

A STUDY ON ONLINE SHOPPING BUYING BEHAVIOUR OF FEMALE STUDENTS IN TIRUNELVELI DISTRICT

Anu Radha S

(Reg.no:18223162008), Research Scholar, Scott Christian College (Autonomous),
Nagercoil, (Affiliated to Manonmaniam Sundaranar University, Abhisekapatti, Tirunelveli
– 627 012)

Dr.J.Jane Theeba Jeya Vanathy

Assistant Professor, Department of Business Studies, Scott Christian College,
(Autonomous), Nagercoil, (Affiliated to Manonmaniam Sundaranar University,
Abhisekapatti, Tirunelveli – 627 012)

Abstract

The rapid growth of e-commerce necessitates understanding online shopping attitudes and behaviors among young demographics like college students. However, there is limited contemporary research on post-pandemic dynamics among female students from conservative communities, who have traditionally been reluctant online buyers. This study investigates online shopping perspectives of 502 female undergraduate students from Tamil Nadu, India using a structured questionnaire. Guided by technology acceptance model, it tests a conceptual framework analyzing the relationships between awareness, ease of use, enjoyment, trust and other variables on perceived usefulness, attitude, intentions and actual buying. Statistical analysis provides valuable insights. Awareness, information quality, service quality and website quality significantly influence the perceived ease of use of online platforms. In turn, enjoyment and ease of use determine platform usefulness, shaping positive purchase intentions via favorable attitudes. Intentions strongly predict actual buying frequency. Additionally, website quality demonstrates the highest indirect effect on behavior through the mediators. These findings underline that while inherent conservatism causes hesitation, raising awareness through education and enhancing platform quality to improve usefulness can create welcoming online experiences for young women. As digital natives, targeted initiatives addressing their requirements for user-friendly design and reliable functionality can effectively boost engagement. The study recommends that to sustainably convert this high-potential segment, online retailers should run engagement campaigns focused on building trust and enjoyment in tandem with strengthening female-centric platform experiences.

Keywords: *Online Shopping, Ease of use, College Students, Buying Behaviour.*

Introduction

The Indian e-commerce industry has witnessed exponential growth in recent years, projected to balloon from US\$38.5 billion in 2017 to over \$200 billion by 2026. Much of this rapid expansion has been fueled by rising internet and smartphone adoption spurred by government

digital initiatives and expanding consumer spending power. India now stands as one of the world's fastest-growing e-commerce markets.

Leading domestic players like Flipkart and Amazon India are competing fiercely for market share, while niche and specialized e-tailers continue emerging across verticals. The COVID-19 pandemic further accelerated e-commerce uptake across the country, pulling in new demographics of online shoppers. Experts predict e-commerce could contribute up to 10% of India's total retail sales by 2025, signaling the sector's mounting influence on broader economic growth.

Both established enterprises and startups are focused on uniquely Indian e-commerce innovations around payments, logistics and language interfaces. National policy reforms aim to standardize e-retail operations for streamlined vendor onboarding and consumer protection protocols. As internet connectivity strengthens across India's farthest corners, a young, tech-savvy population stands prepared to shape e-commerce's future while taking advantage of its conveniences and job potentials. The stage appears set for Indian online retail to graduate from its cheerful adolescence into a more mature, refined and sophisticated adulthood.

The key factors empowering this e-commerce boom involve widespread mobile and wireless adoption, supportive government policies, rising consumer incomes and purchasing power, sophisticated logistics networks, as well as cultural shifts towards online buying behaviors across urban and rural markets. This confluence of infrastructural and societal drivers has set the trajectory for Indian e-commerce entering a new stage of high – potentially unprecedented – growth.

Review of Literature

Bancoro (2023) analyzes factors driving online shopping preferences and behaviors among 319 university business students in the Philippines using surveys. The paper finds a high rate of online purchasing experience for clothes, accessories and electronics among this youth demographic. Perceived ease of use and convenience were top motivators for online shopping, which most students preferred over in-store. However, risks around product quality and delivery delays remained barriers for some. While limited to one student population, results provide useful insights into key e-commerce criteria among digitally-immersed youth consumers. As online retail expands globally, understanding these influential drivers of adoption among young shoppers will be increasingly important in emerging markets.

