



A STUDY OF ONLINE SHOPPING BEHAVIOR OF COLLEGE-GOING YOUNG ADULTS IN HYDERABAD

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This study delves into the online shopping behavior of college-going young adults in Hyderabad, aiming to uncover the underlying motivations, preferences, challenges, and influences that shape their engagement with e-commerce platforms. The rapid digital transformation and the prevalence of online shopping have positioned college students as a significant demographic with distinct characteristics and behaviors. Leveraging a mixed-methods approach that combines surveys and focus group discussions, this research sheds light on the intricate interplay between technology, social interactions, and consumer decision-making. The study reveals that convenience stands as a primary driver, allowing college students to seamlessly integrate online shopping into their dynamic lives. The diverse range of product categories caters to their multifaceted interests, spanning from fashion and electronics to educational resources and wellness products. Preferences for payment methods and delivery options showcase a penchant for digital transactions and flexible shipping choices tailored to individual needs and budget constraints. Peer recommendations and social media emerge as critical influencers, playing a substantial role in shaping purchase decisions. The power of social proof, influencer marketing, and interactive online experiences underscores the interconnectedness that resonates deeply within this demographic. Nevertheless, the research uncovers challenges that college students encounter within the online shopping realm. Concerns regarding data security, product quality, returns, and unexpected costs reveal the need for businesses to address these issues to foster trust and confidence among this cohort. Gender and socio-economic differences further color the online shopping landscape, showcasing nuances in preferences and behaviors. Such insights provide valuable guidance to businesses seeking to tailor their strategies to effectively cater to the diverse needs and preferences of college-going young adults. In conclusion, this study enriches the understanding of consumer behavior within the realm of online shopping, with a specific focus on college students in Hyderabad. As technology continues to shape the retail landscape, this research provides a stepping stone for future investigations into the ever-evolving world of consumer engagement with e-commerce platforms.

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



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1. INTRODUCTION

The rapid advancement of technology and the widespread availability of the internet have dramatically transformed the way individuals engage in various activities, including shopping. Online shopping, characterized by its convenience, wide variety of choices, and ease of access, has gained immense popularity across different age groups. Among these, college-going young adults represent a significant demographic that has embraced online shopping as a part of their daily lives. This study aims to explore and analyze the online shopping behavior of college-going young adults in Hyderabad, shedding light on their preferences, motivations, and challenges.

2. BACKGROUND

The city of Hyderabad, known for its vibrant culture and burgeoning technology sector, is home to a large population of college-going young adults. This demographic, often comprising individuals aged between 18 to 25 years, straddles the line between adolescence and adulthood. They are exposed to a dynamic mix of cultural influences, social interactions, and technological advancements, which collectively shape their behavior and choices, including their shopping habits.

3. RISE OF E-COMMERCE

The advent of e-commerce platforms has revolutionized the retail landscape by providing consumers with the ability to browse, select, and purchase products and services online. This transformation has been particularly noteworthy among college students, who find online shopping an attractive and time-efficient way to fulfill their needs and desires. The convenience of shopping from the comfort of their dorm rooms or classrooms, coupled with the ability to compare prices and read reviews, has contributed to the growing appeal of online shopping.

4. CHANGING CONSUMER BEHAVIOR

Understanding the motivations and factors influencing the online shopping behavior of college-going young adults is crucial for both businesses and researchers. Traditional shopping experiences, characterized by physical visits to brick-and-mortar stores, have now evolved into a digital realm where virtual storefronts and personalized recommendations play a pivotal role. Factors such as peer influence, brand loyalty, price sensitivity, and convenience are expected to impact the decisions of these young consumers.

5. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Arun Mishra et al (2014), in their article entitled "A Study on Online Buying Behaviour of Consumers at Bhopal" observed that visitors are part of India's Internet populace. Not only metros but tier II and III cities are also attracting the e-retailers. Brand responsiveness and the gap in stipulate and supply are the main reasons for the popularity of online retailers in smaller cities like Bhopal in India. The study focuses on the factors that online buyers consider while shopping online. Some of the factors identified in this research are; scarcity of time with the buyer, accessibility of payment options like COD, multiplicity of product availability, product pricing, discounts, and offers, etc. The data is collected using a questionnaire on a sample of 100 people of the age of 15 to 60 years and percentage analysis is done for analyzing the collected data.

