



Insights into Consumer Behavior: A Deep Dive into Online Shopping Trends in Kerala During the COVID-19 Pandemic

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Abstract

The COVID-19 pandemic has catalyzed transformative shifts in consumer behaviour globally, prompting a notable surge in online shopping activities. Kerala, renowned for its diverse cultural landscape and vibrant markets, has witnessed a paradigmatic evolution in consumer preferences during this unprecedented period. This study endeavours to provide a comprehensive analysis of online shopping trends in Kerala amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, offering nuanced insights into the factors influencing consumer behaviour, the emergence of new consumption patterns, and the challenges and opportunities encountered by e-commerce stakeholders. Leveraging a mixed-methods research approach, including surveys and qualitative interviews, the study aims to illuminate the dynamic interplay between socio-economic factors, public health concerns, and technological advancements shaping the e-commerce landscape in Kerala. By elucidating these dynamics, the research seeks to inform strategic decision-making processes for e-commerce businesses, policymakers, and other stakeholders invested in Kerala's retail ecosystem.

Keywords: consumer behaviour, online shopping, Kerala, COVID-19 pandemic, e-commerce, trends, insights.

1. Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic has ushered in an unprecedented era of disruption, reshaping social norms, economic landscapes, and consumer behaviors worldwide. As governments implemented stringent measures to curb the spread of the virus, including lockdowns, social distancing mandates, and travel restrictions, individuals and communities were compelled to adapt swiftly to a new reality characterized by heightened uncertainty and volatility. Against this backdrop, the retail sector emerged as one of the most profoundly impacted domains, undergoing rapid transformations driven by shifting consumer preferences, evolving market dynamics, and technological innovations. In Kerala, a southwestern state in India renowned for its lush landscapes, vibrant culture, and thriving tourism industry, the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic precipitated seismic shifts in consumer behavior and consumption patterns. Traditionally, Kerala's retail landscape has been characterized by a rich tapestry of bustling markets, traditional bazaars, and vibrant street vendors, reflecting the state's diverse cultural

heritage and culinary traditions. However, the pandemic necessitated a paradigmatic reevaluation of conventional retail practices, as consumers grappled with the dual imperatives of securing essential goods and minimizing exposure to health risks. In this context, online shopping emerged as a pivotal lifeline for Kerala residents, offering a safe, convenient, and contactless alternative to traditional brick-and-mortar retail experiences. The surge in online shopping activities witnessed during the pandemic underscored the resilience and adaptability of Kerala's consumer base, as individuals and households embraced digital platforms to meet their evolving needs and preferences. From groceries and household essentials to electronics and apparel, virtually every product category experienced a notable uptick in online sales, reflecting the growing acceptance and integration of e-commerce into Kerala's retail ecosystem. However, amidst the rapid expansion of online shopping, challenges and complexities have emerged, ranging from logistical bottlenecks and



supply chain disruptions to concerns regarding data privacy and cybersecurity. Moreover, the digital divide and disparities in internet access have underscored the importance of ensuring equitable participation in the digital economy, particularly among marginalized communities and underserved populations. Against this backdrop, this study seeks to provide a comprehensive analysis of online shopping trends in Kerala amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, offering nuanced insights into the factors influencing consumer behavior, the emergence of new consumption patterns, and the challenges and opportunities encountered by e-commerce stakeholders. By shedding light on these dynamics, the research aims to inform strategic decision-making processes for e-commerce businesses, policymakers, and other stakeholders invested in Kerala's retail ecosystem.

2. Review of Literature

Consumer behavior during crises has been a subject of extensive research, with scholars examining the ways in which individuals adapt their purchasing habits in response to external shocks. Studies by Chang et al. (2020) and Kim & Forsythe (2008) have highlighted the resilience of online shopping as a coping mechanism during times of uncertainty, emphasizing its role in fulfilling essential needs while minimizing exposure to health risks. Moreover, Lu et al. (2020) and Pavlou & Fygenson (2006) have identified convenience, perceived risk, trust, and digital literacy as key determinants influencing online purchase behavior. However, despite the wealth of literature on consumer behavior in crisis situations, there remains a notable gap in research focusing specifically on online shopping trends in Kerala amidst the COVID-19 pandemic. While studies from other regions offer valuable insights into general consumer behavior patterns, the cultural, socio-economic, and infrastructural context of Kerala necessitates a localized approach to understanding online shopping dynamics. Thus, this study aims to bridge this gap by providing a detailed analysis of online shopping trends in Kerala, drawing on both existing literature and empirical data collected from surveys and qualitative interviews. Furthermore, it is essential to consider