Al Asheq et al. (2022) examine factors driving online shopping intentions among 339 university students in Bangladesh. Using surveys and regression analysis, they find perceived trust, convenience, website quality and subjective norms all positively influence students' intentions to purchase from e-commerce sites. Convenience exhibited the strongest effect size. The authors conclude by discussing practical implications for online retailers in targeting youth consumers via building trust, maximizing convenience, optimizing site design and leveraging peer influence.

The paper by Islam (2021) on online shopping behavior among students from Belt and Road countries studying in China. Using qualitative surveys of 105 international students in Beijing, he provides an initial exploration of online shopping perspectives and e-commerce

adoption among youth consumer demographics from nations part of China's Belt & Road Initiative (BRI). The paper finds significant openness to online purchasing among this digitally-engaged university cohort based on factors like convenience and access to global products. Islam concludes captive youth segments in BRI emerging economies will be pivotal for future cross-border online retail growth as trade links between China and partner countries continue expanding under geopolitical and development frameworks like the BRI. While based on a limited sample, it offers a foundation for ongoing investigation around student online shopping habits and attitudes between China and its regional trade allies.

Magalhães and Oliveira (2021) explore shifts in online shopping attitudes and behaviors among Portuguese university students before and during COVID-19 lockdowns. Using surveys, they assess e-commerce trust perceptions and purchasing habits within this influential young consumer demographic. Results indicate pandemic conditions accelerated adoption of online buying for categories like groceries and pharmacy items previously purchased in-store. Most students intend to maintain these new digital shopping habits post-lockdowns. The research provides early data on how COVID-19 may durably shape online commerce trends among digitally-native youth consumers in hard-hit countries like Portugal. Findings suggest e-retailers and brands should continue catering to convenience and experience preferences cemented during the health crisis among students and similar segments coming of age during the rise of e-commerce.

Statement of the problems

The COVID-19 pandemic necessitated a major shift to online shopping across all consumer demographics. However, pre-existing research on e-commerce adoption indicates that women, especially in conservative communities, have traditionally been more hesitant in embracing online buying compared to their male counterparts. This phenomenon persists even among educated younger cohorts like female college students.

The recent pandemic circumstances overturned many social conventions and nudged new first-time users, including reluctant women consumers, towards e-commerce in an unprecedented manner. Yet there remains a dearth of contemporary insight on how these crisis-triggered virtual shopping experiences have enduringly impacted attitudes and online behaviors among the female college student demographic specifically.

Now over two years into the pandemic, the current moment allows for timely investigation of post-COVID dynamics vis-à-vis online shopping adoption among young higher education women learners. As an inherently conservative consumer category harboring reservations around online retail, probing their latest perspectives and digital buying patterns can reveal crucial behavioral shifts with both academic and commercial value.

Specifically, understanding residual hesitations and evolving comfort levels among hitherto cautiously engaged female students in today's normalized e-commerce climate can help academia and industry ascertain post-pandemic thresholds for online shopping acceptance among similar conservative segments. These pandemic-era learnings can strategically guide e-commerce

players in crafting targeted initiatives to sustainably convert these high-potential niches into permanent digital retail shopper bases going forward.

Objectives of the study

1. To assess the influence of perceived ease of use on perceived usefulness in the context of online shopping among the sample population.
2. To evaluate the effect of perceived usefulness on attitudes towards online shopping among the sample population.
3. To examine the relationship between attitudes towards online shopping and online purchase intentions among the sample population.
4. To determine the impact of online purchase intentions on actual buying behavior related to online shopping among the sample population.

Hypotheses of the study

H_a- Ease of use has positive influence on perceived usefulness.

H_a-perceived Usefulness has positive influence on attitude towards online shopping.

H_a- attitude towards online shopping has positive influence on purchase intention.

H_a- purchase intention has positive influence on buying behaviour.

Methodology

The methodology of this study involved a detailed sampling plan to accurately gather data from relevant samples. The universe of the study comprised female students from higher educational institutions, with the specific population being students from Arts and Science colleges affiliated with Manonmaniam Sundaranar University in Kanyakumari district. The sampling unit focused on female students who engage in online shopping. For this study, the minimum required sample size was set at 384, but to ensure greater accuracy and based on insights from a pilot study, the researcher targeted 570 respondents involved in online buying from the specified demographic in Tamil Nadu. Out of these, 521 responded, and ultimately, 502 complete and suitable responses were selected for the research. These respondents were chosen using a Purposive sampling technique, a type of Non-probability sampling method. Data collection was carried out through a Structured Questionnaire, focusing on the questionnaire method, and the gathered data was meticulously processed, edited, and tabulated for analytical purposes, ensuring a thorough and targeted approach to understanding the online shopping behaviors of this specific group.

