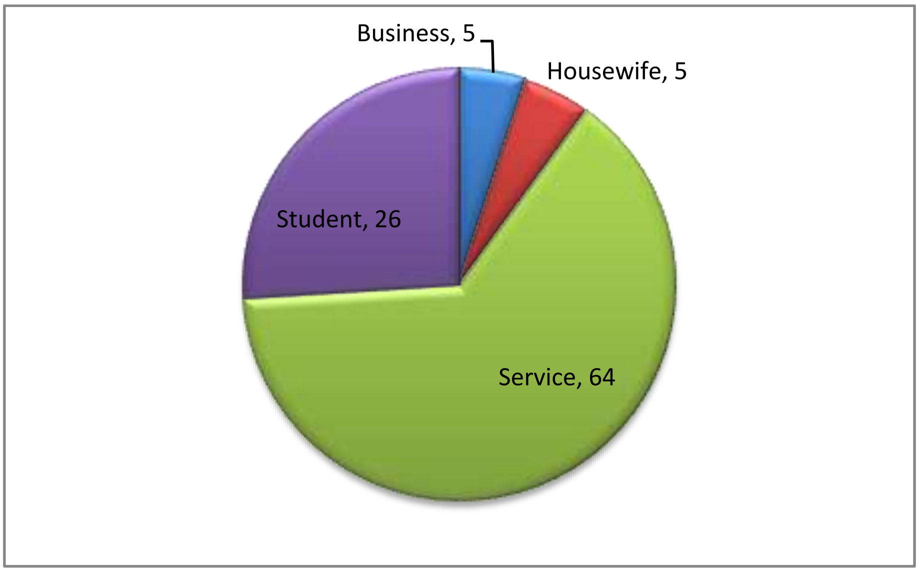
Figure 1: Age of respondents



2. Age: From figure 1 we can interpret that majority of respondents were below 35 years of age. 10 female respondents were below 25 years of age, 34 between 25-35 years, 8 between 36-45 years, and 1 between 46-55 years. Whereas 6 male respondents were below 25 years of age, 16 between 25-35 years, 17 between 36-45 years, 5 between 46-55 years, and 2 males were above 56 years. There was 1 respondent who prefers not to say his/her age falls in 36-45 years age group.

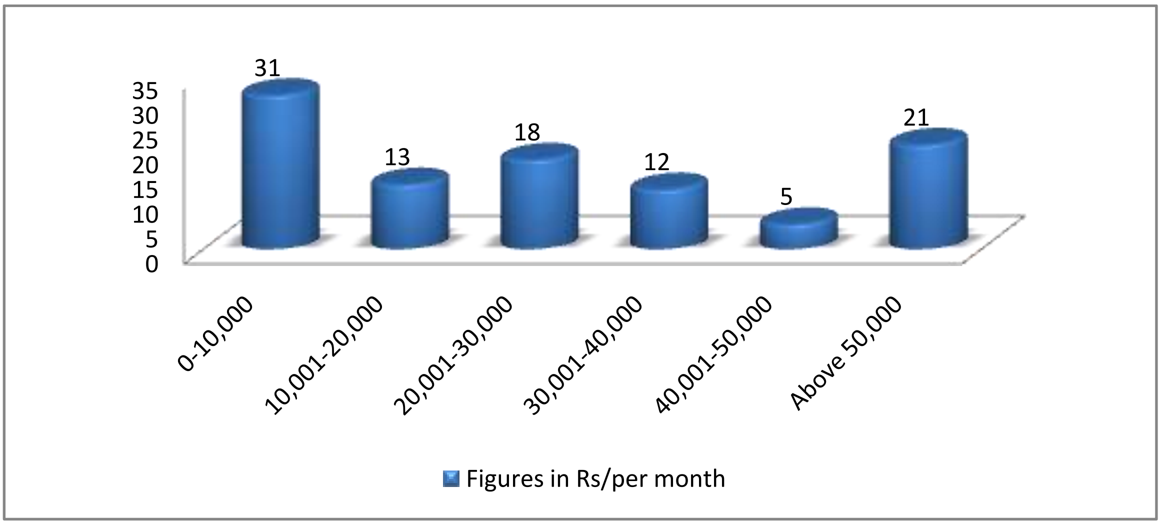
3. Occupation: In case of occupation, 64 respondents belonged to service sector, 26 were students, 5 were from business sector and 5 were housewives. (see Figure 2)