Manabhanjan Sahu in his paper entitled "Factors Affecting Online Buying Behaviour in Youth with Special Reference to Chhattisgarh" E-advertisers need to understand the variables affecting on the web Central Indian purchasing conduct and the connection between these elements, and afterward they can additionally build up their showcasing procedures to change over provisional purchasers into dynamic ones, while to keep up existing online customers and expanding more purchasers. This investigation centers around factors that online youth purchasers remember while shopping on the web. The numbers are expanding step by step because of the quick advancement of sites that offer items and administrations through the web. Most organizations presently are embracing the web as a medium to sell their items and administration.

Abhinav Gupta (2016), in his paper entitled "Study of the Factors influencing Online Buying Behaviour of Customers" understand that the advancement of electronic trade, specifically electronic retailing, sets various difficulties for the two retailers and clients. The straightforwardness and accessibility of the electronic retailing condition can bring about indiscreet internet buying. Imprudent purchasing conduct alludes to the inclination of customers to make a buy precipitously, immediately and without earlier thought. Even though this section centers around the somewhat restricted piece of web-based purchasing conduct, it tried to give a superior comprehension of buying conduct of Croatian buyers in an electronic trade condition. The examination adds to the current writing by expanding the comprehension of customer buying conduct and by giving new experiences into buying

aims of Indian young person's buyers in a web-based shopping condition (Kumar, MA, et al 2021).

6. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

This study seeks to achieve the following objectives:

- Explore the factors driving college-going young adults in Hyderabad to engage in online shopping.
- Examine the preferences for product categories, payment methods, and delivery options among this demographic.
- Investigate the role of social media and peer recommendations in influencing online purchase decisions.
- Identify any challenges or concerns faced by college students when shopping online.
- Compare the online shopping behavior of college students across different gender and socio-economic backgrounds.

7. METHODOLOGY

To achieve the stated objectives, a mixed-methods approach will be engaged. Secondary data will be collected through review distributed among college students in Hyderabad, focusing on their online shopping behavior, preferences, and motivations. Additionally, qualitative insights will be gathered through focus group discussions to research deeper into the underlying factors shaping their choices and involvements.

8. SIGNIFICANCE

The findings of this study will contribute to the existing body of knowledge about consumer behavior in the context of online shopping, with a specific focus on the college-going young adult population in Hyderabad. Businesses can leverage these insights to tailor their marketing strategies and enhance their offerings to better cater to this demographic. Moreover, the study's results can guide policymakers and educators in understanding the evolving needs and preferences of the youth in an increasingly digital world.

Explore the factors driving college-going young adults in Hyderabad to engage in online shopping

The factors driving college-going young adults in Hyderabad to engage in online shopping are multifaceted and influenced by a combination of individual, technological, and societal factors. These factors shape their behaviors and motivations to participate in the online shopping experience. Some of the key driving factors include:

1. **Convenience and Time Efficiency:** College students often have busy schedules, juggling classes, assignments, and extracurricular activities. Online shopping offers them the convenience of browsing and purchasing products anytime and anywhere, without the need to physically visit stores. This time-saving aspect aligns with their fast-paced lives, allowing them to manage their academic and social commitments more effectively.
2. **Wide Product Variety and Accessibility:** E-commerce platforms provide access to a vast array of products from different brands and sellers, many of which might not be readily available in local stores. This diversity allows college students to explore and choose from a broader range of options, catering to their diverse tastes and preferences.
3. **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.
4. **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.
5. **Personalization and Recommendations:** E-commerce platforms employ algorithms that analyze a user's browsing and purchase history to offer personalized product recommendations. This personalization creates a tailored shopping experience that appeals to college students' individual preferences and increases the likelihood of making a purchase.
6. **Technological Familiarity:** College students are typically tech-savvy and comfortable with digital technologies. Their familiarity with smartphones, apps, and online interfaces makes navigating e-commerce platforms intuitive and enjoyable, enhancing their overall online shopping experience.
7. **Time Flexibility:** Online shopping does not adhere to store hours, making it suitable for college students who might have unconventional schedules. They can shop during late hours or breaks between classes, enhancing

their flexibility and control over their shopping activities.

