

Trends in Online Shopping for Fashion Products in the State of Himachal Pradesh

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Abstract

The study included 1500 Himachal Pradesh residents of Shimla and Solan cities. The study sample was selected using convenience sampling, and a structured questionnaire was employed to collect data. Descriptive and inferential data analyses were performed. Appropriate statistical tools were used to achieve the study's objectives and hypotheses, such as Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA), reliability analysis, validity analysis, mediation analysis, moderation analysis, Structural Equation Modelling (SEM), t-tests, ANOVA, etc. Online shopping awareness positively affects fashion product buying decisions, establishing a substantial association.

Keywords: Online shopping • Fashion products • Perceived challenges • Awareness level • Influencing factors

Introduction

In 2023, India has 1.2 billion internet users, second worldwide. Mobile phones connected 1.05 billion people to the internet. Mobile internet accounted for 73% of India's web traffic in 2019. This happened, how? Two elements fuel South Asia's rapid mobile internet growth. First, affordable cellphones have made digital literacy and adoption easier since 2010. Secondly, the Indian government extended telecom spectrum licenses to induce investment [1].

Shopping, digital payments, digital ads, social media content consumption, and the D2C ecosystem demonstrate India's fast digitalization. Livemint reports 22% digital ad spending, ahead of the UK (9.3%), US (10%), Australia (5.8%), France (11%), and China (3.3%). A recent study estimated that India would top retail e-commerce development among 20 nations between 2023 and 2027, gaining 14.11 percent yearly. India has 63.17 billion dollars in e-commerce. Argentine and Brazilian e-commerce markets are growing fastest, with 13.63 and 14.07 percent CAGRs. The global retail e-commerce CAGR was 11.16 percent [2]. Online clients are growing in market share. Consumers can buy, interact, and create [3].

Concept of fashion products

Fashion includes clothing, footwear, accessories, and cosmetics that reflect individual individuality and embrace the zeitgeist of a given age. They typically represent designers' ingenuity and consumers'

desire to express themselves in modern ways [4]. Online shopping has created a massive digital marketplace for fashion products from domestic and international businesses. This has given consumers more options and the flexibility to browse a variety of styles and patterns from home.

Literature Review

Many studies have examined worldwide consumer online buying behaviour from diverse angles, but few are completely assessed. This review would help uncover knowledge gaps and deepen understanding. A national and international literature review on online purchase topics pertinent to the proposed study has been collected. A literature review on several aspects of the topic is as follows:

Customers' branded ready-made garment purchases are examined in this study. The study also investigates customer purchase influences. This study measures consumer awareness of accessible brands and looks at buying habits. Internal and external variables influence consumer purchase. Himachal Pradesh's apparel industry is underdeveloped, so enterprises can profit. Many Himachal Pradesh shoppers prefer international and non-branded clothing. International-branded garments are better than non-branded. Himachal Pradesh consumers are becoming more conscious of global brands [5].

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Sustainability and eco-fashion perceptions, awareness, and attitudes were examined in 263 buying power clients. Data was analysed using descriptive statistics and correlation. Participants were optimistic about fashion enterprises' long-term viability. A positive association was found between fashion brand sustainability and customer purchases of sustainable apparel [6].

This study analyses how Instagram helps fashion firms develop online stores and measure client feedback. Social media has changed marketing formats in the past decade. Many companies demand fresh startup communication methods. They consider these portals to have modern, affordable client outreach. A case study examines how age and gender affect Instagram marketing and sales. Consumer Instagram reactions and marketing are examined. Statistics show that some methods improve consumer perception dramatically. Instagram boosts business website and online store traffic, a study shows [7].

Research gap

Nowadays, online shopping is a common phenomenon. It is well-established worldwide and growing rapidly in India. The review of the literature indicated that most online buying research has been done abroad and in India in the past 5–6 years. Few fashion product studies have been done in Himachal Pradesh. Most research has examined demographics, perceived risk, website design, and consumer behavior. Thus, a study is needed to investigate how these factors, including mediating and moderating variables, affect online shoppers' thoughts and actions [8].

Objectives of the study

- To analyse the demographic attributes of customers.
- To assess the extent of customer awareness of online shopping trends in the fashion industry.
- To determine the variables that impact consumer shopping behavior and the perceived challenges associated with buying fashion products online.
- To evaluate customer satisfaction and determine the influence of online shopping on consumer buying behavior towards fashion products.

