

**Customers Perception towards Impact of Covid-19 on E-Commerce Business with Special Reference to PollachiThaluk**

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**Abstract**

*The year 2020 is marked with rapid changes taking place over nights and the sense of uncertainty about health, business, education and even life is lost. Nothing is spared by the globally hit pandemic of COVID-19 that has now spread to almost all the corners of the world. By every passing day the pandemic is getting uncontrollable and the concerned authorities are unable to cope with it. People are also becoming adaptable to the changing patterns of life and are adopting the lifestyle of staying at home that is further being implemented by the government of different countries which is imposing smart or complete lock down in different parts of the country. The recent lifestyle of staying at home is turning the attention of people towards online buying and selling and virtual shopping that has become a leading and expanding trend in the pandemic of COVID-19 thereby adding more importance and success to the E-commerce business industry. Before the outbreak of Corona Virus people were free to move and interact in all kinds of businesses and thus the domain of E-commerce business was not in attention as it is nowadays. The fear of getting sick is the ground reason behind the switching of people towards online shopping and this is in fact the reason why the E-commerce sector is making progress by leaps and bounds. In this Paper focus on customer perception towards Impact of covid-19 on E-Commerce with special reference to Coimbatore District.*

**Key Words- Pandemic- Virtual shopping- Online Shopping- Lifestyle**

**Introduction**

The impact of the pandemic are highly depressing and even hard to imagine in case of health, education, tourism and many other spheres of life, but when it comes to the E-Commerce business, the influence of COVID-19 is very positive and beyond satisfactory for those who are directly or indirectly involved in it. The pandemic has rendered a kind to great favor and service to E-Commerce business community by offering them great business opportunities. Since it is officially announced by WHO that COVID-19 is a global pandemic, the lock down and restrictions are made more strict and severe in the active hotpots and hardly hit areas due to which all local markets as well as worldwide business is closed and people are working from home that is again a hard nut to crack. Despite of it, E-Commerce business has become the best option for all the business owners because nobody is certain about the long lasting impacts of this pandemic and there is no assurance about when it will end. That is why people are opting for online buying and selling of products, accessories, appliances and services that has influenced the earnings and working of E-Commerce business.

**Impact of Covid-19 on E-Commerce Industries**

All the sectors like food, health care, garments, jewelry even entertainment have developed online websites and facilitating applications to help the consumers in buying the required products and availing the desired services in a quicker and easier manner. The influx of daily consumers of grocery and food is highly noticeable because these are the fundamental essentialities that are linked to every human being so going out and risking one's own health is not a better option to consider and nobody is ready to do that happily that is why everyone is preferring to go digital and avail the useful services being offered by E-Commerce business. And developing ecommerce mobile apps turned out to be one of the very high demand service requirements during this pandemic, as many small business owners were really searching for a good mobile app development company to develop an ecommerce app that suits their business model.

It is seen that the impact of COVID-19 is quite evident on E-Commerce where some of the sectors are earning huge profit it can be described by the fact that during the month of March, when the lock down started, the demand for apparels, both casual and festive, increased to a high percentage due to which the concerning sectors earned a lot. One proof of this earned profit is the practice of putting the demanded items on sale. The trend of sale has highly increased after the pandemic of COVID-19 and people are enjoying every moment of it. If only the sale percentage of the fashion industry is evaluated it is noted that there is 21% in the profit for the month of March to April.

As the people are observing time in self-isolation they have an sample amount of time to spend in their own way so that are naturally attracted towards the skin care and beauty products to stay fit and active that is why these products are on rise which is directly helping the E-commerce to flourish as compared

to other businesses. The increased numbers of food apps that are being introduced widely are the best example of people using the E-commerce industry to get their favorite food items.

### **Customers Perceptions**

However, the impacts of COVID-19 pandemic are not one-sided; they are in fact double-sided. On one hand E-Commerce is experiencing a boom in production and earning unimaginable profit while on the other hand these businesses are facing a new tax imposition that is a great hurdle for them to tackle as it will reduce the selling rate. Then the problems that are causing great troubles in the normal running of E-Commerce business is the delay in delivering the products to the customers and the process of shipping is also badly affected because of the restrictions on vehicles. Moreover there is an unexplainable burden on the certain branches of this industry that it is really tough for the employees to handle the outnumbered influx of the customers especially the food related sectors. Another very problem that the E-Commerce business is facing is that people who are fresh in this domain are unable to understand the pros and cons of this delicate business and this transition from the physical business to the digital one is hard to digest not only the beginners but the trading companies having wide exposure to E-Commerce are also facing problems because of the issues like delayed deliveries and bad reviews from the customers.

With the occurrence of the COVID-19, development, new ranges of abilities and innovation have become crucial for the business environment. This also led the nation, various foundations, and business pioneers confronted with intense decisions and an uncommon degree of uncertainty.