Figure 2: Occupation of respondents



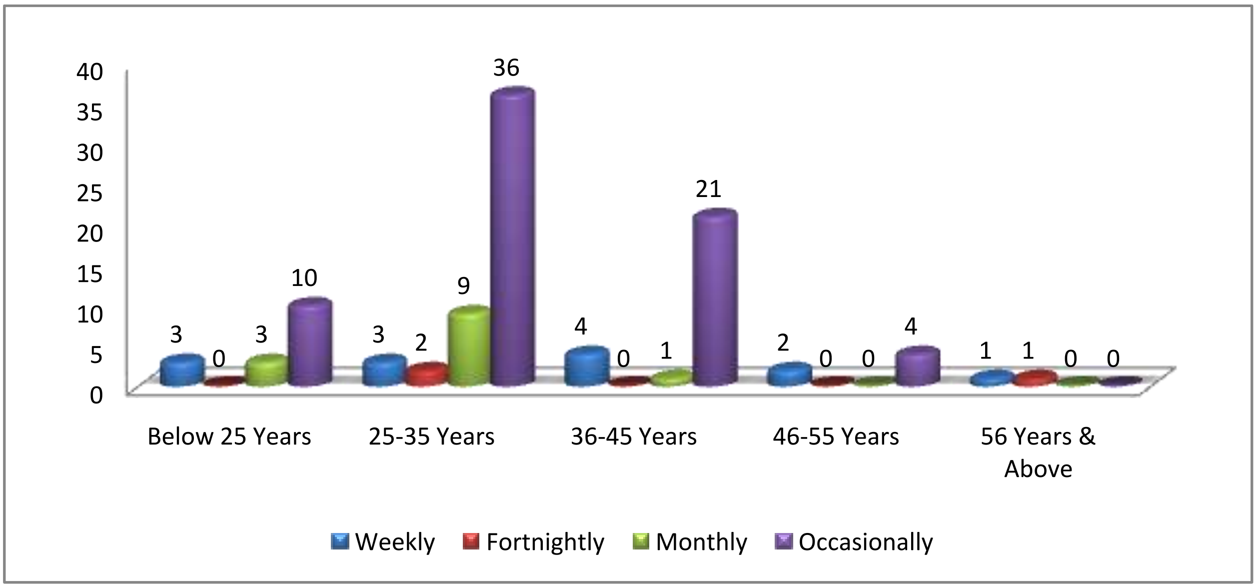
4. Income: From figure 3 we can see that 31 respondents' monthly income fall into Rs. 0-10,000 category, 21 respondents' monthly income was above Rs. 50,000, 18 respondents' fall in the category of Rs. 20,001-30,000, 13 fall in the category of Rs. 10,001-20,000 monthly income, 12 fall in the category of Rs. 30,001-40,000, and 5 respondents' fall in the category of Rs. 40,001-50,000 monthly income.

Figure 3: Income of respondents



Online shopping frequency during Pandemic versus age group of respondents

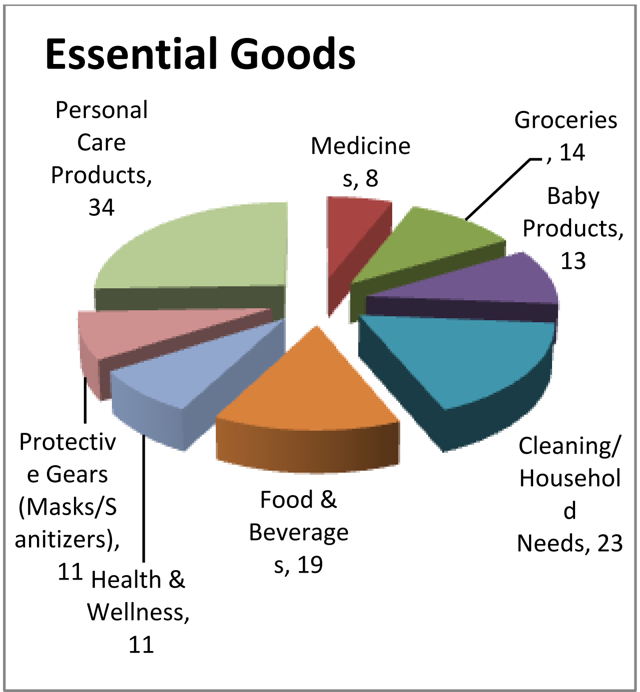
Figure 4: Online shopping frequency versus age group of respondents