Research methodology

The research methodology used for the study covers the research design, universe of the study, sampling technique, sample size, tools and techniques for data collection, and data analysis.

Research design

A descriptive research design has been adopted in the current study. This kind of research design, as its name implies, describes a population's characteristics. It entails identifying the research problem and developing pertinent research hypotheses. Along with the content, setting, and methodology for the study, it details the goals of the investigation.

Universe of the study

The study was conducted among the citizens of all 34 wards and 17 wards of the Municipal Corporation, Shimla, and Solan cities, respectively. The data for the study was collected from October to December of 2023.

Sampling technique

The sample size was selected using the "Convenience sampling technique", based on scientific data from previous studies and the specific requirements of the present study.

Sample size

In order to achieve the objectives of the study, the final sample size was set at 1500 respondents, *i.e.*, 780 from Shimla and 720 from Solan cities. The proportionate participation of male and female respondents in the final sample from both cities was decided on the basis of the ratio of registered male and female populations in both cities.

Data collection method

For the present study, the primary data was collected with the help of structured questionnaire administered to sample respondents of Shimla and Solan cities. Additionally, secondary data was collected from books, journals, newspapers, websites, theses, and other government documents.

Research instrument

The questionnaire was designed in "Google Forms," and the link to it was shared through social media platforms such as WhatsApp, emails, etc. All the variables of the study were measured on a 5-point Likert scale, and the questionnaire was divided into six sections as per the objectives of the study.

Data analysis

The data analysis was divided into two sections: descriptive analysis and inferential analysis. Appropriate statistical tools, *e.g.*, Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA), reliability analysis, validity analysis, mediation analysis, moderation analysis, Structural Equation Modelling (SEM), t-tests, ANOVA, etc., were applied in order to achieve the stipulated objectives and hypotheses of the study.

Results and Discussion

- It was found that the majority of participants, *i.e.*, 777 (51.8%), are between the ages of 18 and 25 years.
- Out of the total sample, there are 818 men (54.5%) and 682 women (45.5%).
- The majority of participants, 43.3% (650 individuals), have obtained their bachelor's degree,
- Out of total sample *i.e.*, 695 (46.3%) are students, followed by private employees, *i.e.*, 449 (29.9%), and 185 (12.3%) are businessmen.

