

RURAL CUSTOMER BEHAVIOUR TOWARDS ONLINE SHOPPING WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO THE RURAL AREAS IN THIRUVANANTHAPURAM DISTRICT

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Abstract

The largest proportion of customers in India is residing in rural areas. The advancement in technology and the emergence of smartphones have mostly influenced the urban population but these developments made slight changes among the rural people. Rural customers are highly dependent upon agriculture and allied activities. So they are not much familiar with the advanced technology and do not have the facilities of urban people. According to the World Bank collection of development indicators were reported the rural population at 65.07 percent in 2020. The present study aims to find the behaviour of rural customers towards online shopping.

Keywords: Rural, Urban, Population, Customers, Agriculture, Technology, Behaviour.

Introduction

Today we can purchase nearly everything online. Online shopping has grown rapidly in urban areas. After getting success in urban areas, online shopping will now capture the rural area. In the Census of India 2011, the definition of urban area adopted is as follows: (a) All statutory places with a municipality, corporation, and cantonment board, or notified the town area committee, etc. (b) A place satisfying the following three criteria simultaneously:

- i) a minimum population of 5,000;
- ii) at least 75 percent of the male working population engaged in non-agricultural pursuits; and
- iii) A density of population of at least 400 per sq. Km. (1,000 per sq. Mile).

An area is considered 'Rural' if it is not classified as 'Urban' as per the above definition. According to data from the Census 2011, in the 10 years between 2001 and 2010, the teledensity jumped from a mere 0.7 percent to a healthy 21 percent. In rural regions of India, more than 45 percent of the population is using mobile phones in 2021. The hike in mobile users in rural India shows people's positive attitude towards online shopping. The urban population is highly educated, technically advanced, and has access to online shopping. While rural people have an inefficient internet connection and poor transport system prevents them to shop online. To attract rural customers, the online retailers provide the facility to use the mother tongue of each rural area. Thiruvananthapuram is the capital city of Kerala has a population of 3,301,427 in the 2011 Census. The district has a total area of 2,189 sq km, 577 sq km is urban and 1612 sq km is rural. The rural areas comprise some parts of Neyyattinkkara Taluk, the whole of Nedumangad, Chirayinkeezhu, Varkala, and Kattakkada Taluks.

Review of Literature

FeninSamuel S and K A Janardhanan (2016), Online Shopping - a strategy needed for rural customers aims to study the demographic factors of customers, and the influencing and preventing factors on online shopping. The primary data were collected from the online shoppers in KanyakumaryDistrict. The findings of the study reveal that rural men customers are keener about online shopping. The encouraging factors are low price, a greater selection of products, save time, and convenient store hours. The discouraging factors are the delivery system, lack of confidence, and lack of customer support.

ZeenathPathan's (2019), rural consumer behaviour towards online shopping in Vadodara District mentions the level of awareness and use of online shopping, the factors influencing and the factors not influencing online shopping. The primary data was collected from four regions of Vadodara District USA sampling technique regions. The results of the study reveal that rural men are more committed to online shopping. The majority of the customers are away out online shopping. The factors influencing were low price, greater selection, and saving time. The factors not influencing are lack of trust and low-speed internet.

R Sureshkumar (2017), rural consumer attitude towards online shopping: An empirical study of rural areas aims to identify rural customers' attitude towards e-retailing in India. The preliminary study was in the form of informal interviews. 32 percent of respondents are illiterate and not familiar with e-retailing.

Objectives

- To study the awareness level of rural customers about online shopping.
- To assess the issues faced by rural customers while shopping online.
- To analyze the satisfaction level of rural customers towards online shopping.
- To make suggestions based on the findings of this study.

Statement of the problem

Due to the poor infrastructural facilities in communication and transport, online shopping in rural areas is not satisfactory. Rural customers have no proper awareness of online shopping. If people are familiar with online shopping it will help them in using modern products and in getting their products online. This will generate revenue, business growth, and economic development. The study will emphasize what will be the awareness level of rural customers about online shopping, the factors hindering them to shop online, and their satisfaction levels.