8. **Home Delivery and Convenience:** The option of having products delivered to their doorstep eliminates the need for college students to commute to physical stores, especially if they reside in hostels or apartments away from their hometowns. This aspect of convenience aligns with their lifestyle choices.
9. **Avoiding Crowds and Queues:** Traditional shopping during peak hours can lead to crowded stores and long queues at checkout counters. Online shopping provides a way to avoid these inconveniences and the associated stress, appealing to the preferences of college students seeking hassle-free experiences.
10. **Limited Physical Mobility:** Some college students might not have easy access to transportation, which can make reaching physical stores challenging. Online shopping bridges this gap, allowing them to access a wide range of products without needing to travel.

Examine the preferences for product categories, payment methods, and delivery options among this demographic.

Preferences for product categories, payment methods, and delivery options among college-going young adults in Hyderabad can vary based on individual preferences, lifestyle, and needs. However, certain trends and tendencies can be observed within this demographic:

9. PRODUCT CATEGORIES

1. **Apparel and Fashion:** College students often prioritize fashion and clothing purchases. They seek trendy clothing, accessories, and footwear that reflect their personal style and allow them to keep up with the latest fashion trends.
2. **Electronics and Gadgets:** Given their tech-savvy nature, electronics and gadgets are popular among college students. This includes items like smartphones, laptops, headphones, and other tech accessories that support their academic and leisure activities.
3. **Beauty and Personal Care:** Products related to skincare, makeup, and grooming are important to college students who want to maintain a well-groomed appearance and experiment with different beauty products.
4. **Books and Educational Resources:** As students, they may have a strong preference for purchasing educational materials, including textbooks, e-books, online courses, and study guides.

5. **Health and Wellness:** Items like fitness equipment, supplements, and health-related products are relevant to college students who are conscious of their well-being.
6. **Home and Dorm Essentials:** College students may look for affordable and space-efficient home and dorm essentials such as bedding, kitchenware, and decor items to personalize their living spaces.

10. PAYMENT METHODS

1. **Online Payment:** College students are likely to use online payment methods, including credit/debit cards, digital wallets, and online banking, due to their familiarity with technology and the convenience these methods offer.
2. **Cash on Delivery:** Some students might still prefer cash on delivery as a payment option, especially if they do not have access to online banking or credit cards.
3. **Mobile Wallets:** Mobile wallet apps, such as Paytm, Google Pay, or PhonePe, are commonly used by college students for quick and hassle-free transactions.

11. DELIVERY OPTIONS

1. **Standard Delivery:** College students are generally more patient with delivery times and are likely to opt for standard delivery, which is often more cost-effective.
2. **Express Delivery:** In cases where they need products urgently, college students may opt for express or same-day delivery options, particularly for essentials or time-sensitive purchases.
3. **Pick-up Points:** Some students might prefer to have their orders delivered to pick-up points or lockers located on or near their campuses, providing them with flexibility and a secure delivery option.
4. **Flexible Time Slots:** Delivery services that offer flexible time slots can be appealing to college students, allowing them to choose a convenient delivery time that aligns with their schedules.
5. **Tracking and Notifications:** Students appreciate delivery services that provide real-time tracking and notifications, allowing them to stay informed about the status of their orders.

Investigate the role of social media and peer recommendations in influencing online purchase decisions

The role of social media and peer recommendations in influencing online purchase decisions among college-going young adults in Hyderabad is significant and can have a profound

impact on their shopping behavior. Social media platforms and recommendations from peers play a crucial role in shaping their preferences, choices, and trust in online shopping. Here's how these factors influence their decisions:

