

IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON THE PURCHASE OF GOODS THROUGH CYBER SHOPPING AMONG MARRIED WOMEN IN NAGERCOIL

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Abstract

Cyber shopping is a trending sector in today's world. Cyber shopping refers to "the activity of buying products or services over the internet. It means going online, landing on a seller's website, selecting something, and arranging for its delivery" (Market Business News, 2021)ⁱ. The growth in technology is a vital factor that aids in bridging the gap between genders. Digital transformation has empowered many women economically (Jain, 2023)ⁱⁱ. Earlier women were afraid to purchase online. However, the trend is changing, and women are moving from offline shopping methods to online shopping methods. Today, women are more independent, aware, and self-sufficient (Innerdots, 2021)ⁱⁱⁱ. The research aims to analyze how COVID-19 has influenced married women toward cyber shopping. The collection of primary data is from 150 married women. Secondary data collection is through journals, books, databases, and transcripts. COVID-19 has created an impact on purchasing decisions.

Keywords: Business-to-Consumer Model, COVID-19, Cyber shopping, Purchasing power, Goods.

1. Introduction

In the current world, cyber shopping is expanding. Women have full and equal rights in society and it is a fundamental human right. Improved education among women has done little to shift deeply entrenched occupational segregation in developed and developing countries (UN Women, 2020)^{iv}. Cyber shopping provides women with different goods, and one can easily compare them before purchasing. It saves time in many ways. Waiting in the queue is reduced and the time is taken for going to traditional stores. Cyber shopping provides women also with various payment methods, and they can opt for the most convenient one. Through online shopping, there are many benefits available to married women. It is highly convenient as distinct options are available, and comparisons and reviews about the product are conveniently available (Franco & Regi, 2016)^v. It also provides them with adequate information (Taher G, 2021)^{vi}.

Objectives

To analyze how COVID-19 has influenced married women towards cyber shopping.

To understand the problems faced in cyber shopping by married women.

Hypothesis

H01– There is no relationship between demographic factors and the preferred payment methods for purchasing the product.

Research Methodology

The Random Sampling method is used to collect the data for the research. The random sampling method was conducted among women in Nagercoil. The data was collected from 150 married women. Primary data collection and secondary data collection are the tools used for data collection. In primary data collection, structured questionnaires were formed and data was collected with the aid of Google Forms. In secondary data collection, journals, books, databases, and transcripts were the sources of

information. The statistical tools used for the research are percentages, ranking, tables, and chi-square tests. The analysis was done with the aid of SPSS software.

2. Review of Literature

Baubonienė and Gulevičiūtė (2015)^{vii} evaluate the “E-Commerce factors influencing consumers’ online shopping decisions”. The objective is to analyse the scientific literature that focuses on the scientific approach to cyber shopping and factors that encourage such shopping. Women prefer cyber shopping due to its low price. Factors such as career advancement and marital status also play a role in desiring cyber shopping. According to Pearson Chi-Square Test, factors affecting women are price while, factors affecting men are time and convenience.

Sushmitha (2021)^{viii} in her topic on “Impact of COVID-19 on e-commerce” studied the present status and trends of e-commerce. The benefits received from cyber shopping are low price, accessibility and convenience, and wider choice. COVID-19 has led to an increase in first-time users in cyber shopping. Few cyber shopping websites faced a breakdown due to the sudden rush of customers accessing the websites. Some cyber shopping websites only focus on essential goods, such as household staples, packaged foods, health care, hygiene, personal safety, and other priority goods.

Veybitaand et al. (2021)^{ix} analysed “The impact of stress during the COVID-19 pandemic on online buying behaviour: A meta-analysis study”. The object is to observe the social impact that is happening worldwide due to the spread of COVID-19. Most of the respondents shopped through cyber shopping more frequently during the pandemic. Women started to shop more through cyber shopping. The purchase of necessities goods increases by more than ninety per cent while non-essential goods increase only by thirty-six per cent.

Kanwaland et al. (2022)^x, discussed their study gender and their attitude toward cyber shopping. The aim of the study “Systematic review of gender differences and similarities in online consumers’ shopping behaviour” is to examine the gender behavioural variances and likenesses in cyber shopping consumers along with the theories and the effect it has on cyber shopping. Men were more favourable towards cyber shopping, repurchasing, and digital payments than women. Social influences play a crucial role here. Social effects suppress the intention of cyber shopping from women customers. Privacy is an area that harmfully affects cyber shopping behaviour for both men and women. However, it affects women the most.

