

Consumer preferences regarding online grocery shopping and traditional grocery shopping in Kolkata

An elaborative study post-pandemic.

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Abstract—This study examines consumer preferences between online and traditional grocery shopping in Kolkata. Based on a survey of 100 respondents, key factors like convenience, pricing, product availability, and delivery services were analyzed. Results show that online grocery shopping is gaining popularity due to accessibility, time-saving benefits, and discounts. However, concerns over product quality, freshness, and delivery hygiene persist. The COVID-19 pandemic has further accelerated the shift toward platforms like BigBasket, BlinkIt, and JioMart. The findings offer insights for online retailers to improve services and address consumer concerns for long-term growth.

Index Terms—Online grocery shopping, consumer preferences, e-commerce, customer satisfaction.

I. INTRODUCTION

Background of the Study

In the last 2 decades, the Indian e-commerce market has grown quickly. The mobile phone prevalence and expanding internet accessibility are two key factors influencing this rise. Additionally, changing demographics and the acceptance of online payments have altered how businesses interact with their customers also carry out business. The way the Indian e-commerce sector functions has altered as a result. As the Internet continues to play an increasingly important role in linking information and people, pressure has continued to mount on markets that have already employed online services, particularly on areas where selling goods online is new. As more merchants turn their attention away from traditional brick and mortar commerce and towards new forms, the trend of the retail store is evolving.

Traditionally, people have purchased their groceries from businesses where they can touch and examine the items before making a decision. They can also oversee how fragile items are transported. The volume of online grocery shopping is still in its infancy, and this makes it difficult for Indian e-grocers to maintain long-term profitable growth. Most customers have some skepticism when considering buying perishable goods like fish online since they have doubts about the service's dependability and accountability. Market penetration in this sector will be achieved by online grocery stores that may grow their brand value and bring in return customers. Convenience is the main advantage of grocery shopping online. Online shopping allows for speedy product searches.

Kolkata's online grocery retail market is generally unorganized. In addition, it presents a significant difficulty due of high entry barriers and established large competitors in offline sectors. There are untapped prospects in this industry as online grocery portals are already proliferating through digital means. Many players have entered the market and are attempting to sway consumers. Indian consumers who purchase for groceries online report that the process is convenient, pleasant, and hassle-free. Due to their extreme convenience, simplicity of buying, and rapidly expanding markets, online grocery stores are becoming more and more popular in India. BigBasket, BlinkIt, Zepto, and JioMart are a few well-known online grocery retailers in India.

Each of these businesses has been in operation for a few years and has a sizeable market share in the cities where they do business. The rapid growth of the sector was limited by the surge in customer demand for convenience shopping and its widespread use by the general public. Additionally, the industry is flourishing as a result of its success in drawing customers away from traditional neighbourhood grocery stores and towards online grocery shopping by providing significant price reductions on the food goods offered. This shows that customers who don't have to bother with carrying their bags conveniently avoid parking and traffic problems, as well as long line-ups at their neighbourhood markets or supermarkets.

Conceptual Framework

E-commerce has radically changed the business outlook of the world. In a developing country like India, this effect is more pronounced due to the more people are using the internet. By 2025, 530 million individuals are expected to purchase online, up from the 225 million consumers there are today. This demonstrates how the e-commerce sector is improving its standing inside the Indian economy. Rising consumer expenditure, increased urbanisation, and rising disposable income of India's working population are all factors that contribute to this phenomena.

Consumers may purchase food online from the convenience of their own homes when they shop online (OGS). Online retailers have gained popularity recently across a wide range of industries. It is gaining popularity as a result of the ease it provides to users. It began in western and southern India and has now expanded throughout the whole nation. Due to the lack of a requirement for physical storefronts, starting up an online business is inexpensive. Additionally, merchants may lower their storage expenses by stocking items that sell quickly. Electronic merchants need effective distribution, inventory management, and transportation in order to flourish in this market. The biggest online supermarkets in India include Big Basket, Amazon Fresh, BlinkIt, and JioMart. Among organized retail are supermarkets, chain stores, and other retail chains and other licensed retailers. OGS avoid going to a physical store, standing in checkout lines, and lugging large shopping bags, according to Coula and Lapoule's 2012 analysis.