- It was found that the majority of participants, *i.e.*, 969 (64.6%), are unmarried.
- Out of the total sample, the majority of participants, *i.e.*, 925 (61.7%), belonged to the nuclear family.
- The data demonstrates that the largest proportion, accounting for 26.80% (402 participants), is associated with households earning a monthly income exceeding Rs. 65000.
- Out of the total sample, the majority of respondents, *i.e.*, 1262 (84.1%), reported using smartphones as their primary means of accessing the internet, indicating a strong preference for mobile connectivity. Laptops are the second most popular choice, with 207 (13.8%) respondents, while desktop computers are the least utilised device, representing only 2.1% (31 respondents) of the sample.
- It has been established that around 609 (40.6%) of the participants spend 2-3 hours online every day, with 474 (31.6%) reporting spending 4-5 hours online.
- The majority of participants, *i.e.*, 714 (47.6%), have been actively shopping online for the past 4-6 years, and 580 (38.7%) for the past 1-3 years.
- It is concluded that the majority of participants reported shopping online on a monthly basis, accounting for 52.3% (785 participants) of the total sample.
- It is inferred that 450 participants (30%) stated that they visit actual retail stores before buying online, indicating a substantial preference for in-person shopping. 639 participants (42.6%) stated that they occasionally visit physical retail stores before buying online, indicating a mix of buying strategies.
- It can be concluded that the majority of participants have expressed a positive attitude towards WhatsApp (mean value: 4.37), Facebook (mean value: 4.23), and Instagram (4.19), with them being the 'most favourite' social media websites among the rest, whereas Tumblr (mean value: 2.81) has been ranked as the 'least favourite' social media website.
- It was found that the majority of participants, *i.e.*, 1189 (79.3%), strongly agree on the point that they use the Internet for communication purposes.
- It can be inferred that the majority of participants prefer to buy products in the clothing segment (mean value: 4.42), followed by accessories (mean value: 3.83), and footwear (3.79). Whereas, jewelry is considered the least preferred item among the participants, with a mean value of 3.05.
- The majority of participants, *i.e.*, 990 individuals (66%), preferred UPI payments for online shopping.
- It can be concluded that the majority of participants have expressed a positive attitude towards Amazon (mean value: 4.63), Flipkart (mean value: 4.30), Myntra (4.24), Meesho (mean value: 3.72), and Nykaa (3.62) being the top five most favourite online shopping websites among all, whereas Shopclues (mean value: 2.97) has been ranked as the least favourite online shopping website.
- It was discovered that the majority of participants sources of awareness about online shopping websites came from friend recommendations (mean value: 4.21), followed by social media advertisements (mean value: 3.85), and television advertisements (mean value: 3.83). Whereas, email advertisements (mean value: 3.30) have been classified as the least important source of awareness about online shopping websites.
- This research has identified several significant factors that participants consider before doing online shopping. These factors include time savings (mean value: 4.51), exclusive availability of products (mean value: 4.16), price discounts (mean value: 4.15), variety of product choices (mean value: 4.11), easy payment options (mean value: 4.10).
- Although to some extent every factor is considered a perceived challenge while doing online shopping, there are still certain significant factors that are identified and ranked among the top five perceived challenges by the participants, such as the inability to touch, feel, or see the actual product in order to access its actual quality (mean value: 4.57), fear of misuse of personal information entered on the shopping website (mean value: 4.11), fear that the product delivered might differ from what was advertised on the website (mean value: 4.04), fear of online financial fraud (mean value: 3.99), and doubt on the actual performance of the product (mean value: 3.91).
- After the analysis, the five most significant factors in calculating participants' satisfaction level towards online shopping are as follows: Ease of using websites (mean value: 4.64), product categories (mean value: 4.19), discount offers (mean value: 4.04), payment options (including UPI, debit card, credit card, EMI, and COD) (mean value: 4.00), and return and cancellation policy (mean value: 3.92).
- Approximately three-quarters of the participants, *i.e.*, 1127 (75.1%), expressed substantial satisfaction with their entire experience of shopping online. The mean total satisfaction score is 4.101, indicating a predominantly high level of contentment among the participants, with most of them expressing positive satisfaction.
- After the analysis, the five most significant factors identified in reference to the impact of online shopping trends on customer buying behavior towards online shopping are as follows: increase in shopping frequency (mean value: 4.53), easy comparison of price (mean value: 4.22), easy comparison of products (mean value: 4.12), latest product designs (mean value: 4.05), and unplanned purchase (mean value: 4.02).
- Out of the 1,500 participants, most (84.8%) stated that their online buying habits have increased post COVID-19. It suggests a notable shift towards greater online purchasing.
- At least 720 people (48.0%) stated they recommend online shopping to others "Always." A significant portion, 664 (44.3%), said "Sometimes," while 116 (7.7%) said "Rarely." It implies that most respondents recommended online shopping to others regularly or occasionally.
- Out of the 1,500 participants, 959 (63.9%) expressed that online shopping adversely affects the sales of shopkeepers, whereas 176 (11.7%) had a contrary opinion, indicating no such impact. Moreover, 365 (24.3%) participants expressed uncertainty or neutrality, indicating that the impact could be ambiguous or subject to change.
- Out of the total sample, 75.1% (1127 participants) held a favorable perspective, affirming that online shopping possesses significant potential. Only a small fraction, specifically 7.6% (114 participants), expressed a pessimistic viewpoint, asserting that internet

shopping lacks substantial potential in the future. Conversely, a total of 17.3% (259 participants) expressed uncertainty or readiness toward the idea, indicating their response as "May be." The greater frequency of positive replies suggests that most respondents hold an overall optimistic view of the potential of online shopping.

Conclusion

This study found numerous key findings. First, online shopping awareness positively affects fashion product purchases, establishing a substantial association. Customer satisfaction with online purchasing is positively correlated with online shopping awareness. Customer satisfaction increases purchase habits. The factors that influence online fashion purchases affect customer buying behavior. Customer satisfaction also mediates influencing factors and buying behavior. However, it does not moderate the relationship between perceived challenges and customer buying behavior. The study shows significant differences in customer buying behavior by gender, age, education, occupation, marital status, family type, and family monthly income. These findings illuminate the complicated dynamics of online shopping trends and their effects on Himachal Pradesh fashion consumers.

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