



UNRAVELING THE CHALLENGES IN RURAL ONLINE SHOPPING – A REVIEW

* Mr. Sumit Shivaji Sagale

**Dr. Manoj Brijlal Patel

R. C. Patel Educational Trust's Institute of Management Research and Development, Shirpur, Dist- Dhule

Abstract:

In recent years, online shopping has posed a significant challenge to traditional trade and business. Because of technological advancements, the globe has become as small as a town. Indians are using the internet to purchase groceries, vehicles, furniture, apparel, and other items. While most consumers in metropolitan areas now shop online, about 70% of India's population lives in rural areas, making this a difficulty for businesses. The use and benefits of online shopping may vary depending on the user's resources, knowledge and awareness, and so on. Though online shopping is still widely used, there are certain challenges such as geographical location, availability of resources, lack of proper knowledge, and so on that prevent the full use of online shopping. Furthermore, the difficulties that customers face when shopping online are identified which includes trust, security, and privacy issues, as well as distribution channel and customer experience. This paper discusses the difficulties that rural people face when shopping online.

Keywords: Online Shopping, Challenges, Rural.

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Introduction:

The term "e-commerce" is an acronym for electronic commerce, which describes a digital marketplace and business strategy that lets you buy and sell goods online. E-commerce has changed the way that businesses compete on the internet, especially in the computer communication network, and it has given consumers and businesses in remote areas access to an e-commerce marketplace. About 70% of Indians live in villages and other rural areas, making it one of the most diversified nations in the world. For many e-commerce supporters and would-be business owners, the unexplored Indian rural sector has great promise as the top market. Since India's independence, little has been done to promote the distribution of rural commercial

goods within its borders. Therefore, it is imperative that commercial and e-commerce firms in rural areas expand as quickly as possible.

Rural India Scenario:

The following are the scenario of rural background in India.

A. Population: 83.3 Crore population lived in villages (Census of India 2011)

B. Literacy Rate: In rural India, the literacy rate as of 2021 was approximately 73.5%. This comprises 65% of women and 81% of men who are literate in India's rural areas. (IBEF)

C. Occupational Pattern: According to NCAER (2002), approximately 76% of the rural population makes their living through wages or agriculture.

Online shopping is a rapidly evolving field of technology. Retailers can reach out to customers who might not otherwise visit a physical store and increase their market by opening an online store. Customers are primarily drawn to online purchasing because of its convenience. Purchases from other individuals can be made easily and securely thanks to innovative internet payment solutions. Online shoppers should be aware of the risks and hazards that come with the benefits. Future technological advancements in internet retailers should make purchasing more convenient and realistic.

Literature Review: The following are the important review of literature:

Md. Muktaur Rahman Kazi did an empirical study titled "Online Shopping Behaviour of Rural Consumers: An Empirical Study of South Salmara Mankachar District Of Assam". His investigation reveals that both rural and urban consumers find pleasure in online shopping. Rural consumers exhibit a sensible approach to online shopping, with a majority diligently comparing prices and product features across various e-commerce platforms before finalizing a purchase. They also weigh online prices against those offered by brick-and-mortar retailers. Among internet shoppers, the preferred payment method is pay/cash on delivery. The study identifies several key factors driving online purchases among rural consumers, including perceived convenience (offered through home delivery, time and effort savings, and easy payment options), freedom of choice and enjoyment, reduced prices and promotions, and product availability. Furthermore, the research underscores the influence of factors like pricing, discounts and offers, return and exchange policies, recommendations from friends and family, social media influencers and vloggers, ratings and reviews from previous customers, and the reliability of the online shopping platform in shaping the decision to buy a product online. The insights gained from this study can aid e-tailers in

developing strategies to expand their rural customer base.(Muktazur & Kazi, 2022)

Zeenat Pathan conducted a study titled "Rural Consumer Behavior towards Online Shopping In Vadodara District". The researcher came to the conclusion in his investigation that the most favorably impacting aspect is a greater selection of products. Rural consumers are encouraged to shop online by the low pricing provided by internet retailers. They are also happy with the offers and discounts they get from different internet merchants like Amazon, Flipkart, and Paytm. Several unfavorable elements that discourage buyers from making online purchases were found in this investigation. These variables include things like the product's quality, the absence of a high-speed internet connection, a lack of "touch and feel," a lack of trust and a fear of being duped, etc. (Pathan, n.d.)