As a result, the physical stress is greatly diminished. According to research, internet orders typically come with more fresh product than offline orders do (Munson et al., 2017). Factors influencing the increase of daily products sales online:

1. There are no physical borders.
2. Time management
3. Free delivery and savings
4. The ongoing epidemic

The world economy as we know it, however, has been negatively impacted by the coronavirus. Almost all industries, especially those in manufacturing and fast-moving consumer goods, are affected by it. All offline stores were closed in India when the ban was announced. Omni channel shops could make it through such a predicament, but with many difficulties. As more people have started purchasing groceries, packaged goods, and other necessities online, internet shopping has grown significantly overall. Similar increase in grocery and foods has been observed by Amazon and Flipkart. The purpose of the investigation is to look into the key aspects of acceptability and intention for electronic purchasing that might affect how frequently a product or payment method is used online. Finally, several research have looked at how different variables affect the OGS process. The majority of the material now in circulation focuses on how these impacts affect consumer behaviour in developing nations, yet very little is known about acceptance, purchase choices, and dissemination there..

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Shipra Agrawal, Snehal, and Tushar Kandhari (2021) performed a research to assess the customer sustainability of online buying following COVID-19. 120 respondents from India's urban and suburban areas made up the study's sample size. According to the study's findings, the majority of customers are happy with grocery stores' online platforms. However, in their eyes, the largest challenge is the absence of physical control over the product and assurances about its quality.

Dr. Vyshali Trivedi, Ankit Chandani (2021) studied the alterations in supermarket buying habits that persisted after the pandemic scenario was over. The comparison of offline and online food shopping, the impact of physical inspections, and the impression of online safety were the primary areas of attention in this study. There were 166 Gujarati respondents in the sample population. The survey demonstrated that throughout the epidemic, shoppers preferred internet purchasing because to its ease and security. Customers' decisions to purchase items outside of grocery stores are influenced by the availability of physical product examination.

Jyoti Meshram (2020) examined how popular foods were during store closures in internet retailers vs neighbourhood shops. In the cities of Mumbai and Pune, 103 respondents made up the study's sample. The study's primary areas of interest were customer experiences with online grocery shopping, customer expectations vs service delivery, the effects of the closure, and consumer games connected to online grocery shopping. The survey revealed that people favour online shopping, and if it becomes the new standard, they won't hesitate to purchase food from these merchants.

Dr. S Suguna and Pooja V (2020) did a research to determine customer attitudes and preferences towards e-grocery. 120 respondents from the city of Coimbatore made up the study's sample. According to the report, free home delivery, product choice, discounts and special offers all have an impact on online grocery shopping.

Vidya Gopinath (2020) studied India's internet purchasing customer behaviour has been researched. The sample size was 412 respondents from the Kerala districts of Thrissur and Ernakulam. According to the report, people are happy with online shopping since it is quick, simple, convenient, secure, and affordable.

Sreelakshmi V and Dr. Manoharan G Nair (2020) carried out a study to determine the elements influencing consumer satisfaction with online buying. 209 respondents from the Ernakulam district made up the sample population. Finding diverse age groups to pick the online business was the study's major objective. Women preferred it more, the survey found. Convenience and affordable costs are deciding factors, they concluded.

Y Wang, R Xu, M Schwartz, D Ghosh (2020) stated that the pandemic has hit different companies in different ways - negatively for some and positively for others. Initially, the number of visitors to the online store services decreased, but in the end it turned out to be a boon for them. However, the results of the survey show that consumer expectations for store security are now higher, the frequency of store visits has decreased, and habits have changed.

Jeyachandran H., Kumaran A., Devi T.R., D. Asokk, and Prasad A. (2019) compared supermarkets and traditional retailers. Through their research, they were able to determine whether or not customer preferences were influenced by demographic profiles. The association between the aforementioned was discovered to be strongest in the sector of education. People with higher levels of education tended to prefer supermarkets over traditional markets, whereas those with lower educational opportunities tended to favor the latter. Additionally, it was discovered that traditional markets were preferred for quick trips and supermarkets for longer ones. There was no association between occupation mix and anything other than the preference of elderly persons for traditional marketplaces.

Singhal, P., and Patra, S. (2018) analyzed the numerous aspects influencing customers' online purchasing behavior. The Buyer Black Box Model was displayed. In addition, they "created gender-wise differentiation to ascertain how male and female reacts to different category of product such as Household things, Apparels, Beauty products, Electronic Gadgets, etc.