Praveen (2022)^{xi}, conducted a study on ‘Online shopping during COVID-19: A study on the influence of digital marketing on consumer behaviour and compulsive buying in women’. The study aimed to look at the impact of digital marketing on online consumer behaviour and compulsive buying, with a focus on online shopping. Women tend to purchase compulsively more than men. Their feeling towards shopping is more favourable and spontaneous. The compulsive buying pattern increased especially after the COVID-19 pandemic. COVID-19 has aided people to transform towards the digital platform at a faster rate than expected rate.

3. Analysis

3.1 - Demographic Representation

In this section, consideration is on the demographic representation of the customers. Demographic representation is the factor that is related to the living conditions of communities of people (Furler and et al. 2012)^{xii}. The following are the demographic factors taken into consideration. In the table below age, current education, area, type of family and family income per annum are shown.

Table 1 – Demographic Representation

Demographic Factors	Classification	Respondents
Age	18-36	60
	37-54	61
	55-72	29
	Above 72	0
	Grand Total	150
Education qualification	Did not attend school	0
	High school	20
	Graduate	30
	Postgraduate	55

	Professional courses	27
	Diploma programmes	18
	Grand Total	150
Occupation	Government employee	18
	Private employee	46
	Self-Occupied	29
	Student	33
	Unemployed	24
	Grand Total	150
Family Income per Annum	Rs. 3,00,000 and Below	50
	Rs. 3,00,001 to Rs. 6,00,000	28
	Rs. 6,00,001 to Rs. 9,00,000	24
	Rs. 9,00,001 to Rs. 12,00,000	18
	Above Rs. 12,00,000	30
	Grand Total	150
Nature of Family	Nuclear	95
	Joint	55
	Grand Total	150
Number of Members	Less than 4	66
	4 to 8	58
	More than 8	26
	Grand Total	150
Current Accommodation Status	Rented House	69
	Own House	52
	Leased House	29
	Grand Total	150
Area	Urban	72
	Rural	43
	Semi-Urban	35
	Grand Total	150

Source: Primary data

To get a balanced view, an effort was taken to have representations from different age groups among married women. Of the total 150 respondents, many of them belonged to the age group of 18 to 36 and 37 to 54. 29 respondents belonged to the age group of 55 to 72 and none were above the age of 72. The majority of the respondents have an education qualification of post-graduation and are privately employed in business organisations. Most of the respondent's annual income is Rs. Three lakhs and below. Most of them belong to a nuclear family having less than 4 members in the family. Many married women are living in rented houses in urban regions.

3.2 - Usage of Cyber Shopping

Table 2 – Usage of Cyber Shopping before COVID-19

Frequency	Respondents	Percentage
Yes	100	66.67
No	50	33.33
Grand Total	150	100

Source: Primary data

An interesting fact that was found through this research is around one-third of the respondents did not use cyber shopping before COVID-19. They have started to use cyber shopping only after the pandemic. The main reasons are lockdown, maintaining social distance and safety issues. However, a hundred respondents (66.67%) were using cyber shopping even before the COVID-19 pandemic started.

Table 3 – Impact of COVID-19 on the frequency of purchase in Cyber Shopping

Frequency	Respondents	Percentage
Yes	98	65.33

No	52	34.67
Grand Total	150	150

Source: Primary data

As per the above data, ninety-eight of the respondents did realise that COVID-19 has impacted their frequency of purchases through cyber shopping. However, 52 of the respondents (34.67%) did not feel the frequency of purchases in cyber shopping was affected due to COVID-19. This group of people might be regular users of cyber shopping even before the pandemic started.

3.3 – Preferred Payment Method for Cyber Shopping

Various payment methods are available nowadays. However, payment through such a method is made only after carefully scrutinizing safety(Karthick, 2019)^{xiii}.