Sanal Kumar Velayudhan's work "Factors influencing online shopping in rural India: A review" was released. In his study, he discovered that attitudes and beliefs about online shopping, as well as their influence on online retailing, are examined in order to understand their potential to affect acceptance in rural areas. Aside from the benefits that consumers seek from online shopping, the accessibility of traditional retail stores and their ability to meet consumer needs can have an impact on online. Internet access is a factor, but it is beliefs about the internet that have the most impact on internet use. Consumers benefit from the ability to access online information, but given rural consumers' low literacy levels, policymakers must educate the rural population on how to use online information. (Kumar Velayudhan & Management, n.d.)

An investigation led by R. Sureshkumar on "Rural Consumer Attitude towards Online Shopping: An Empirical Study Of Rural Area" He came to the conclusion that respondents prefer to buy online because it is convenient. Customer will select their favourite items by comparing price and quality from a

variety of online shopping sites. There is no need to visit physical stores. They will have more time to spend with their family. Almost any item can be purchased using an online shopping system. Customer can buy foreign goods from the comfort of their own bedroom. They will receive their goods at their residence. It is a very safe place to shop. Also, respondents did not mention online shopping because it is risky and misleading, does not guarantee quality, and cannot be exchanged in rural areas. Customer can never test their purchases with their own hands. They must rely on images, videos, and descriptions in this case. (Sureshkumar, 2017)

A review of the study "Magnitude of E-Commerce in Rural Areas" was carried out by T. Lalithaa, N. Velmuruganb, and Dr. T. Mukilanc. The integration of e-commerce is becoming an essential aspect of our daily existence, they concluded. E-commerce is transforming the exchange of goods and services. It is in charge of developing fresh commercial prospects in both urban and rural regions. Even with all the advantages, capturing rural areas that need more development still faces several obstacles. For a number of reasons, a large number of e-commerce companies still struggle to penetrate rural areas. He claims that since internet connectivity is available in rural areas, where over 69% of India's population resides, there is great opportunity to capitalize on this market. Rural residents are being encouraged to adopt e-commerce by actions taken by governments. People need to be more tech-savvy in order to use e-commerce more frequently. Rural consumers also need to feel more confident in the system, therefore the government needs to put strong laws in place protecting their privacy and security online. (T. Lalitha, 2022)

Challenges of Online Shopping In Rural Areas:

Online purchasing makes it possible to customer to access a wide range of products without leaving their house. However, when it comes to online shopping,

rural areas frequently face unique challenges. Here are some of the difficulties:

- 1. Limited Internet Access:** Access to fast internet is limited in many rural areas, making it difficult to access online shopping websites. Slow internet speeds can also make browsing and purchasing products difficult.
- 2. Limited delivery options:** Due to distance, online retailers may not deliver to rural areas or may charge higher shipping fees. This can make receiving purchases difficult or expensive for people living in rural areas.
- 3. Lack of trust on online retailers:** Some people in rural areas may be unfamiliar with online shopping and may be skeptical of online retailers. This can make convincing them to try online shopping difficult.
- 4. Lack of technology access:** Many people in rural areas may lack access to computers or smartphones, which are required for online shopping. This can make browsing products and making purchases difficult.
- 5. Limited product availability:** Online retailers in rural areas may not offer the same product selection as they do in urban areas. People in rural areas may have fewer options as a result of this.
- 6. Returns and refunds:** If there are no local drop-off points or if the cost of returning an item is high due to shipping fees, returning an item can be difficult.

The difficulties of online shopping in rural areas can make it difficult for people to benefit from the convenience and variety that online shopping can provide.

Factors for improving online shopping in rural areas:

To address these issues, e-commerce companies and governments must collaborate to improve internet infrastructure and expand access to technology in rural areas. Additionally, companies can offer incentives

such as cash on delivery and easy return policies to build trust and encourage rural customers to embrace online shopping. Overcoming these obstacles will be critical in bringing the benefits of e-commerce to rural communities and driving inclusive growth.

Conclusion: To conclude, while online shopping has become an increasingly popular mode of shopping for customers all over the world, it has also presented a number of challenges for customers in rural areas. Some of the major challenges that rural customers face when it comes to online shopping are limited access to technology, poor internet connectivity, and a lack of trust in online transactions. In order to resolve above mentioned challenges, the government can put in place some policies to promote internet retailers and advance e-commerce in rural areas. More fresh ventures could be established to conduct e-commerce trading in rural areas.

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