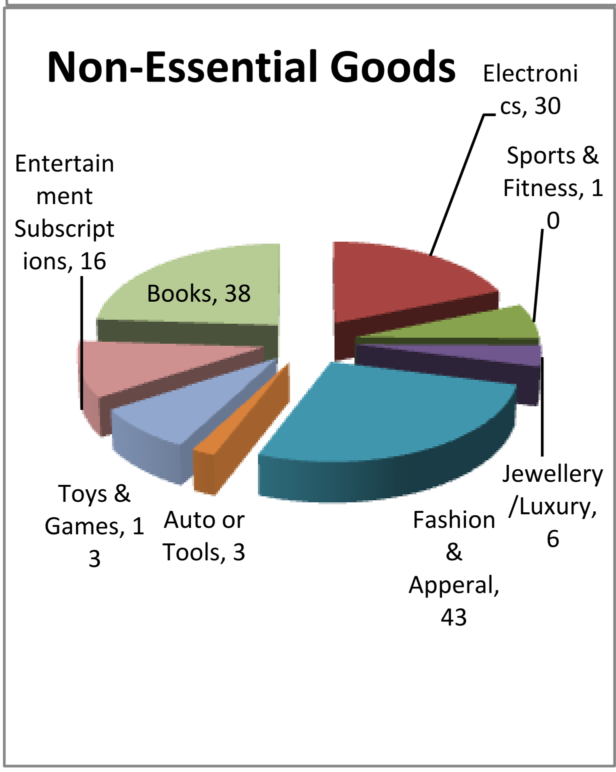


From figure 4, it is observed that in the age group category 'Below 25 years' 10 respondent prefers to shop occasionally, 3 prefers to shop weekly and 3 monthly. In the age group category '25-35 years' 36 respondent prefers to shop occasionally, 9 prefers to shop monthly, 3 prefers to shop weekly, and there are 2 who prefers to shop fortnightly. The respondents fall into age group category '36-45 years' 21 do shopping occasionally, 4 do weekly, and 1 do monthly. Among the age group category '46-55 years' there are 4 respondents who do shopping occasionally, and 2 do weekly. In '56 years and above' age group category 1 respondent prefers to shop weekly, and 1 do fortnightly. It is evident that during lockdown phase in the pandemic period 2020, the highest number of respondents prefer to shop online occasionally rather than weekly, fortnightly or monthly.

Preference for essential and non-essential products for online shopping by respondents

Figure 5: Preference for essential and non-essential goods for online shopping





While assessing the preference for essential and non-essential goods for online shopping (Figure 5) states that 43 respondents prefer non-essential good 'Fashion & Apparel' followed by 38 respondents who prefers 'Books', essential good 'Personal Care Products' prefer by 34 respondents, non-essential good 'Electronics' prefer by 30, essential good 'Cleaning/Household Needs' shop by 23 respondents followed by 19 who prefer 'Food & Beverages', 16 respondents prefer non-essential good 'Entertainment Subscriptions', 14 prefer essential good 'Groceries' followed by 13 who prefer 'Baby Products', non-essential good 'Toys & Games' being prefer by 13 respondents, 11 respondents prefer essential good 'Health & Wellness' followed by 11 who prefer 'Protective Gears like Masks, Sanitizers, etc, 9 of them prefer non-essential shop for 'Sports & Fitness', 'Medicines' which is categorised as essential good shop by 8 respondents, non-essential good 'Luxury & Jewellery' shop by 6 followed by 'Auto or Tools' by 3 respondents out of 100 respondents selected for the study.

Fashion & Apparel, Books and Electronics are the main three categories in non-essential goods category; and Personal Care Products, Cleaning/Household Needs and Food & Beverages in essential goods category depicting online shopping culture among respondents representing State of Punjab during Covid-19 pandemic period.