### **Challenges and Opportunities in E-Commerce**

Across the globe, the pandemic has led to mammoth change in various sectors including ecommerce. Commenting on how the pandemic has accelerated the pace of e-commerce adoption, and brought in new trends, Shauravi Malik, Co-founder, Slurpp Farm says, “what we would have wanted to do in a decade, happened in a span of almost 6 months. E-commerce which was earlier associated with young, disruptive and an innovative brand has now become a major focus area for MNC’s and other big companies.

Developing on how the pandemic apart from revolutionizing e-commerce has also re-shaped consumer behavior, MansiZaveri, Founder, Kidsstoppress Media says, “Very crucial pillars determining how the consumer will buy would be in form of a triangle with trust at its epicenter and its three vertices being community, connect, creation and convenience. Coupled with this, the role of digital and social will have to mirror the sentiment and thought of the consumer in indulge the consumer to buy their product.”

In terms of new trends and challenges brought in by the pandemic, Deep Bajaj, Founder, Sirona Hygiene says, “We saw a lot of new shoppers who came from Tier 2 and Tier 3 cities along with many elder lies and this trend is here to stay. The pandemic also posed newer hygienic requirements for the brand, which led to the birth of various new products. Further, cost, transportation, material and labor posed major challenges during the pandemic.”

The challenges which the pandemic brought to life for various companies and service providers were majorly those of manpower as people were back home, transportation as making products available across borders became a problem, cost which skyrocketed during this time and supply chain.

### **Advantages**

#### **1. An inflow of online shopping**

As traditional street-side business has completely shut down, people are taking their business online. Somehow the sales in some sectors have gone up leading to the shortage of several products. Due to the sudden declared lockdown, panic buying of house hold products became a trend. This eventually led to shortage on a larger scale. People are switching from malls and supermarkets to ecommerce for everyday commodities, the sales of companies like BigBasket and Grofers have gone up and will continue to be that way in the coming time as well. CouponzGuru is also providing people good deals in these tough times to make sure that the customers do not suffer

#### **2. Efficiency and Time Saving Power is here to Stay**

Online shopping has a benefit that you don’t have to go out to shop and waste time; everything is delivered at your doorstep. Even small stores are giving home delivery. In the coming time people will prefer buying online rather than from stores.

On the other hand, quarantine has also shown the worst side of everything so far. It has alleviated the severe time shortages that so many people have faced in this entire time. Since people are unwilling to

go out to shop as the fear of getting sick remains constant, insufficient labor strength is still an issue. Though online grocery stores are receiving orders on a very large scale, the manpower is not sufficient to deliver them on time.

### **3. Increase in corona virus related ecommerce store**

The shopping habits and consumer behavior is changing rapidly. To stay competitive, businesses have started to sell what's important presently. Some e-commerce sellers are adding soaps, sanitizer and other hygienic products to meet consumer demands.

### **4. Retailers shifting towards selling essential goods**

Since people are still buying essential commodities, a lot of retailers selling non essentials like jeweler, clothes and foot wears have faced a huge loss. This is likely to have a long term impact on them. So, to bear this, retailers have started to sell essential goods. They are using technology to be back in the game. This may seem tough but there is still a ray of hope. Since the attitude of buyers is changing, the retail industry is also expecting a change in the nearby future.

### **5. Digital transformation of local kirana shops**

These shops have played a crucial role in this tough time. We know these kirana shops are the life blood of people. Now due to the outbreak of the virus people are looking for alternatives so that they don't have to be in contact with anyone. With the kirana shops digitizing and starting to deliver online, people are finding it even more convenient to have everything on the tips of their fingers. Local shops are now confined to a radius of a few kilometers in which they can deliver. They are even offering contactless deliveries along with sanitization of the goods that you have ordered. It helps to stop the spread of the virus and the fear among people. Digital transformation of local kirana shops has benefitted both; the consumers and the retailers.

The future of e-commerce is unfolding now with COVID-19 forcing the very many people who previously relied on their street's kirana shops and their friend's friend shops for non-essential items to clutter the growing user lists of e-commerce companions. So, post COVID will these people go back to their old ways of garnering items or will the comfort, ease and the discounts rope them into staying within the world of e-commerce is still a question.

