



EXPLORING ONLINE SHOPPING BEHAVIOUR AMONG YOUNG ADULTS PURSUING HIGHER EDUCATION IN HYDERABAD

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Abstract

The results of the study show that many researchers at the Council utilize online shopping to help determine what are the most important factors in their e-commerce platform selection. Factors include preferred product order, payment types, delivery options, and the reasons they shop via electronic means. Findings indicate that there are relationships between technology, social factors and the decision-making processes of consumers on e-commerce platforms. The source of convenience and variety of products are both significant motivators of Council Members. Additionally, Council members prefer to have very large varieties available, from clothing to electronics to educational and health-related materials. Individuals who are part of this younger generation tend to be highly influenced by social proximity to others when determining how to purchase and this influence is provided by social network activity and/or peer recommendations. In summary, this study outlines many of the challenges that young adults (e.g., college students) face when performing an online e-commerce transaction. Business owner concerns include data security, product quality, return policies, and unexpected costs. These variables may create an environment that will be conducive for their customer to make a purchase via an electronic commerce (e-commerce) platform. Based on the geographical differences associated with socio-economic and gender categories, this study provides evidence of the differing patterns of behaviour that exist among those young adults who engage in e-commerce. Also, this study provides important information to assist business owners in developing and modifying their marketing strategies to better meet the needs of the young adult consumer. In conclusion, this study expands our understanding of consumer behaviour during e-commerce transactions, particularly university students in Hyderabad, India. Furthermore, as technology continues to alter the retail environment, this investigation establishes a foundation for future research on how consumers are engaging with e-commerce sites in an ever new and changing e-commerce marketplace.

Keywords: *Technology, E-Commerce, Variety of Choices, and Ease of Access.*

Introduction

Through technology's rapid advancement and the widespread availability of the Internet, individuals have changed significantly how they engage in colourful conditioning, particularly around shopping online. Online shopping has become immensely popular among many different age brackets because online shopping is extremely convenient, has many options, and is easy to access. A significant group within these age brackets who regularly engage in online shopping are council-going young adults. This study aims to explore and dissect the gesture of council-going youthful grown-ups in Hyderabad who shop for their everyday needs through the internet. This study will explore their shopping preferences, things that drive them to the internet to shop, and challenges with online shopping. Hyderabad is a megacity and home to many council-going youth, and is a very vibrant city with a growing technology sector. Many individuals belong to the 18 to 25-years-old age group (or younger) straddle the divide between childlike and adulthood, and have lived through numerous artistic, social experiences, and technological advances that, together, shape their behaviour and choices (e.g., shopping). E-commerce

platforms have fundamentally changed the physical landscape of retail establishments (e.g., stores) enabling consumers to browse merchandise, select what they want to purchase, and pay for it all online. Notably, college students prefer to shop online to meet their requirements and desires because it is more practical and efficient for them to do so. Because college students can purchase from either dorm rooms or classrooms, compare prices, and read customer reviews from home, traditional in-person shopping behaviours generally have transitioned to the digital realm where online retailers and recommended items are an important part of the process. These students' perceptions around shopping have likely been influenced by factors such as peer pressure, brand loyalty/appeal, perceived price, or convenience, therefore, it is essential to understand their shopping behaviours and the factors influencing them for both academia and business.

Review of Literature

Arun Mishra and his co-authors researched "A Study on the Online Buying Behavior of Consumers at Bhopal," publishing their findings in 2014. The authors report that companies have joined India's growing Internet community of buyers, as all major cities and towns continue to appeal to e-retailers. Common to both large and small cities, such as Bhopal, India, are brand loyalty and the gap between supply and demand, which are also cited as key factors in explaining the increasing popularity of online retailers in smaller cities in India. Researchers focused on what buyers look for when shopping online. Among the factors identified in the research are determining the unique challenges faced by consumers who buy products online, such as, limited time to shop, ease of using Payment Method (e.g. COD), variety of products offered by retailers, price of the product being sold, discount(s) and/or promotional offer(s), etc.. Responses were obtained by means of a survey (a questionnaire) completed by 100 individuals, ages 15 to 60, and the data were then analyzed using percentage analyses.

According to Manabhanjan Sahu(2020), e-advertisers can build up a way to create dynamic purchasers through an understanding of the elements affecting online purchasing actions and the relationship between these components. They can also classify methods to keep existing online customers and expand upon this with additional online customers, based upon this knowledge of the behaviour of online purchasers. The present study focuses on the components of purchasing actions that online youth purchasers view when purchasing online and the nature of these behaviours from the point of view of youth in Raipur City, who are presently the largest group of online purchasers. This group is increasing as a result of the rapid expansion of online stores offering products and services. Many companies are using the internet as a distribution method for their products and services.