Significance of the study

The rural area is enriched with a wide variety of handicrafts and agro-based products. Although the rural people do not have sufficient facilities to utilize their efficiency. The emergence of online shopping and e-commerce provides modern methods and devices for rural people. This will enable them to cherish their life and increase their standard of living. So the study helps online retailers improve their operations by knowing the behaviour of customers in rural areas.

Research Methodology

The study was descriptive. Both primary and secondary data were used. Primary data were collected by using a structured questionnaire. The present study consists of respondents from NedumangaduTaluk and the sample comprised 100 respondents. Convenience sampling was used whereby respondents who were easily accessible were chosen for the study.

Limitations of the study

Thiruvananthapuram is a highly populated district, and can't generalize the results based on only 100 respondents. The results were biased because few cooperated with the study and some did not. There is very little time available for the study that has too affected the outcome.

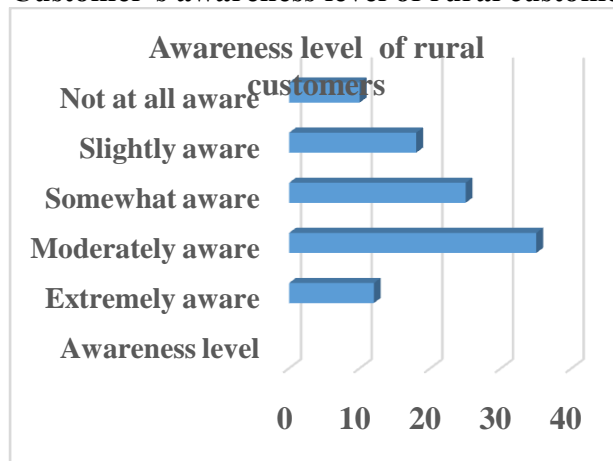
Socio-Demographic Profile

Table 1 reports the respondent's socio-demographic characteristics like gender, age, etc.

Table 1
Socio-Demographic profile

Socio-Demographic characteristics	Particulars	Number of respondents	Percentage
Gender	Male	65	65
	Female	35	35
Total		100	100
Age	Below 25	20	20
	25-35	50	50
	35-45	18	18
	Above 45	12	12
Total		100	100

Customer's awareness level of rural customers about online shopping.



From above diagram depicts the awareness level of rural customers about online shopping. The majority of the respondents (35 %) were moderately aware of online shopping. The number of customers who are extremely aware of online shopping is 12 percent. The 10 percent of respondents were not at all away from online shopping.

The issues faced by rural customers while shopping online.

Table no. 2

Issues faced	Rank
Inefficient internet services	1
Lack of trust	4
Poor transport infrastructure	3
Payment failure	5
Lack of awareness	2

The above table shows the issues faced by rural customers regarding online shopping. The major issue was the inefficient internet connection. Most of the rural people use a 2G net connection and the network problem is regular in rural areas. Lack of awareness is another issue the rural people faced. The people who lived around the forest area did not have adequate transport facilities. So the delivery agents could not access the customers.

Satisfaction Level of Customers

Table no. 3

RESPONDENTS	SATISFACTION LEVEL			TOTAL
	LOW	MEDIUM	HIGH	
MALE	30	20	10	60
FEMALE	15	9	6	30
TOTAL	45	29	16	90

Source: Primary data

From the above table, it is clear that rural customers are not satisfied with online shopping due to the issues faced by them.

Findings of the study

Most of the customers committed to online shopping are male.

The majority of the respondents have a 2G internet connection.

Women customers mostly purchased from Naaptol.

The major issues were inefficient internet connection, Lack of awareness, poor transportation, payment failure, and lack of trust.

Among the total respondents, 10 percent have no awareness of online shopping.

The majority of the rural customers were not satisfied with online shopping.

Suggestions

Government should provide adequate infrastructural facilities to rural people.

Telecom companies provide internet facilities at a cheaper rate to rural areas.

Online retailers make a tie with the Indian postal service to support the delivery system in rural areas. Make awareness campaigns for rural people regarding online shopping.

Conclusion

Online shopping is increasing at every moment but the rural population lacks its benefits because their awareness level is very low and they are not equipped with adequate facilities. Online retailers support rural people by creating awareness campaigns.

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