Payment Mode	Respondents	Percentage
Cash on Delivery	52	34.67
Credit Card	25	16.67
Debit Card	22	14.67
Net Banking	19	12.67
Digital Wallet – GPay, PayTm	32	21.33
Grand Total	150	100

Table 4 - Preferred Payment Method for Cyber Shopping

Source: Primary data

Cash on delivery is the most opted method for payment. Fifty-two respondents (34.67%) opted for cash on delivery. Thirty-two respondents (21.33%) opted for digital wallets such as GPay and Paytm as payment methods. Twenty-five respondents (16.67%) selected credit cards as their preferred payment method and twenty-two respondents (14.67%) opted for debit cards. Nineteen respondents (12.67%) opted for net banking. For two respondents the payment methods were not applicable.

3.4 – Problems Faced in Cyber Shopping

Even if cyber shopping has lots of advantages, it does have various disadvantages. While through cyber shopping, people are concerned about these issues as well.

Table 5 – Problems Faced in Cyber Shopping

Disadvantages	Respondents	Percentage
Customer care negligence	14	9.33
Difficulty in payment	13	8.67
Undistinguished product image	16	10.67
Fraud and security	17	11.33
Additional shipping rates	18	12.00
Refund and return disputes	18	12.00
Lack of touch and feel	34	22.67
Shortage of goods	11	7.33
Lack of internet facilities	9	6.00
Grand Total	150	100

Source: Primary data

Thirty-four of the respondents (22.67%) feel that the lack of touch and feel of the product is the biggest disadvantage. This is followed by additional shipping rates and refund and return disputes. Eighteen respondents (12%) consider these as an issue respectively. It is followed by fraud and security issues as seventeen respondents opt for it. Only nine respondents (6%) consider the lack of internet facilities as a disadvantage in cyber shopping.

3.5 – Chi-Square Test

The Chi-Square test aids in analysing the various variables and their relationship with each other. The table shows the relationship between the most preferred payment methods and most-purchased products through cyber shopping and is analysed with demographic factors.

Table 6 – Relationship between Demographic Factors and Most Preferred Payment Methods

Demographic Factors	Most Preferred Payment Methods	
	Pearson’s Chi-Square Value	Null Hypothesis
Age	0.985	Accepted
Education	0.697	Accepted
Occupation	0.197	Accepted
Annual Family Income	0.001	Rejected
Nature of Family	0.751	Accepted
Number of Members	0.142	Accepted
Current Accommodation Status	0.569	Accepted
Area of Residence	0.261	Accepted

Source: Primary data

According to the Pearson Chi-Square test, there is no relationship between the most preferred payment methods with age, education, occupation, nature of family, number of members, current accommodation status, and area of residence. As the Pearson Chi-Square value is more than 0.05, the null hypothesis (H01) is accepted. However, there is a relationship between the most preferred payment method and the annual family income. As the Pearson Chi-Square value is less than 0.05 (0.001), the null hypothesis is rejected (H01) and it is said that there is a relationship between annual family income and preferred payment method. The alternate hypothesis (HA1) is accepted.

4. Findings

Two-thirds of the respondents have been using cyber shopping before the pandemic itself. However, one-third of the respondents used cyber shopping only after the COVID-19 pandemic started. Around 65.33 per cent of the respondents accepted that there was an impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on their frequency of purchases in cyber shopping. Cash on delivery is the most opted payment method as 34.67 per cent of the respondents use this method. It is followed by digital wallets such as GPay and PayTm. The majority of the respondents opt for lack of touch and feel as a problem faced in cyber shopping. Other issues in cyber shopping include additional shipping rates, refund and return disputes and fraud and security issues.

According to the Pearson Chi-Square test, there is no relationship between the most preferred payment methods with age, education, occupation, nature of family, number of members, current accommodation status, and area of residence. The null hypothesis is accepted here. However, there is a relationship between the most preferred payment method and the annual family income. Hence the null hypothesis is rejected here.

5. Conclusion

The objective was to analyze how COVID-19 has influenced married women toward cyber shopping. It also aims to find the relationship between demographic factors and products purchased from cyber shopping. It analyses the relationship between demographic aspects and the payment methods used for buying the products. Many people nowadays use cyber shopping. However, the lack of touch and feel is the crucial problem customers face in cyber shopping. Cash on delivery is the most preferred mode of payment. However, this requires the customer to be available at the delivery site. Despite the great efforts by the Government of India at pushing for digital payments, very few customers prefer to use these alternative payment methods. It is vital to instil confidence in their minds about making online payments. To conclude, there is a lot of general awareness of online shopping, but there is a long way to go for it to reach its full potential which will be mutually beneficial to the customer and the seller.

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