Data Analysis

This section presents a path analysis conducted to explore the relationships among various constructs related to online shopping behavior. The analysis focuses on the influence of ease of use, perceived usefulness, attitude towards online shopping, and purchase intention on buying behavior. The path analysis includes four hypotheses:

H_a- Ease of use has positive influence on perceived usefulness.

H_a-perceived Usefulness has positive influence on attitude towards online shopping.

H_a- attitude towards online shopping has positive influence on purchase intention.

H_a- purchase intention has positive influence on buying behaviour.

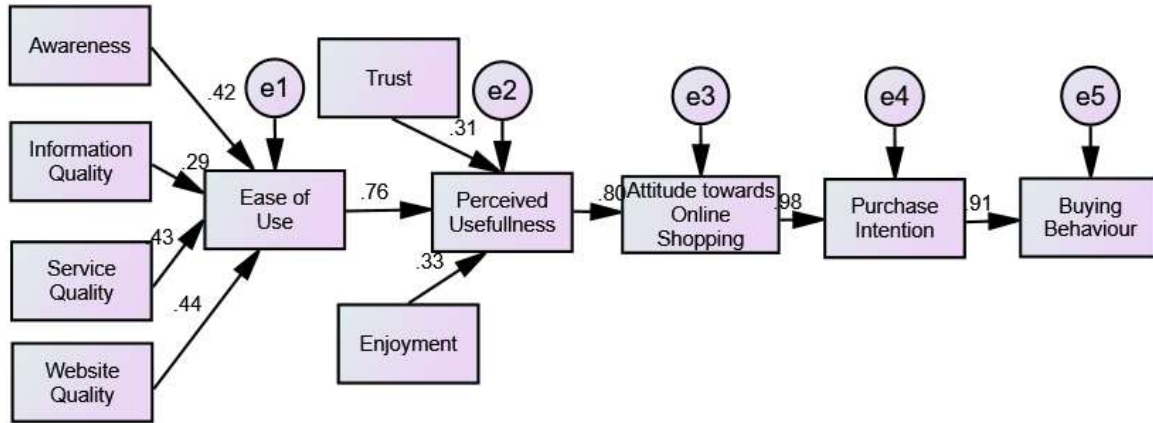


Fig. 1 Path Analysis from awareness to Buying Behaviour

Table No. 1
Unstandardized Regression Weights

	Paths		Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P	Label
Ease of Use	<---	Awareness	.259	.017	15.636	***	Supported
Ease of Use	<---	Information Quality	.157	.014	10.946	***	Supported
Ease of Use	<---	Service quality	.260	.016	15.965	***	Supported
Ease of Use	<---	Website Quality	.250	.015	16.617	***	Supported
Usefulness	<---	Trust	.132	.009	15.184	***	Supported
Usefulness	<---	Enjoyment	.159	.010	16.043	***	Supported
Usefulness	<---	Ease of Use	.639	.017	37.184	***	Supported
Attitude	<---	Usefulness	1.075	.036	30.135	***	Supported
Intention	<---	Attitude	.993	.009	108.759	***	Supported
Behaviour	<---	Intention	.957	.019	49.421	***	Supported

The table details the influence of various factors on the ease of use and their subsequent impact on perceived usefulness, attitude, intention, and behavior. Key observations include:

Ease of Use: Influenced positively by awareness, information quality, service quality, and website quality, as indicated by the significant positive regression weights. This suggests that improvements in these areas can enhance the ease of use of online shopping platforms.

Perceived Usefulness: Significantly influenced by trust, enjoyment, and ease of use. The high weight for ease of use (.639) indicates its strong effect on perceived usefulness.

Attitude towards Online Shopping: Strongly influenced by perceived usefulness, as indicated by the high regression weight (1.075). This underlines the importance of perceived usefulness in shaping positive attitudes.

Purchase Intention: Directly influenced by attitude towards online shopping, with a very high regression weight (.993), suggesting a strong link between a positive attitude and the intention to purchase.

Buying Behavior: Influenced by purchase intention, with a high weight (.957), indicating that intentions strongly translate into actual buying behavior.