Abhinav Gupta published a paper called "Study of Factors affect Online Buying Behaviour" (2016) from Pt. Ravishankar, India. He understood that Electronic Commerce advancement bring different challenges for both members of the marketplace (i.e., Merchants and Customers) with the development of ecommerce. A major reason for these challenges is the abundance/difficulty of the Electronic Marketplace on the Internet, this can lead to consumers irrationally Purchase Products on the Internet. An example of this is that visitors may make unplanned purchases that are done impulsively and/or with little or no research beforehand, Site based "Impulse Buying", There are very few studies published to examine this issue that are available in an academic form; particularly with total access. The primary objective with this section is to provide a better understanding of the Impulse Buying Behaviour of Croatian Consumers' on the Internet with a specific focus on the Ecommerce setting. This study builds upon the previous literature base regarding consumers Purchasing Behaviour and provides additional insight into the Purchase Behaviour of Young Indian Consumers in an Ecommerce Shopping Platform.

Hemamalini.E (2025) This research will examine the impact of digital wallet applications to promote Financial Inclusion among rural areas in Tamil Nadu with consideration to the following: Socio-economic factors, Trust and Ease of Use. The research found that the availability of digital wallets did increase individuals access to financial services however there were barriers preventing access to these services, including Digital Illiteracy and Poor Internet Access/Network Issues. By utilizing Structural Equation Models (SEM analysis), the researcher also highlighted the essential requirement for Infrastructure Development, Digital Literacy and Trust, in order to facilitate increased adoption of digital wallets therefore promoting inclusive growth. In order to maximise the benefits associated with digital wallets, both Policymakers and Fintech Stakeholders will need to work collaboratively.

The primary aims of this Research are to determine the following

1. Determine a better understanding of the elements motivating college-aged individuals in Hyderabad (aged 18-25) to shop for products online.
2. Identify students' preferred shopping categories, payment options, and delivery choices. 3. Assess how social media and friends' recommendations affect students' purchase decisions when shopping online.
3. Identify any difficulties or worries that college students experience while making an online purchase.
4. Analyse online shopping behaviour of the student population, comparing by each of the gender and socio-economic demographic segments.

Methodology

To accomplish the goal, a multipronged plan will be implemented. Collected through the questionnaire will gather information about students of Hyderabad's online shopping/internet use habits, preferences, and motivations to shop. The focus group will provide more in-depth and qualitative information about the reasoning behind students' choices and interest in online shopping. Implications: The findings from this research will help advance current understanding of the behavior of consumers when using the internet to purchase, especially in relation to young adults aged 18-24 years old in Hyderabad. Business owners can then utilize the findings from this study to help create effective marketing strategies and product offerings for this target market to increase sales opportunities. Findings from this study will help provide the data to assist policymakers and teachers in interpreting the ever-changing needs and wants of young adults today in a high-tech society.

A number of factors impact college students in Hyderabad when they consider engaging in online shopping. These factors can be grouped into three categories: technology, people, and society. The combination of these three types of factors influences how college students in Hyderabad will act and what they have to do with online shopping. Some of the main motivating reasons for college-aged shoppers in Hyderabad, regarding their online shopping experience are:

Convenience and Time Savings: Many college students have busy schedules and are involved with many classes, homework assignments, and extracurricular activities. Because of this, online shopping provides them with the convenience of being able to look at and purchase items when they want, from wherever they are located, without having to physically go into a brick-and-mortar store. This ability to save time allows college students to continue to participate in both social and academic responsibilities.

Wider Variety of Products Available: E-commerce websites contain many different types of products from many different retailers and sellers, many of which are not available in stores where students reside. As a result, students will be able to look at all of the products that are offered on a website and



choose from a much larger selection that matches their personal tastes and preferences than they would ever be able to do at a brick-and-mortar location.

Price Comparison and Discounts: College students are often budget-conscious due to limited financial resources. Online shopping allows them to easily compare prices across different platforms and find the best deals, discounts, and offers. This ability to hunt for cost-effective options resonates with their desire to make informed and frugal choices.

Peer Influence and Social Validation: Social media platforms play a significant role in the lives of college students. They often come across posts and reviews from friends and peers about their online shopping experiences. Positive reviews, recommendations, and the desire to align with their social circle's preferences can influence their decision to engage in online shopping.