Preference of Online Shopping Websites/Apps by respondents

Figure 6: Preferred Online Shopping Websites/Apps

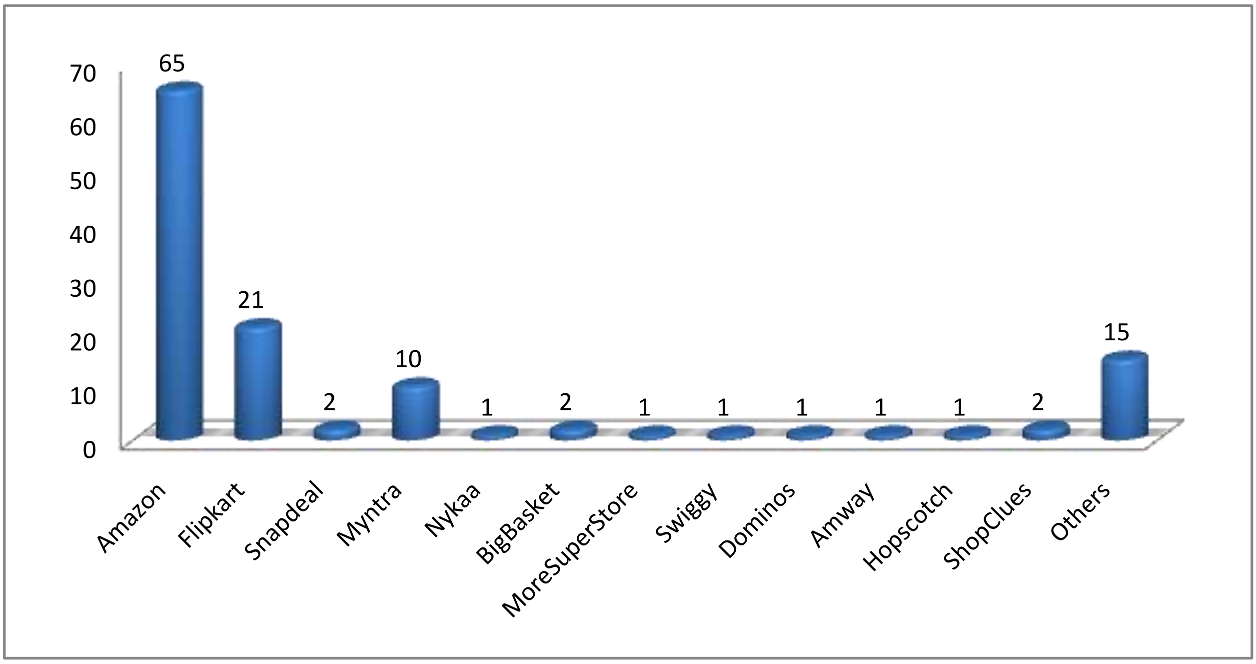


Figure 6 represents prefer online shopping websites/mobile applications by the respondents, where most rated one is Amazon (65), Flipkart (21), 15 respondents who preferred some other online websites/mobile applications, followed by Myntra (10) for shopping, Big Basket (2), Snapdeal (2), Shop Clues (2), Nykaa (1), More Super Store (1), Swiggy (1), Dominos (1), Amway (1), and Hopscotch (1).