### **Statement of the problem**

The worldwide spread of the COVID-19 pandemic has disrupted how people buy products and services and how they perceive e-commerce. The standardized lockdown rules across India and the growing hesitation among consumers to go outside and shop for essential goods have tilted the nation towards e-commerce. Consumers have switched from shops, supermarkets, and shopping malls to online portals for the purchase of products, ranging from basic commodities to branded goods. Since the norm of social distancing has been initiated for almost the entirety of 2020, the scope of online purchases and online businesses is expected to surge. Many people are embracing the concept of online retail and the surge in FTUs (First Time Users) on e-commerce sites is visible. Consumers have drawn a line between want and need. As COVID-19 continues, the impact on the e-commerce continues to fluctuate depending upon the industry. Some of the strongest economies in the world are struggling to get back on track. While e-commerce has proved itself essential after the outbreak of this deadly virus, there are still some sectors of it which are trying hard to cope with the situation. Though it is impossible to predict the full impact of corona virus on e-commerce and online growth rates, it will depend upon the niche and the duration of future social distancing. In this Paper focus on customer perception towards Impact of covid-19 on E-Commerce with special reference to Coimbatore District.

### **Objectives**

1. To understand the present status and trends of E-Commerce.
2. To reveal the key variables influencing the increased usage of E-Commerce.
3. To analyze the impact of Covid 19 on E-commerce.

### **Research Methodology**

#### **Research design**

Descriptive methods were used for this study. Bearing in mind the objective of the study and secondary data analysis the research was carried out using a structured questionnaire.

#### **Sampling design**

Convenient sampling technique is adopted in this study.

### **Sample size**

The survey was conducted in pollachiTaluk and the sample was chosen from the rural areas. The sample size for this study was 150 respondents.

### **Data collection**

The data was collected day time, evening time and weekends. Data collection comprises of

- Primary Data
- Secondary Data

### **Primary Data**

Primary data was collected with an aid of a Questionnaire. The Questionnaire contains a series of questions arranged in a proper order. The data collection was done using a questionnaire which consisted of all questions is closed ended questions.

### **Secondary Data**

Secondary data was collected from the internet, articles from scholarly journals and books.

### **Statistical Tools Used**

- Simple Percentage
- Linkert Scale
- Chi- Square test

### **Limitations**

- The study is restricted to the area near to the pollachiTaluk. So it cannot be generalized.
- The study is based on stratified random sampling only.
- The study being based on primary data, the accuracy and reliability depend on the information provided by the respondents.

### **Review of Lecture**

**Sarah Davis (2020)**,examined the on top of health concerns, brands across the globe are worrying about how corona virus (COVID-19) will impact ecommerce as a whole. Ecommerce, B2B, B2C, and brick-and-mortar brands alike are all feeling the impact of corona virus on their business in one way or another. In this article, we've collected everything your brand needs to know about corona virus and ecommerce, as well as what you can do to lessen the blow. Keep coming back to this post as updates on corona virus and ecommerce continuously roll in. We'll be adding updates throughout the pandemic to help keep you in-the-know.

**India Infoline News Service (2020)**, Stated that Online marketplaces have reported an unprecedented spike in demand for personal hygiene products such as hand washes, sanitizers, toilet essentials such as toilet papers in addition to daily necessity items like floor cleaners, wet wipes, etc. Panic buying and hoarding have made matters worse, and it has led to essential items running out of stock. To ensure that necessary supplies are available, e-commerce players are cracking down on hoarders and profiteers and blocking their access to online marketplaces. Ecommerce players are finding it hard to meet demands due to inequity unleashed by curb on exports of preventive gear such as protective masks.

**Dr. Deepak Halan(2020)**,in this study the Indian retail market is greatly divided up between the unorganized sector, which includes about 13.8 million conventional family run neighborhood stores and the organized retail sector with a share less than 10%. The organized sector includes all organized brick & mortar stores and online shopping sites. Despite the boom in B2C e-commerce sector in India, majority of Indians continue to have more faith in the neighborhoods brick & mortar stores for shopping as they prefer touching and feeling the products and negotiating discounts over-the-counter, before buying. In India, a great majority of B2C ecommerce retailers draw customers to shop online by offering bargains such as free delivery, discounts, buy-one-get-one-free and exchange offers.

**Analysis and Interpretation**

**TABLE-I**

**Main sales channels, before outbreak of COVID-19 and channels with highest recent growth (in per cent)**

	<b>SDA</b>	<b>DA</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>SA</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Rank</b>
Face Book	-84	-57	0	107	184	<b>150</b>	<b>III</b>
Own E-Commerce Website	-62	-43	0	118	236	<b>249</b>	<b>II</b>
Telephone Channels	-94	-59	0	113	148	<b>108</b>	<b>IV</b>
Online Market Place	-82	-43	0	108	172	<b>95</b>	<b>V</b>
Advertisement	-42	-33	0	148	222	<b>295</b>	<b>I</b>

**Source: Primary Data**

The table depicts that out of 377 respondents, majority of the customers have stated that, they are satisfied with Advertisement is persuading to buying a products and it score is 295 and ranked I, The customer give second rank is Own E-Commerce Website is 249, The customers give third for face book and the score is 150, fourth rank is telephone channels and score is 108 and last rank is online market place and it score is 95.