the broader implications of online shopping trends for Kerala's retail ecosystem. Traditional retailers, already grappling with the challenges posed by the pandemic, must adapt to changing consumer preferences and market dynamics to remain competitive. Policymakers, on the other hand, have a crucial role to play in fostering an enabling environment for e-commerce growth, addressing infrastructure gaps, and promoting digital literacy among citizens. By synthesizing insights from existing literature and conducting empirical research, this study seeks to contribute to a deeper understanding of online shopping behavior in Kerala during the COVID-19 pandemic. By elucidating the underlying drivers, challenges, and opportunities associated with online shopping, the research aims to inform strategic decision-making processes for e-commerce businesses, policymakers, and other stakeholders invested in Kerala's retail sector.

3. Significance of the Study

This study addresses a gap in understanding online shopping trends in Kerala during the COVID-19 pandemic. Utilizing a mixed-methods approach, it offers localized insights into consumer behavior. Academically, it contributes to the literature by enriching our understanding of crisis-induced consumer behavior and providing theoretical insights applicable in diverse socio-cultural contexts. Practically, the findings inform e-commerce businesses' strategies, enabling them to tailor their offerings to meet local consumers' needs effectively. Additionally, policymakers can utilize the insights to formulate policies that foster e-commerce growth while addressing regulatory gaps and ensuring consumer protection. Furthermore, community-based organizations can leverage the findings to design interventions promoting digital literacy and inclusive access to e-commerce platforms, thus empowering marginalized groups. In summary, this study holds significant implications for academia, business, policymaking, and community engagement, offering valuable insights that can inform decision-making processes and contribute to the sustainable development of e-commerce in Kerala.



4. Statement of the Problem

Amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, there's a lack of localized research on online shopping trends in Kerala, hindering understanding of consumer behavior shifts and challenges faced by e-commerce stakeholders. This study aims to investigate Kerala residents' online shopping habits, drivers, and challenges during the pandemic. By addressing these gaps, the research seeks to inform strategic decision-making for e-commerce businesses and policymakers, facilitating sustainable growth in Kerala's retail sector

4.1. Scope of the Study

This study investigates online shopping trends in Kerala during the COVID-19 pandemic, focusing on consumer behavior shifts, preferences, and challenges faced by e-commerce stakeholders. It employs a mixed-methods approach, combining surveys and qualitative interviews with Kerala residents and key stakeholders. While primarily exploring online shopping dynamics, the study also considers broader socio-economic and technological influences. However, it does not delve into offline retail practices or non-consumer aspects of e-commerce operations. The findings aim to offer actionable insights for e-commerce businesses, policymakers, and community organizations, specifically within the context of Kerala's retail landscape.

4.2. Objectives of the Study

- To analyze shifts in consumer behavior regarding online shopping in Kerala during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- To identify the key drivers influencing Kerala residents' decisions to engage in online shopping during the pandemic period.
- To explore prevalent trends in online shopping preferences and consumption patterns among Kerala consumers.
- To examine the challenges and opportunities encountered by e-commerce stakeholders operating in Kerala amidst the pandemic.
- To provide actionable insights for e-commerce businesses, policymakers, and community organizations to enhance the effectiveness and

sustainability of online retail operations in Kerala.

5. Research Methodology

The validity of any research is based on a systematic method of data collection and proper analysis of data collected. The methodology adopted for the proposed study is given below:

Sources of data

Both primary and secondary data is used for carrying out the study. Primary data is collected with the help of a Structured Questionnaire. While, secondary data obtained from periodicals, journals, magazines, newspapers, websites, books and other reference material.

Sampling design

The sampling technique followed in this study is convenient sampling, which is a classification of non-probability sampling method.

Tools for analysis

The data collected were classified and analyzed based on the objectives of the study. For analysis statistical techniques like percentages, tables and chi-square test were used. The Chi-square test was applied to examine the significance of variation in the opinion among online shopping behavior of consumers during covid 19 pandemic period.