Dey S. (2017) stated that the lifestyle is changing as a result of urbanization, which is a significant influencing element. It will also affect how customers perceive the business. This study discovered that not all societal groups are given the same options. Due to the change in the environment, Indian consumers are increasingly recognized for their high value orientation.

Kavitha R. (2017) focused her study on customers' awareness of online grocery buying. Online purchasing is made to reduce both labour and time. There is no time limit when shopping online, and it presents difficulties because location and physical proof become hazy. Online purchasing is advantageous because it is less stressful and consequently gains from more customers. Additionally, it offers a variety of choices, which draws in more customers. These are the primary factors that make internet buying more popular than other types of purchasing venues.

Banerjee. A and T. Banerjee (2016) found that supermarket delivery is favourably connected with enjoyment from the experience of utilising a shopping website. They came to the conclusion that customers are happy with their items and the online buying process.

Bahee.V and L . Kaushal (2015) examines the impact of several factors on consumer perceptions of internet buying. The four characteristics were perceived cost, convenience, risk, and enjoyment. The findings on perceived costs indicated that there were no noteworthy variations among the customers' various demographic traits. Between clients who are aware of internet buying and those who are not, a considerable difference was discovered.

Sathiyaraj S. (2015) said that e-retailers may improve their marketing tactics to turn potential customers into active customers if they are aware of the variables influencing Indian consumers' purchasing behaviour and the connections between those elements and the different types of online purchasers. The study's findings also shown that demographic characteristics like gender and age do not influence the elements that determine consumer happiness. If a marketer wants to entice their clients to purchase online, they need take into account certain elements, according to Raut.V and S. Walvekar (2014). These considerations include security, dependability, service, and references.

Kumar and Verma (2014) determined that the infrastructure of the city and its demographic goals are consistent with the education level, money, requirements of the populace, and platform required to propel e-tail.

Mattila (2013) did a study on the factors influencing the adoption of online shopping and found six variables that affect the adoption of electronic grocery shopping. The survey also revealed that consumers prioritised convenience, a large and well-known range of goods and brands, freedom of time and location, time savings, and other aspects while shopping at an electronic grocery store.

Mishra and Mathew (2013) demonstrated that internet customers in India had a high risk perception, with the delivery of online-purchased goods being the major source of anxiety. The most common website elements that affect Indian online users are information quality, product selection, and after-sales support.

Coupey et al (2009) discovered both numerous obstacles and several drivers for internet buying. Interestingly, grocery shopping suffers from a very poor pricing picture, in contrast to other online shopping sectors, although consumer price sensitivity for food is considerable..

III. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To analyze the key factors influencing consumer preferences for online grocery shopping over traditional grocery shopping in Kolkata, focusing on aspects such as convenience, pricing, product availability, and delivery services.
- To evaluate consumer concerns regarding online grocery shopping, including product quality, freshness, delivery hygiene, and their impact on purchasing decisions.

IV. METHODOLOGY

Research design: The research design should be cost-effective and time-efficient, but at the same time should aim to minimize the subjective bias of the research. This study uses a cross-sectional study to describe consumer behavior and their views on different forms of retailing in relation to grocery shopping behavior and to specify how demographic characteristics and such decision relate to one another.

Sampling Technique: Non-probability sampling was used in this investigation on the grounds of convenience and discretion. This was appropriate because we wanted a population mix that would not highlight any particular strata of the population.

Sample Size: Sample size is the number of the population out of the total number studied in the study. Here we interviewed a total of 100 respondents. The sample was selected from Kolkata city. The sample consisted of men and women of different occupations, age groups, etc.

Sampling Frame: Here our sampling frame is the households of Kolkata city. Every household, be it students or small and joint families, is part of the study. A household in this context is a group of members who have some income and consumption, the basic needs of common housing, and group catering and other needs.

Sampling Unit: In this study, the sampling unit is every person who is responsible for the selection of retail stores and attends or makes purchases in the agreed store.

Time period: January 2023 - April 2023.

Research instrument: Here, the research instrument was a closed, structured questionnaire.

Data collection technique: Primary data was collected to achieve the objectives of the study.