Personalisation and Recommendations: E-commerce platforms employ algorithms that analyse a user's browsing and purchase history to offer personalised product recommendations. This personalisation creates a tailored shopping experience that appeals to college students' individual preferences and increases the likelihood of making a purchase.

Comfort with Technology: College students are often well-versed in technology and comfortable working with it. Because they are accustomed to using smartphones, applications, and web-based systems, using e-commerce websites is intuitive and fun for college students and enhances their overall experience when shopping online.

Late Hours: College students have varying hours for school and work. As such, many college students do not have typical hours and prefer to do their shopping late at night or during their time between classes, thereby providing a greater degree of flexibility and control over when they do their shopping.

Freedom from Commuting: Because college students often reside away from home, they are generally required to travel to and from physical retail stores to purchase what they want. However, with the option of having items shipped to their homes, college students have more flexibility than if they had to make an in-person visit to the store as a result of their situation.

Crowds & Lines: Peak shopping times create overcrowded stores and long checkout lines. Shopping online gives our college customers (and everyone else) a way to avoid these difficulties as well as the stress they create, an attractive option for college students looking for a more convenient experience.

Limited Access to Road Transportation: Not all college students have easy access to transportation by car, making it difficult for them to visit traditional retail stores. Online shopping allows our college customers the opportunity to shop for a large selection of merchandise without having to travel to a physical store. An analysis of demographic preference for various types of items, such as product categories, methods of payment and methods of delivery show the college demographic has individual taste and lifestyle needs which will vary between individuals; however, several common trends, behaviours and patterns can be observed amongst individuals in the college demographic group as outlined below.

Product Categories

1. **Fashion & Apparel:** Fashion-topic items are extremely high purchases for college students. Generally, students purchase their fashion items, including street wear, clothes, shoes, and accessories, in order to represent who they are as individuals, while also being current with the latest fashion trends.

2. **Electronics & Gadgets:** The collegian student demographic, for the most part, has a great deal of technical knowledge, so it is natural for them to purchase a variety of electronic and gadget-type items. For example, most college students will purchase and use smartphones, laptops, and headphones along with other types of accessories, for both educational and leisure use.
3. **Beauty & Personal Care (BPC):** Many college students consider BPC-type items to be a part of their overall appearance and because they believe that experimenting with new types of BPC-type items is an acceptable activity for them; the purchase of these types of items is a regular occurrence amongst college students and can consist of a variety of types; skincare, make-up and grooming items etc.
4. **Educational Resources and Books:** College students often have a preference for buying educational books and other types of educational resources like e-books, online courses, and study guides.
5. **Health and Fitness Products:** Students are usually very health-conscious, so they may buy fitness equipment, supplements and other health-related items for their well-being.
6. **Dorm/Apartment Items:** Students may want to find affordable items that maximise limited space (such as bedding, dishware, and decor) to help make their living space more personalized.

Payment Methods

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Delivery Options

1. The education level of college students typically lends them to be more tolerant when it comes to delivery times, and as a result will most often choose a standard delivery method because it is less expensive than paying for express delivery services.
2. College students may use express or same-day delivery service options for very time-sensitive needs through ordering essential products.
3. Many college students prefer to have their order delivered to either a pick-up point or locker on or near their campuses to provide themselves with convenience and security.
4. College students are typically interested in delivery services that provide flexible delivery time slots so they will have the ability to choose the best time to receive their order according to their schedule.
5. Delivery services that provide college students with real-time tracking updates and notifications about the status of their order are valued by these customers.

Investigate The Role of Social Media And Peer Recommendations In Influencing Online Purchase Decisions: Social media's impact and the influence of peers on the purchasing behaviour of young adults aged 18-25 is a substantial factor that can significantly influence their online purchases. The influence of social media and peer recommendations plays an important role in shaping their shopping behaviour and choices, as well as their level of trust in shopping via the internet. The following influences their online purchases, hence the following examples will outline how these factors can have a great bearing on young adults' decisions:



How they discover and learn about products: Social media sites such as Facebook, Instagram, Pinterest and messaging apps provide young college students with a platform to learn about new products through the use of both photos and social media influencers, and therefore they expose young college students to a much wider variety of products, brands and trends than would be possible without the use of these applications.

The influence of their peers: When it comes to making purchasing decisions, the word of mouth of your friends, classmates and other peers is the most trusted source of information. Young college students rely on their peers, as they usually trust their peers more than the advertisements that they see. Friends who have positive experiences providing product recommendations to their peers can build up credibility and trust in the product, so their peers will consider the product more closely.