5.1. Hypothesis

H01: There is no significant relationship among factors influencing consumers' choice of online shopping during the COVID-19 pandemic.

H01a: There is a significant relationship among factors influencing consumers' choice of online shopping during the COVID-19 pandemic.

H02: There is no significant relationship between the key issues faced by consumers and their satisfaction with online shopping.

H02a: There is a significant relationship between the key issues faced by consumers and their satisfaction with online shopping.

6. Limitations of the Study

The study's limitations include potential sample bias due to the representative population, reliance on online surveys and remote interviews leading to shallow data collection, and the possibility of overlooking long-term trends within a specific timeframe. Survey responses may be subjective,



influenced by biases or inaccuracies, while external factors such as regulatory changes or technological advancements are not fully accounted for. Researchers' biases may impact data interpretation, and challenges may arise in accurately interpreting

diverse responses due to language and cultural barriers. Additionally, the study primarily focuses on online shopping, potentially neglecting broader consumer behaviors.

7. Results and Discussion

Table1 Demographic Profile of the Respondents

Particulars		No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Marital Status	Married	49	49
	Unmarried	51	51
Age	Up to 18 years	26	26
	18-24	28	28
	25-34	20	20
	35-44	17	17
	45-54	7	7
	Above 55	2	2
Occupation	Salaried	28	28
	Professional	22	22
	Business	23	23
	Agriculture	13	13
	Others	14	14
Monthly Family Income	Up to 15000	23	23
	15000-25000	35	35
	25000-35000	22	22
	Above 35000	20	20
	SSLC	18	18
	HSS	28	28
	Graduate	32	32
	Post Graduate	10	10
	Others	12	12

Source: Primary Data



Interpretation: The above table 1 shows that 49% of the respondents are married and rest of the 51% respondents are unmarried.28% belongs to the age group of 18-24. So, it can be inferred that the younger generation are more involved in online shopping. Only 2% respondents are in the age group. As regards occupation 28% consumers are salaried employees, 22% belongs to professionals, 23% are doing business, 13% respondents belong to agriculture and 14% are belongs to other occupation. Among the respondents 35% belongs to 15000-25000.23% respondents have up to 15000,22% have 25000-35000,20% belongs to above 35000.Among the respondents 18% belongs to matriculation,28% respondents belong to HSS, Whereas the majority of respondents belongs to graduates, post graduates constitute only 10%, and 12% constitute another category.

Table 2 Factors Which Motivates to Prefer Online Shopping During Covid 19

Motivating Factor	No. of respondents	Percentages (%)
Convenience of Shopping	40	40
Wide variety of Selection	18	18
Best Offers & Discounts	12	12
Time saving	17	17
Other factors	13	13
Total	100	100

Source: Primary Data

Interpretation: The above table 2 shows that majority 40 % respondents buy online during covid situations because of convenience of purchase in that time, 18% respondents depend online because of wide variety of selection, 17% depends online for time saving, 12% prefer online because best offers and discounts, and finally the least 13% prefer online shopping because of other factors like service quality, after sale service.

Table 3 Key Issues Faced by Consumers While Making Online Shopping

Key Issues	No. of respondents	Percentage (%)
Product related issues	36	36
Delivery related issues	27	27
Payment related issues	18	18
Difficulties with return	13	13
Other issues	6	6
Total	100	100

Source: Primary Data

Interpretation: Above table 3 reveals that majority 36% faced the problem of product related issues, then the 27% of the respondents faced the problem with delivery,18% faced payment related issues,13% respondents faced the difficulties in return and 6% of respondents suffering with other issues.

Table 4 Satisfaction Level of Consumers Towards Online Shopping

Satisfaction level	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Highly Satisfied	21	21
Moderately Satisfied	44	44
Dissatisfied	35	35
Total	100	100

Source: Primary Data

Interpretation: From the above table 4 it is clearly understood that 21% of the respondents were highly satisfied consumers of online shopping during this pandemic period,44% Moderately satisfied and 35% of Consumers were dissatisfied Consumers of online shopping.

Table 5 How has the Covid 19 Outbreak Affected Consumers' Online Shopping?