Concerns about Buying Online

Figure 7: Concerns of respondents about buying online

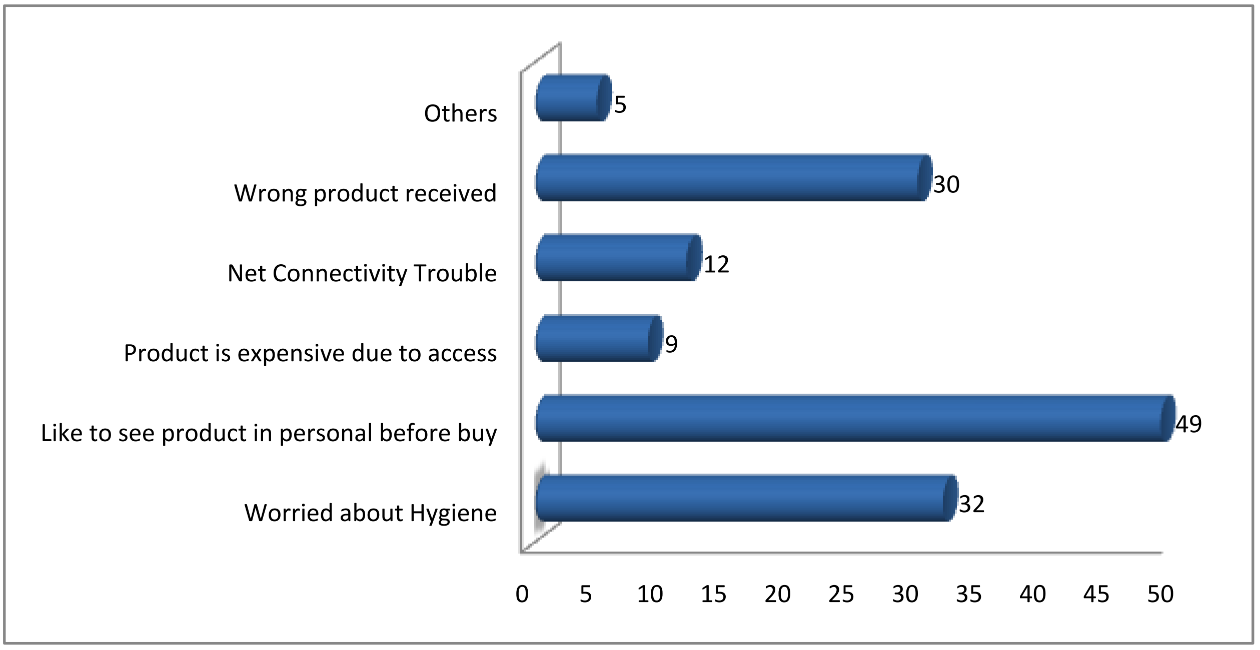
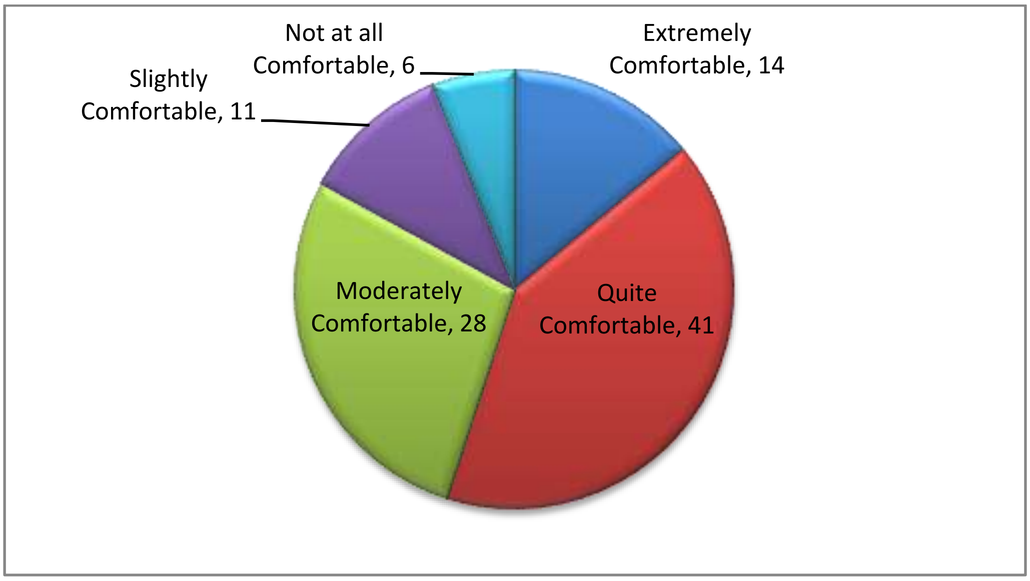


Figure 7 represents the concerns of respondents about buying products online during Covid-19 pandemic. There are 49 respondents who likes to see product in personal before buying, 32 respondents are worried about the hygiene factor, 30 respondents experiences wrong receipt of product, 12 faces net connectivity trouble, 9 respondents concern is expensive product due to access, and there are 5 respondents who have others issues/concerns while shopping online. Inability to check and see the product in personal before buying is the biggest concern among respondents. Hygiene factor during Covid-19 pandemic is also a big issue among respondents as the buyer is unaware whether the shopping agency or delivering agency is following sanitization norms issued by Government of India before delivering the goods to the customers.

Comfortable Buying Online

Figure 8: Respondents comfortable buying online



The respondents have been asked how comfortable they are buying products online during Covid-19 pandemic period. Figure 8 depicts that there are 41 consumers who are quite comfortable, 28 are moderately comfortable, 14 are extremely comfortable, 11 responded that they are slightly comfortable, and there are 6 respondents who not at all feel comfortable buying online during pandemic.