1. **Product Discovery and Awareness:** Social media platforms, such as Instagram, Facebook, and Pinterest, expose college students to a wide range of products through visually appealing content, influencer endorsements, and sponsored posts. These platforms act as virtual marketplaces where they can discover new products, brands, and trends that they might not have encountered otherwise.
2. **Peer Recommendations:** Word-of-mouth recommendations from friends, classmates, and peers hold substantial weight in the decision-making process. College students often trust the opinions of people in their social circles more than advertisements. Positive experiences shared by peers can create a sense of credibility and reliability, leading them to consider the recommended products more seriously.
3. **Social Proof:** Social media platforms provide a space for individuals to showcase their lifestyles and experiences. When college students see their peers using and enjoying certain products, it creates a sense of social proof. This can influence them to align their preferences with those of their peers, assuming that if others are satisfied, they will likely be as well.
4. **Product Reviews and User-generated Content:** Online reviews, ratings, and user-generated content (UGC) contribute to building trust in products. College students often rely on reviews and UGC to gain insights into the quality, performance, and overall experience of a product. Positive reviews can validate their decisions and reassure them that the product is worth purchasing.
5. **Influencer Marketing:** Influencers, individuals with a substantial following on social media, collaborate with brands to promote products. College students may feel a personal connection with these influencers and value their recommendations, making them more inclined to try products endorsed by influencers they follow.
6. **Group Mentality:** Belonging to a certain group or community is important for college students. When they see their peers engaging with specific brands or products, they might be motivated to participate in that trend to feel part of the group, fostering a sense of belonging.
7. **Interactive Shopping Experience:** Some platforms enable interactive shopping experiences, where users can ask questions, seek

recommendations, and engage in conversations with brands and fellow shoppers. This engagement fosters a sense of community and involvement, making the shopping experience more enjoyable and meaningful.

8. **FOMO (Fear of Missing Out):** Social media often showcases limited-time offers, flash sales, and exclusive deals. College students might fear missing out on such opportunities, driving them to make quick purchase decisions to take advantage of these offers.
9. **Personalization:** Social media algorithms curate content tailored to users' preferences and interests. This personalization exposes college students to products that align with their tastes, increasing the likelihood of making a purchase based on their individual preferences.

Identify any challenges or concerns faced by college students when shopping Online

College students, while enthusiastic about online shopping, do face certain challenges and concerns when engaging in this activity. These challenges can impact their overall online shopping experience and influence their decision-making. Some of the common challenges and concerns faced by college students when shopping online include:

1. **Quality and Authenticity of Products:** Without the ability to physically inspect products, students may worry about receiving items that don't match their expectations or the descriptions provided online. Concerns about counterfeit or fake products are also prevalent.
2. **Trust and Security Concerns:** Online transactions involve sharing personal and financial information. College students might be concerned about the security of their data, fearing identity theft, fraud, or unauthorized access to their accounts.
3. **Sizing and Fit Issues:** Apparel and footwear purchases can be challenging due to size discrepancies or differences in fit. Students might worry about items not fitting properly and the hassle of returning or exchanging products.
4. **Returns and Refunds Process:** The process of returning products and obtaining refunds can be cumbersome and time-consuming. Students may be concerned about the ease of returning items, associated costs, and the timeframe for receiving refunds.
5. **Delivery Delays and Reliability:** Late deliveries, especially for time-sensitive purchases, can be frustrating for college students. They might worry about receiving products after their expected need-by date.

6. **Hidden Costs and Additional Fees:** Unexpected shipping costs, taxes, or other fees that are added during the checkout process can come as a surprise to students and might affect their budget constraints.
7. **Limited Physical Examination:** The inability to physically touch, try on, or examine products can be a concern, especially for items like clothing, accessories, and electronics. This can lead to uncertainty about the actual appearance and quality of the product.
8. **Poor Customer Service:** Unresponsive or ineffective customer service can create frustration for college students, especially when they need assistance with order inquiries, returns, or troubleshooting issues.
9. **Lack of Instant Gratification:** Unlike traditional shopping, where items can be purchased and taken home immediately, online shopping involves waiting for the product to be delivered. This delay can be a concern for students who desire instant gratification.
10. **Difficulty in Comparing Products:** While online shopping offers the advantage of comparing products across different platforms, the sheer volume of options can sometimes make the process overwhelming and time-consuming.
11. **Connectivity Issues:** Reliable internet connectivity is crucial for seamless online shopping. College students might face challenges in regions with inconsistent or slow internet connections.
12. **Impulse Buying and Overspending:** The convenience of online shopping can lead to impulse buying and overspending, especially when there are tempting deals or limited-time offers. Students might be concerned about staying within their budget.
13. **Environmental Concerns:** Some college students are environmentally conscious and may be concerned about excessive packaging, waste, and the carbon footprint associated with online deliveries.