Social Proof: Social networks are places where users exhibit how they live and what they do. College students view (and sometimes interact with) other students using and enjoying items, thus being influenced by the social proof of their peers. College students may use these influencers to modify their preferences to those of their peers, believing they are likely to enjoy the product because it is an item that others enjoy.

Product Reviews/User Generated Content: Online reviews, ratings, and user-generated content (UGC) are essential in building trust for a product. College students often rely on reviews and UGC to understand how a product is built, what it can do and the experience of using it. If a product receives positive reviews, college students will have confidence in that decision making, whether to buy the product.

Influencer Marketing: Many brands use influencers to promote their products. An influencer is a person who has a significant online presence and usually has many followers. College students have been influenced by influencers because they associate themselves with the influencer they tend to trust and appreciate the influencer's opinion, so they're more likely to try the products the influencer endorses.

Social Group Mentality: Belonging to a particular social group is important for most college students. They see other members of their group consuming certain brands/products and find themselves wanting to participate in the particular trend to feel included, providing them the feeling of belonging.

Engaging Shopping Experience: There are many different ways that brands can create engaging shopping experiences for their consumers. Some examples of interactive shopping experiences provided by brands allow users and other consumers to interact with one another and ask questions about products or brands in real-time. Brands or companies establish a sense of community amongst their consumers, which creates a more enjoyable shopping experience.

FOMO (Fear of Missing Out): Social media has created many forms of FOMO for young adults. An example of this is social media advertising promoting that a company has a limited-time offer or flash sale, or an exclusive product only available for a short time. In response to these limited-time product promotions, college students may make quick decisions to purchase these products because they don't want to miss out.

Personalisation: Social media algorithms curate content tailored to users' preferences and interests. This personalisation exposes college students to products that align with their tastes, increasing the likelihood of making a purchase based on their individual preferences.

Lately, College students are excited to shop online but have certain obstacles and worries while doing so. Some of these obstacles can detract from a good online shopping experience, and may even have an impact on their decision-making process regarding what to buy. The following are some examples of obstacles and worries that College students experience while they are shopping online:

1. Quality & Safety

When making a purchase online, it is impossible for an individual to view the product being purchased. This creates a level of apprehension for students as a result of receiving a product that does not meet their expectations or match the description that was provided on the website. In addition to this, Students may have concerns regarding the authenticity of the products that they are purchasing, and if they are being sold fake or counterfeit items.

2. Trust & Safety

The processing of online payment transactions necessitates the sharing of personal and financial information. Consequently, many College students have trust and safety issues when making these transactions. For example, they fear that the website will not have appropriate security in place to protect their personal or financial data, or they may be concerned about the theft of their identity, or fraud, or having their account hacked.

3. Size & Fit

When purchasing clothing or shoes online, there can be size and fit issues. College students may experience size and fit discrepancies due to a mismatch in size charts, and when there is an issue with the fit of an item do not want to go through the headache of returning/exchanging the item.

Return & Refunds: Too many steps in the process for returning items and getting a refund may be seen as difficult by students. Students are also concerned with how easy it will be to return their items, any potential costs associated with the return and what the amount of time is expected to be before they receive their refund.

Delays or reliability with Deliveries: College students will get frustrated with receiving orders after they need them. Students will be frustrated with late orders and want to know if their order can arrive on time.

Unexpected Hidden Fees or Additional Costs: College students will be surprised when they have to pay extra fees (i.e. shipping or taxes) when purchasing a product online or at checkout, and will want to make sure that this unpredictability does not affect their budget.

4. Limited opportunity to physically look at a product before making a purchase:

College students physiologically may become concerned about purchasing products they can't touch, feel and/or try on before buying them; thereby becoming concerned about what the actual (size, colour, texture, etc) or quality something might actually look or feel like once they get it.

Lack of Communication: Lack of communication or response can frustrate college students, especially when they are seeking assistance with an order, return or troubleshooting.

No Instant Gratification: Online shopping is different from traditional shopping. When you buy something at a store, you can take it home with you immediately. When you order online, you must wait for the product to arrive. This can be a problem for college students who are eager to have instant gratification.

Hard to Compare Products: Although one of the advantages of online shopping is the ability to compare products across multiple sites, the number of products available can be overwhelming for some College students, and it may take a long time to find what they want.

Bad Internet Connectivity: College students shopping online need to have access to a fast and reliable internet connection. Many college students live in places that have slow or unreliable internet service, which does not help them shop online.