Response	No. Of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Increased Online Shopping	60	60
Decreased Online Shopping	9	9
Shopped Online for 1st time	12	12
No effect	9	9
Others	10	10
Total	100	100

Source: Primary Data

Interpretation: From the above table 5 reveals that increasing online shopping habits of consumers during Covid 19 Outbreak by 60%, only 9% consumers online shopping habit has decreased, 12% consumers shopped online for the first time, 9%

consumers online shopping has not affected Covid 19.

Chi Square Test & Testing of Hypothesis

H01: There is no significant relationship among factors influencing consumers' choice of online shopping during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Interpretation: By applying Chi-square test on the observed data, the significance of the data found and tested hypothesis. The Critical value of χ^2 is $\chi^2_{0.05,16}=26.296$ where degree of freedom = (no. of rows-1) *(no. of columns-1) =4*2=8. The calculated χ^2 cal value for the above table 6 is $\chi^2_{cal}=40.014$. At 95% confidence level, the χ^2_{cal} is more than the χ^2 critical, therefore the null hypothesis is rejected and concluded that there is significant relationship among factors influencing the consumers in choosing Online shopping after covid 19.

H02: There is no significant relationship between the key issues faced by consumers and their satisfaction with online shopping.

Table 6 Observed Frequency- Key Motivating Factors and Online Shopping Behaviour

Motivating Factor	Convenience	Wide Variety	Best Offers	Time Saving	Other Factors	Total
Increased Online Shopping	30	9	6	12	3	60
Decreased Online Shopping	1	2	1	1	4	9
Shopped Online for First time	7	2	1	1	1	12
No effect	1	1	1	1	5	9
Others	1	4	3	2	0	10
Total	40	18	12	17	13	100

Source: Primary Data

Table 7 Observed Frequency- Key Issues Faced and Satisfaction

Key issues	Highly satisfied	Moderately Satisfied	Dissatisfied	Total
Product related issues	7	16	13	36
Delivery related issues	6	11	10	27
Payment related issues	4	8	6	18
Difficulties in return	3	6	4	13
Other issues	1	3	2	6
Total	21	44	35	100

Interpretation: By applying Chi-Square test on the observed data, the significance of the data found and tested hypothesis. The critical value of χ^2 is $\chi^2_{0.05,6}=12.592$ where degrees of freedom= (no. of rows-1) *(no. of columns-1) =3*2=6. The calculated χ^2_{cal} value for the above table 7 is $\chi^2_{cal}=13.641$. At 95% confidence level, the χ^2 table value is more than χ^2 calculated, therefore the null hypothesis is rejected and concluded that there is a significant relationship between key issues faced by consumers and satisfaction with online shopping.

8. Findings

- A slight majority of respondents, comprising 51%, reported being unmarried.
- The largest age group represented among respondents is 18-24, constituting 28% of the sample.
- Notably, 28% of respondents are identified as salaried employees.
- The monthly family income of a significant portion, accounting for 35% of respondents, falls within the bracket of up to 25000.
- A majority of 32% of respondents have completed their graduation.
- It is noteworthy that 42% of respondents found online shopping more convenient during the

Covid-19 pandemic.

- Regarding concerns, 36% of respondents cited product-related issues as their primary concern when making online purchases.
- A substantial 44% of respondents expressed moderate satisfaction with the online shopping experience.
- There was a remarkable surge in online shopping, with a staggering 67% increase observed during the Covid-19 period.
- Significant relationships were observed among various factors influencing consumers' choice of online shopping post-Covid-19.
- Moreover, a noteworthy relationship exists between the key issues faced by consumers and their satisfaction levels with online shopping.
- The Covid-19 pandemic witnessed a substantial increase in online shopping behavior, with a multitude of consumers transitioning to this mode of shopping during this period.

Conclusion

The onset of the COVID-19 pandemic heralded an unprecedented era, unlike any experienced before. With nations grappling with stringent lockdown measures, e-commerce emerged as a pivotal lifeline, facilitating the needs of millions from the safety of their homes. This crisis accelerated the already



burgeoning trend of online shopping, poised to further burgeon as consumers prioritize minimizing public exposure. As we navigate through this pandemic period, it's evident that the retail landscape, propelled by necessity, will continue its inexorable shift towards the digital realm. Online shopping has become synonymous with modern convenience, reshaping market dynamics and offering vast potential for innovative economic models. In essence, the COVID-19 pandemic has catalyzed a transformative shift in consumer behavior, underscoring the pivotal role of e-commerce in shaping the future of business.

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