Personal Information kept Confidential

Figure 9: Personal Information kept Confidential

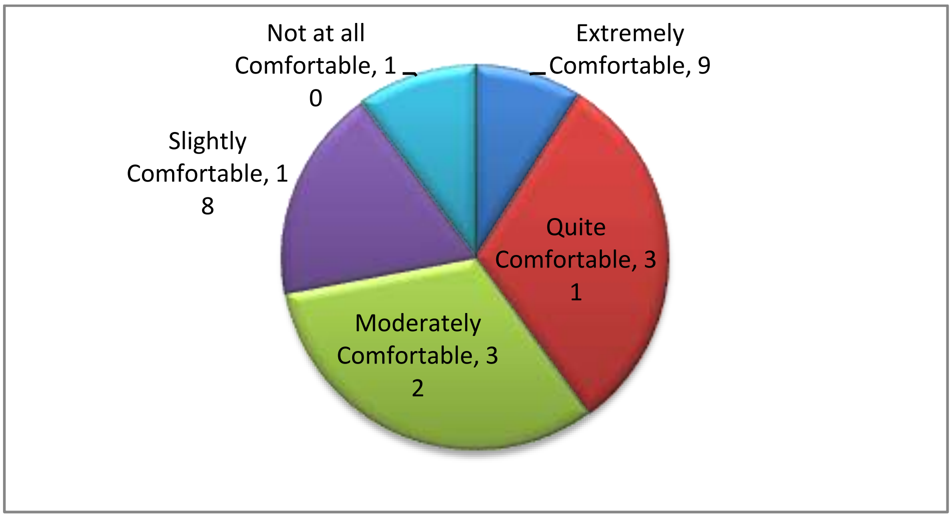


Figure 9 depicts that there are 32 respondents who are moderately comfortable regarding their personal information kept confidential by the supplier he/she shares while placing order online followed by 31 respondents who are quite comfortable, 18 are slightly comfortable, 10 are not at all comfortable, and there are 9 respondents who feel extremely comfortable.

Privacy Concerns

Figure 10: Privacy Concerns during online buying

Figure 10 represents the concerns of privacy in the minds of consumers who are buying products online. 28 respondents sometimes feel the concern while buying followed by 25 whose concern exists always and often while placing orders. 15 feel they rarely have privacy concerns followed by 7 who never have any privacy concern at the times they placed order online.

Payment Method

Figure 11: Method of payment adopted

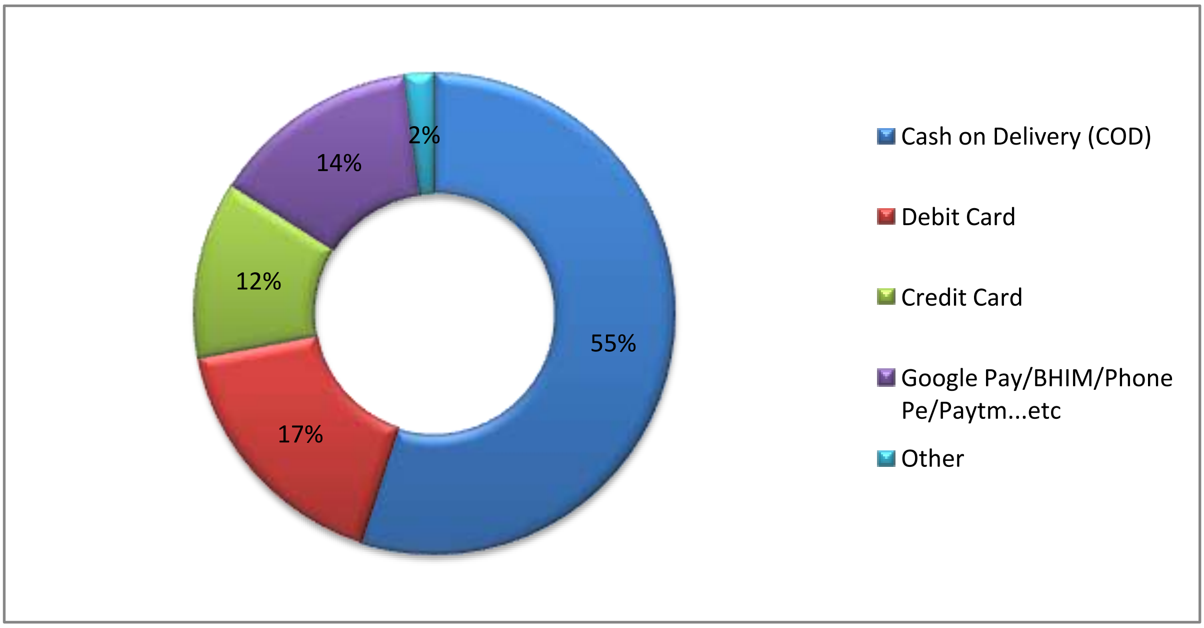


Figure 11 describes the picture of method of payment adopted by the respondents while placing the orders online. There are 55% people who prefers Cash on Delivery option followed by 17% who adopts Debit Card option, 14% uses Google Pay/BHIM/PhonePe/ Paytm i.e., UPI method of payment, 12% adopts Credit Card facility, and 2% adopts other method to make the payment.