Impulse Buying and Exceeding Budgets: Online shopping is easy and provides college students with the availability of impulse buying. College students may also exceed their budgets due to attractive pricing or selecting "limited-time" offers that are on sale.

Environmental Issues: Many college students are concerned about protecting the environment and may be worried about how much packaging, waste, and the carbon cost of delivery are used when shopping online.

Compare the online shopping behaviour of college students across different genders and socio-economic backgrounds: Online shopping behavior among college students can vary based on gender and socio-economic backgrounds, reflecting distinct preferences and patterns. While these differences are not universal and can vary widely within each group, here's a general comparison:

Gender Differences:

Gender-based Shopping Patterns: Women appear to have an interest in items such as fashion, cosmetics, and beauty products. In contrast, men appear more interested in electronic and gadget-type products and things associated with hobbies.

Men generally take a more efficient approach and make their purchases more quickly than women, and use prior knowledge and customer feedback to guide their decisions.

Social Media & Peer Recommendations:

1. Women appear to experience a greater amount of influence from social media and peer recommendations regarding fashion, beauty, and lifestyle products than men.
2. Men appear to be more influenced by technology-related content and by friends' recommendations when making purchases related to electronics.

Shopping Habits

1. Women shop more frequently online than do men and tend to look for a variety of different product categories when they do so.
2. Men shop online less often than do women, but tend to spend more on average when purchasing something that they are interested in.

Socio-economic Background Differences:

Budget's affecting consumers' behaviour

1. Consumers from lower socio-economic groups are likely to be price sensitive and will be actively searching for the best deals, promotions and budget-friendly solutions.
2. Consumers from higher socio-economic groups will typically place more emphasis on the quality and reputation of the products being purchased than on the price of the products. Type of products purchased by different segments of students
3. Students from lower socio-economic groups are likely to focus on essential products and practical items such as textbooks, basic clothing and essential electronic devices.

4. Students from higher socio-economic groups will have the flexibility of being able to explore a wide range of products, such as luxury items or products that cater for niche interests. Preferred methods of payment for consumers
5. Consumers from lower socio-economic groups may prefer cash on delivery or digital wallets due to their limited access to credit cards.
6. Consumers from higher socio-economic groups may be more familiar with and use credit cards and other forms of online payment.

Brands and Quality: Higher SES students may be more brand-conscious and have higher expectations of product quality and reputation as compared to lower SES students, who may prefer low cost and functionality of products over brand names.

Delivery: Higher SES students may choose to use premium delivery options for faster and more convenient delivery; lower SES students may use standard delivery options to save money on their shipping costs.

Technology Access: Higher SES students are likely to have access to higher rates of high-speed internet and technology with the capability to support online shopping, whereas lower SES students are likely to experience connection interruptions during their online shopping activity.

Conclusion

This research makes a significant contribution to the literature on the online shopping behaviours of council-goers in Hyderabad, with insights into their preferences, motivations, barriers and influences. The council-goers in the demographic of young people are all technologically savvy and well-connected socially, which creates a diverse range of factors that contribute to their opinions about shopping online. The study indicated that convenience is a major driver of the behaviours of young council-goers as they try to fit shopping in around their activities. The demographic also has a variety of interests in online shopping, including fashion, electronics, books, and health products. The young council-goers' preferences for payment methods and delivery methods are predicated on their familiarity with and comfort with online deals and flexible shipping options, and are consistent with their change in income and budget. Additionally, young council-goers are heavily influenced by peer recommendations and social media, both of which provide personal connections and social validation that are very powerful for the demographic. Social proof, influencer marketing, and interactive shopping experiences demonstrate the influence of connection on individuals' buying decisions. However, the researchers revealed numerous problems within the scope of shopping online, such as the challenges that scholars on councils are facing with respect to shopping in an online environment. Issues such as product safety, product quality, return issues, costs related to retiring goods all highlight the need for companies to address these issues to build trust and create confidence among this market sector. In addition, the researchers found that individual characteristics (e.g., gender and socio-economic status) intersect with the objectives of the online shopping experience creating different preferences and behaviours. Companies wanting to reach this market should work towards building a transparent and safe environment for using their shopping site, create avenues for engagement through social media and through partnerships with influencers, and create seamless customer service and return policies to provide a positive experience for consumers using their shopping site. Research on consumer behaviours in e-commerce as well as providing insight into how the characteristics of young adults who participate in councils differ based on where they live in Hyderabad, India. Technology constantly changes the way we shop; therefore, more research should be conducted regarding consumer behaviour; this will help businesses adjust their strategies to satisfy the needs of an increasingly diverse group of consumers.



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