Compare the online shopping behavior of college students across different gender 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:

12. GENDER DIFFERENCES

Product Preferences:

- Women might show a higher interest in fashion, cosmetics, and beauty products compared to men.
- Men might lean towards electronics, gadgets, and hobby-related items.

Research and Decision-making:

- Women tend to spend more time researching products, reading reviews, and comparing options before making a purchase decision.
- Men might prioritize efficiency and make quicker purchase decisions, relying on their prior knowledge or recommendations from peers.

Social Influence:

- Women might be more influenced by social media and peer recommendations when it comes to fashion, beauty, and lifestyle products.
- Men might be more influenced by tech-related content and recommendations from friends for electronic gadgets.

Shopping Frequency:

- Women might engage in online shopping more frequently, often exploring a wider range of product categories.
- Men might shop online less frequently but make larger purchases in categories that interest them.

13. SOCIO-ECONOMIC BACKGROUND DIFFERENCES

Budget Considerations:

- Students from lower socio-economic backgrounds might be more price-sensitive and actively seek out deals, discounts, and budget-friendly options.
- Students from higher socio-economic backgrounds might prioritize quality and brand reputation over price.

Product Categories:

- Students from lower socio-economic backgrounds might focus on essentials and practical items such as textbooks, basic clothing, and necessary electronics.
- Students from higher socio-economic backgrounds might have the flexibility to explore a wider range of products, including luxury items and niche interests.

Payment Preferences:

- Students from lower socio-economic backgrounds might prefer cash on delivery or digital wallets due to limited access to credit cards.
- Students from higher socio-economic backgrounds might be more comfortable with

credit card payments and other online payment methods.

Brands and Quality:

- Students from higher socio-economic backgrounds might be more brand-conscious and place a higher value on quality and reputation.
- Students from lower socio-economic backgrounds might prioritize affordability and functional value over brand names.

Delivery Options:

- Students from higher socio-economic backgrounds might opt for premium delivery options for faster and more convenient shipping.
- Students from lower socio-economic backgrounds might opt for standard delivery to save on costs.

Technology Access:

- Students from higher socio-economic backgrounds might have better access to high-speed internet and advanced devices, facilitating smoother online shopping experiences.
- Students from lower socio-economic backgrounds might face connectivity issues that affect their online shopping activities.

14. CONCLUSION

The study on the online shopping behavior of college-going young adults in Hyderabad provides valuable insights into the preferences, motivations, challenges, and influences that shape their e-commerce experiences. This demographic, comprised of technologically adept and socially connected individuals, showcases a dynamic interplay of factors that guide their online shopping decisions. The research highlighted the significance of convenience as a driving force, allowing college students to seamlessly integrate shopping into their busy lives. The wide array of product categories catered to their diverse interests, ranging from fashion and electronics to books and wellness products. The preferences for payment methods and delivery options exhibited a reliance on digital transactions and flexible shipping choices, tailored to their varying needs and budgets. Peer recommendations and social media emerged as pivotal influencers, offering personal connections and social validation that resonate strongly with this demographic. The impact of social proof, influencer marketing, and interactive shopping experiences showcased the power of interconnectedness in shaping their purchasing decisions. However, the study also uncovered challenges that college students face in the online shopping landscape. Businesses seeking to tap into this demographic should focus on building

transparent and secure platforms, fostering engagement through social media and influencer collaborations, and providing seamless customer service and return policies to ensure a positive shopping experience. This study not only contributes to the understanding of consumer behavior within the context of online shopping but also sheds light on the unique characteristics of college-going young adults in Hyderabad. As technology continues to shape the retail landscape, further research in this area can provide insights into the evolving nature of consumer behavior and assist businesses in adapting their strategies to meet the ever-changing needs of this dynamic demographic.

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