Table No. 2
Effect size of Paths

Independent Variable	Mediator 1	Mediator 2	Mediator 3	Mediator 4	Dependent Variable	Effect Size
Awareness	Ease of Use	Perceived Usefulness	Attitude	Purchase Intention	Buying Behaviour	.227
Information Quality	Ease of Use	Perceived Usefulness	Attitude	Purchase Intention	Buying Behaviour	.157
Service Quality	Ease of Use	Perceived Usefulness	Attitude	Purchase Intention	Buying Behaviour	.233
Website Quality	Ease of Use	Perceived Usefulness	Attitude	Purchase Intention	Buying Behaviour	.238

The table examines the effect sizes of different independent variables (Awareness, Information Quality, Service Quality, and Website Quality) through mediators (Ease of Use, Perceived Usefulness, Attitude, Purchase Intention) on the dependent variable, Buying Behavior.

Awareness: Has an effect size of .227 on buying behavior, indicating a moderate to strong influence when mediated through ease of use, perceived usefulness, attitude, and purchase intention.

Information Quality: Exhibits a lower effect size (.157), suggesting its influence is significant but less strong compared to other factors.

Service Quality: Shows a strong influence with an effect size of .233, highlighting the importance of service quality in the online shopping experience.

Website Quality: Has the highest effect size (.238), underscoring the critical role of website design and functionality in influencing buying behavior.

Overall, these tables provide valuable insights into how various factors contribute to the online shopping experience and ultimately influence consumer behavior. The results emphasize

the importance of ease of use, perceived usefulness, and a positive attitude in driving purchase intentions and subsequent buying behavior.

Findings

The path analysis conducted to understand the relationship between various factors in online shopping behavior has yielded several key findings:

1. Ease of use is significantly influenced by awareness, information quality, service quality, and website quality. This finding suggests that customers' perception of how easy an online shopping platform is to use is shaped by their overall awareness and the quality of information, service, and website they interact with.
2. Trust, enjoyment, and ease of use are substantial predictors of perceived usefulness. This indicates that the more customers trust a website, enjoy using it, and find it easy to use, the more useful they perceive it to be.
3. A very strong relationship is found between perceived usefulness and attitude towards online shopping. This means that enhancing the perceived usefulness of a site can significantly improve customers' attitudes towards shopping there.
4. There is a very strong direct influence of a customer's attitude towards online shopping on their purchase intention. Positive attitudes are almost directly proportional to the intention to make a purchase.
5. Purchase intention is a strong predictor of actual buying behavior. This highlights the importance of converting positive attitudes and intentions into actual sales.
6. The effect sizes vary for different independent variables, with website quality showing the highest effect size on buying behavior. This emphasizes the crucial role of website quality in driving consumer behavior in the online shopping domain.

Suggestions

Based on the findings from the path analysis, several suggestions can be made to improve the online shopping experience and enhance customer buying behavior:

Enhancing Ease of Use:

User-Friendly Design: Online platforms should focus on user-friendly interfaces, simplifying navigation and transaction processes.

Clear Information Display: Ensuring that product information and prices are easily accessible and understandable.

Boosting Perceived Usefulness:

Reliable and Relevant Content: Providing accurate and helpful product descriptions and reviews to enhance the perceived value of the website.

Effective Communication: Regular updates about new arrivals, offers, and relevant content can enhance the perceived usefulness of the platform.

Improving Attitude Towards Online Shopping:

Customer Engagement: Engaging with customers through personalized recommendations and interactive elements.

Trust-Building Measures: Implementing strong security measures and clear return policies to build customer trust.

Strengthening Purchase Intention:

Promotional Activities: Offering discounts, loyalty programs, and limited-time offers can motivate purchase intentions.

Social Proof: Showcasing customer testimonials and ratings can positively influence potential buyers.

Enhancing Website and Service Quality:

Website Optimization: Continuous improvement in website design, speed, and functionality.

Quality Customer Service: Providing prompt and helpful customer service to address inquiries and resolve issues.

Conclusion

The path analysis has revealed significant insights into how ease of use, perceived usefulness, attitude towards online shopping, and purchase intention are interconnected and collectively impact buying behavior in the online shopping context. The findings underscore the importance of a holistic approach in enhancing the online shopping experience, where each aspect from website quality to customer service plays a critical role. By focusing on these key areas, online retailers can not only improve user experience but also drive higher engagement and sales. It is evident that in the digital age, where competition is fierce, attention to these details can significantly influence customer satisfaction and loyalty, ultimately leading to sustained business growth.

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