Hypotheses Testing

1. H_0: Products purchased by consumer are significantly associated with their monthly income in online shopping during pandemic.

Table 1: Hypothesis Testing on the basis of Income of respondents

Categories of Goods	Chi-Square Test	p-value	Remarks
Medicines	8.315	0.140	Accepted
Groceries	5.018	0.414	Accepted
Baby Products	1.569	0.905	Accepted
Cleaning/Household Needs	4.863	0.433	Accepted
Food & Beverages	6.240	0.284	Accepted
Health & Wellness	3.872	0.568	Accepted
Protective Gears like Masks &	11.209	0.047	Rejected

Sanitizers			
Personal Care Products	12.130	0.033	Rejected
Electronics	6.271	0.281	Accepted
Sports & Fitness	1.259	0.939	Accepted
Jewellery & Luxury	5.300	0.380	Accepted
Fashion & Apparel	4.020	0.546	Accepted
Auto or Tools	9.470	0.092	Accepted
Toys & Games	1.994	0.850	Accepted
Entertainment Subscriptions (e.g., Netflix, Amazon Prime, etc)	8.447	0.133	Accepted
Books	3.515	0.621	Accepted

Table 1 depicts the results for the hypothesis stated that products purchased by consumer are dependent of their income in online shopping during pandemic. Chi-Square test is applied to evaluate whether there is significant association between monthly income and products purchased. Since the p-value in case of 'Medicines' (0.140) is more than the significance level (0.05), we accept the null hypothesis, the p-value in case of 'Groceries' (0.414) is more than the significant level (0.05), we accept the null hypothesis, the p-value in case of 'Baby Products' (0.905) is more than the significant level (0.05), we accept the null hypothesis, the p-value in case of 'Cleaning/Household Needs' (0.433) is more than the significant level (0.05), we accept the null hypothesis, the p-value in case of 'Food & Beverages' (0.284) is more than the significant level (0.05), we accept the null hypothesis, the p-value in case of 'Health & Wellness' (0.568) is more than the significant level (0.05), we accept the null hypothesis, the p-value in case of 'Protective Gears like Masks & Sanitizers (0.047) is less than the significant level (0.05), we reject the null hypothesis, the p-value in case of 'Personal Care Products' (0.033) is less than the significant level (0.05), we reject the null hypothesis, the p-value in case of 'Electronics' (0.281) is more than the significant level (0.05), we accept the null hypothesis, the p-value in case of 'Sports & Fitness' (0.939) is more than the significant level (0.05), we accept the null hypothesis, the p-value in case of 'Jewellery & Luxury' (0.380) is more than the significant level (0.05), we accept the null hypothesis, the p-value in case of 'Fashion & Apparel' (0.546) is more than the significant level (0.05), we accept the null hypothesis, the p-value in case of 'Auto or Tools' (0.092) in more than the significant level (0.05), we accept the null hypothesis, the p-value in case of 'Toys & Games' (0.850) is more than the significant level (0.05), we accept the null hypothesis, the p-value in case of 'Entertainment Subscriptions (e.g., Netflix, Amazon Prime, etc)' (0.133) is more than the significant level (0.05), we accept the null hypothesis, the p-value in case of ‘Books’ (0.621) is more than the significant level (0.05), we accept the null hypothesis.

It can be said that the products Protective gears like Masks and Sanitizers and Personal care products purchased by consumers are significantly associated with their monthly income in online shopping during Covid-19 pandemic.

2. H_0: Products purchased by consumer are significantly associated with their occupation in online shopping during pandemic.