**TABLE-II**

**Payment methods with highest growth since outbreak of the COVID-19 crisis**

	<b>SDA</b>	<b>DA</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>SA</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Rank</b>
Cash on Delivery	-130	-79	0	97	168	<b>56</b>	<b>V</b>
Credit Cards	-46	-27	0	178	230	<b>335</b>	<b>I</b>
E-Banking/Mobile Banking	-98	-46	0	141	180	<b>177</b>	<b>IV</b>
Mobile money	-42	-29	0	174	238	<b>321</b>	<b>II</b>
Online Payment	74	-52	0	164	190	<b>228</b>	<b>III</b>

**Source: Primary Data**

The table shows that, the majority of the customers are agreed with credit cards is convenient for paying off amount so, they are given I rank and score is 335. The second rank given by the customer is Mobile money and score is 321. The customers are given the third rank is Online Payment and score is 228. Fourth rank is E-Banking/Mobile Banking and score is 177. Finally fifth rank is Cash on Delivery.

**TABLE-III**

**Challenges**

	<b>HS</b>	<b>S</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>DS</b>	<b>HDS</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Rank</b>
Policies and Strategies	-138	-94	0	102	30	-100	VIII
ICT infra structure and services	-72	-64	0	97	212	173	V
Logistics and Trade Facilitation	-194	-101	0	117	230	52	VII
Legal and Regulatory Framework	-64	-57	0	117	182	178	IV
E- Payment Solutions	-88	-21	0	109	208	208	III
E-Commerce Skills	-74	-29	0	164	190	251	I
Access to financing	-128	-33	0	148	222	209	II
Compensation Scheme	-64	-117	0	80	182	81	VI

**Source: Primary Data**

The table reveals that majority of the respondents are strongly agreed that E-Commerce Skills is essential for buying of the product and score is 251. The second rank goes to Access to financing and score is 209, third rank goes to E- Payment Solutions and score is 208, fourth rank is Legal and Regulatory Framework.

TABLE-IV

**Significant Relationship between Gender and Reasons for not buying products through online**

Reasons	X <sup>2</sup> VALUE	TABLE VALUE	DF	S/NS
Lack of Awareness	5.32	9.488	4	S
Lack of resources	11.03	9.488	4	NS
Lack of time	13.21	9.488	4	NS
Limited professional networks	11.21	9.488	4	NS
Limited value	12.50	9.488	4	NS

**Source: Primary Data**

The chi square analysis on gender wise classification of the respondents and Reasons for not buying products through online male customers is more effective as compared to female customers. It is inferred that only one factor (i.e) Attractive is significant a 5 percentage level. So, the null hypothesis is rejected. Whereas Lack of resources, Lack of time, Limited professional networks, Limited value is not significant at 5 percentage level. The null hypothesis is accepted.

**Findings**

- The highest weightage (295) is given to Advertisement that they buy a product based on the attractiveness of the celebrity.
- E-Commerce Skills is essential for buying of the product and score is 251.
- Majority of the customers are agreed with credit cards is convenient for paying off amount.
- Only one factor (i.e) Attractive is significant a 5 percentage level. So, the null hypothesis is rejected. Whereas Lack of resources, Lack of time, Limited professional networks, Limited value is not significant at 5 percentage level. The null hypothesis is accepted.

**Suggestions**

- Since the pandemic has made online shopping prominent, you can have a distinct advantage over others by offering niche products that aren't available at other online stores. Having a niche product line limits the expenses incurred and gives you an edge over generic competitors. Furthermore, by filtering out your market, you can find sections that haven't been tapped into by your competitors
- In a world where online shopping is slowly becoming the norm, should make sure that your business has fully adapted to all online payment methods. Since the payments are done through the tap of a button, it breaks any geographical constraints regarding the order, induces trust in your business, and also helps in making any recurring payments more convenient as there is no involvement of large sums of hard cash
- Since the e-commerce platform is filled with competitive businesses, it's very important to do a thorough analysis of competitors to get a better understanding of the market realities. This also acts as a rectifying tool if you aren't as compatible as your competitors, and also helps you in formulating better strategies for your business

**Conclusion**

We are primarily interested in how corona virus spread and affects the e-commerce globally. Awareness almost this topic can countersign better information in people and deliberation to how ecommerce, business, and economies of countries effected by corona virus. How E-commerce provides alternative way to people to meet their demands. E-commerce enhanced by COVID-19. How it impacted e-commerce will be encouraging other researchers to investigate more deeply in this area such as ecommerce trends how changed by corona and future trends. Customers are trying their best to adapt to strange times without a lot of footholds and shifting their behavior as a result. As a business owner, Customers are facing much of the same uncertainty, while trying to support your customers' needs Depending on the industry and audience, response to the ever-evolving situation will change.

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