A questionnaire with questions pertaining to the study issue was sent to gather primary data. Sharing was via email. It was established that the survey method is very convenient to collect the necessary information according to the objectives set for the research problem. The questionnaire was prepared in such a way that it would be easy and convenient for the respondents to understand it and answer impartially. All questions are multiple choice and closed.

V. DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

- 56% of the respondents are female and 44% of the respondents are male.
- 24% of the respondents are of the age group of less than 20 years. 61% of the respondents are of the age group of 20 to 40 years. 12% of the respondents are of the age group of 40 to 60 years. 3% of the respondents are of the age group of above 60 years.
- 71% of the respondents are students, 10% of the respondents are housewives, 10% of the respondents are salaried employees and 9% of the respondents are self-employed.
- The annual income of 39% of the employees is less than 100000. The annual income of 38% of the employees is between 100000 and 300000. The annual income of 11% of the employees is between 300000 and 500000. The annual income of 38% of the employees is above 500000.
- 98% of the respondents are aware of the online grocery selling platforms and 2% of the respondents are unaware of the online grocery selling platforms.
- 55% of the respondents shopped grocery online during Covid-19 pandemic, 31% of the respondents shopped grocery online during Covid-19 pandemic and 14% of the respondents are unsure.
- 38% of the respondents always buy groceries online, 27% of the respondents often buy groceries online, 25% of the respondents sometimes buy groceries online, 9% of the respondents seldom buy groceries online and 1% of the respondents never buy groceries online.
- 28% of the respondents came to know about online grocery platforms from friends and relatives, 22% of the respondents came to know about online grocery platforms from social media, 41% of the respondents came to know about online grocery

platforms from advertisements, and 9% of the respondents came to know about online grocery platforms from magazines and newspapers.

- 40% of the respondents strongly agree that pandemic has influenced online grocery shopping, 39% of the respondents agree that pandemic has influenced online grocery shopping, 16% of the respondents neither agree nor disagree that pandemic has influenced online grocery shopping, 4% of the respondents disagree that pandemic has influenced online grocery shopping and 1% of the respondents strongly disagree that pandemic has influenced online grocery shopping.

- 55.1% of the respondents prefer BigBasket as their online grocery platform, 61% of the respondents prefer BlinkIt as their online grocery platform, 31.6% of the respondents prefer JioMart as their online grocery platform, and 27.6% of the respondents prefer AmazonFresh as their online grocery platform.

- 34% of the respondents buy fruits and vegetables online, 28.9% of the respondents buy chilled and frozen items online, 22.7% of the respondents buy dairy and bakery items online, 32% of the respondents buy staple items online, 43.3% of the respondents buy snacks and branded foods online and 24.7% of the respondents buy all of these items online.

- 33% of the respondents are concerned with product quality, 21% of the respondents are concerned with product availability, 22% of the respondents are concerned with reasonable price, 19% of the respondents are concerned with product choice and 5% of the respondents are concerned with other factors.

- 44% of the respondents receive their order within few hours, 21% of the respondents receive their order on the same day, 21% of the respondents receive their order on the next day, 13% of the respondents receive their order within 2-4 days, and 1% of the respondents receive their order after 4 days

- 47 people stated that contactless delivery influences online grocery shopping the most and 5 people stated that contactless delivery influences online grocery shopping the least. 33 people stated that safe packaging influences online grocery shopping the most and 6 people stated that safe packaging influences online grocery shopping the least. 37 people stated that health consciousness influences online grocery shopping the most and 6 people stated that health consciousness influences online grocery shopping the least. 32 people stated that savings influences online grocery shopping the most and 6 people stated that savings influences online grocery shopping the least. 39 people stated that convenience influences online grocery shopping the most and 6 people stated that convenience influences online grocery shopping the least.