Table 2: Hypothesis Testing on the basis of Occupation of respondents

Categories of Goods	Chi-Square Test	p-value	Remarks
Medicines	8.811	0.032	Rejected
Groceries	9.566	0.023	Rejected
Baby Products	4.681	0.197	Accepted
Cleaning/Household Needs	5.578	0.134	Accepted
Food & Beverages	5.822	0.121	Accepted
Health & Wellness	13.552	0.004	Rejected
Protective Gears like Masks & Hand Sanitizers	5.381	0.146	Accepted
Personal Care Products	2.347	0.503	Accepted
Electronics	1.117	0.773	Accepted
Sports & Fitness	1.242	0.743	Accepted
Jewellery & Luxury	0.777	0.855	Accepted
Fashion & Apparel	3.149	0.369	Accepted
Auto or Tools	0.377	0.945	Accepted
Toys & Games	1.689	0.639	Accepted
Entertainment Subscriptions (e.g., Netflix, Amazon Prime, etc)	2.988	0.394	Accepted
Books	7.594	0.055	Accepted

Table 2 depicts the results for the hypothesis stated that products purchased by consumer are dependent of their occupation in online shopping during pandemic. Chi-Square test is applied to evaluate whether there is significant association between occupation of respondents and products purchased by them. Since the p-value in case of ‘Medicines’ (0.032) is less than the significance level (0.05), we reject the null hypothesis, the p-value in case of ‘Groceries’ (0.023) is less than the significant level (0.05), we reject the null hypothesis, the p-value in case of ‘Baby Products’ (0.197) is more than the significant level

(0.05), we accept the null hypothesis, the p-value in case of ‘Cleaning/Household Needs’ (0.134) is more than the significant level (0.05), we accept the null hypothesis, the p-value in case of ‘Food & Beverages’ (0.121) is more than the significant level (0.05), we accept the null hypothesis, the p-value in case of ‘Health & Wellness’ (0.004) is less than the significant level (0.05), we reject the null hypothesis, the p-value in case of ‘Protective Gears like Masks & Sanitizers (0.146) is more than the significant level (0.05), we accept the null hypothesis, the p-value in case of ‘Personal Care Products’ (0.503) is more than the significant level (0.05), we accept the null hypothesis, the p-value in case of ‘Electronics’ (0.773) is more than the significant level (0.05), we accept the null hypothesis, the p-value in case of ‘Sports & Fitness’ (0.743) is more than the significant level (0.05), we accept the null hypothesis, the p-value in case of ‘Jewellery & Luxury’ (0.855) is more than the significant level (0.05), we accept the null hypothesis, the p-value in case of ‘Fashion & Apparel’ (0.369) is more than the significant level (0.05), we accept the null hypothesis, the p-value in case of ‘Auto or Tools’ (0.945) in more than the significant level (0.05), we accept the null hypothesis, the p-value in case of ‘Toys & Games’ (0.639) is more than the significant level (0.05), we accept the null hypothesis, the p-value in case of ‘Entertainment Subscriptions (e.g., Netflix, Amazon Prime, etc)’ (0.394) is more than the significant level (0.05), we accept the null hypothesis, the p-value in case of ‘Books’ (0.055) is more than the significant level (0.05), we accept the null hypothesis.

It can be said that the products Medicines, Groceries, and Health & Wellness purchased by consumer are significantly associated with their occupation in online shopping during pandemic.

Conclusion

COVID-19 has pulled the handbrake for the humankind race to destruction and redirected attention to life and living. The common man, now a term shared by almost all equally, has started to think anew what kind of future they want, if they survive this pandemic. This cumulative thought will be the trigger thread for the marketing world to redefine, strategise and reshape not only their offerings but also ways of reaching out to customers.

Findings of the study suggested that, Most of the respondents (41) were quite comfortable shopping products online during Covid-19 pandemic. In essential goods category, consumers preferred buying personal care products (34) and cleaning and housing needs products (23), however in non-essential goods category fashion and apparel (43) followed by books (38) were the most purchased goods by the respondents. Amazon (65) was the most preferred online shopping app/website by the respondents.

The most rated concerns of respondents while buying online during Covid-19 was to see the product in personal before buying (49) and hygiene factor (32). The consumers rated that they were moderately comfortable (32) about the confidentiality of the personal information being asked by the service provider while shopping online. Privacy of data was the biggest concern for 50% of the respondents. The highest rated method of payment was Cash on Delivery (COD) (55%) even at the times of social distancing during Covid-19. Only 43% respondents preferred using plastic money.

The Chi-Square test revealed that essential goods like masks and sanitizers and personal care products were closely associated with the monthly income of respondents. Whereas goods like medicines, groceries and health and wellness products were closely associated with the occupation of respondents during Covid-19 pandemic.

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