- 37 people face problems with the unhygienic delivery practices the most and 5 people face problems with the unhygienic delivery practices the least. 33 people face problems with the lack of freshness for edible products the most and 3 people face problems with the lack of freshness for edible products the least. 37 people face problems with the higher shipping charges the most and 3 people face problems with higher shipping charges the least. 25 people face problems with the poor product quality the most and 3 people face problems with the poor product quality the least. 26 people face problems with financial fraud the most and 13 people face problems with financial fraud the least. 62 people are highly satisfied with the fact that online grocery shopping eliminates problems of long queues/long distant travels and 1 person is highly dissatisfied with the fact that online grocery shopping eliminates problems of long queues/long distant travels. 42 people are satisfied with the fact that online grocery shopping provides a wide range of branded products of superior quality and 1 person is highly dissatisfied with the fact that online grocery shopping provides a wide range of branded products of superior quality. 54 people are highly satisfied with the fact that online grocery shopping packages are delivered at one's doorstep and no person is dissatisfied with the fact that packages are delivered at one's doorstep. 47 people are highly satisfied with the fact that online grocery shopping provides safe and easy payment through multiple payment channels and no person is dissatisfied with the fact that online grocery shopping provides safe and easy payment through multiple payment channels. 38 people are highly satisfied with the fact that online grocery shopping has the facility of higher responses to customer feedback and complaints and 2 people are highly dissatisfied with the fact that online grocery shopping has the facility of higher responses to customer feedback and complaints

- 44.4% of the respondents are likely to recommend online grocery shopping to others, 23.2% of the respondents are extremely likely to recommend online grocery shopping to others, 29.3% of the respondents are neutral about recommending online grocery shopping to others, and 3% of the respondents are unlikely to recommend online grocery shopping to others.

- 13.1% of the respondents consider branded product choice as the major factor for recommendation, 27.3% of the respondents consider hygiene and safe delivery as the major factor for recommendation, 6.1% of the respondents consider cashback and offers as the major factor for recommendation, 4% of the respondents consider inaugural shipping offers as the major factor for recommendation, and 49.5% of the respondents consider all the factors as the major factors for recommendation.

VI. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

While the online grocery retail industry is still in its infancy and just beginning to pick up some speed, it is clear that there are hidden opportunities there. This industry will expand in the future as a result of technological advancements. E-grocery retailers will bring succession growth to this industry because they can build brand equity, encourage customer loyalty, and encourage repeat purchases. The review showed that because of accommodation, online shopping for food is chiefly acknowledged. When you place your order online, you can quickly look for the items you need and place your order without having to walk through those long aisles. It is unquestionable that the current generation of online grocery retailers will continue to face challenges in the market, but major brands will quickly achieve success. These online grocery stores will keep adding more value and will have the advantage of being first to market because they have already seized the market while new technology continues to make it mainstream. However, in order to remain competitive in this market, both online and offline retailers must also add value to their operations. In India, the progress from disconnected to online retail business is reliant upon addressing propensities for shoppers and their acknowledgment to new players. The Indian market could benefit from more growth if retail trends shift.

Suggestions

- Due to the lack of online grocery store services, there is a significant untapped market in Tier 3 cities that online grocers should target as well.
- Online grocery stores should use newer methods to make their services more user-friendly and efficient in order to keep these customers because people have shown a positive response to them and are willing to continue using them after the pandemic.
- Today's online systems have trouble telling customers what products are actually in stock, what is fresh, and what other options there are for the product they want. This often leads customers to go to the nearest store to buy the product. To prevent this, automation should be used in all business functions. Customers are drawn to businesses that offer a wide range of products, so they should make sure that customers can easily find what they need.
- As actual assessment and assurance are the significant obstructions purchasers are looking while shopping on the web, online merchants ought to zero in on Item surveys. This way, customers will be able to gauge whether or not a product will meet their standards by observing how another customer used it. Because customers need to be able to trust the website they are purchasing from, it is necessary for building customer loyalty.
- Make the purchasers mindful of transportation charges, conveyance directions, and geological area took into consideration administration and different agreements all along.
- The delivery time should be reduced as much as possible by online grocery retailers.
- The items ought to be made accessible to customers at practical costs, more prominent limits and offers.
- Adding different installment choices, for example, Paypal, Money, and Giftcards and so on will draw in customers.

VII. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

- The significant limits of the study are that it is led exclusively inside the metropolitan city of Kolkata and among a little example respondent inside a restricted timeframe.
- The review is restricted to the metropolitan city so speculations isn't possible.
- The 100-person sample does not provide an accurate representation of the entire population.
- In comparison, the primary survey method used in this study takes more time.
- When respondents are able to read, write, and comprehend the content, questionnaires are only useful.
- Only if the questions are clear and to the point will the questionnaire method be useful.
- Poor answers to several queries and incomplete, erroneous information could not be avoided.

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