



A Study on Consumer's Awareness and Preference of E-Pharmacy With Special Reference to Coimbatore City

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Abstract:

Pharmacy is one of the most Eminent Industries in any Country. In India, it stands in the third position with respect to the volume of sales and seventeenth as far as an incentive is concerned as per equity master report. E-Pharmacy is basically ordering medicine through online with the help of internet technology. This has made buying medicines more convenient and easier to get your medicines at your door-step. During pandemic period awareness about e-commerce platform had a major role both rural and urban peoples. The e-pharmacy sector in India has grown because of the increased accessibility of e-pharmacy during a pandemic like NetMeds, 1mg, EasyMedico, MedLife and Apollo Pharmacy. The researcher has used percentage analysis as statistical tool for deriving findings and suggestions.

Keywords: Awareness, Preference, E-pharmacy, Pandemic, Percentage Analysis.

1. INTRODUCTION

The E-pharmacy is the one of the fastest growing sector India right now. In India e-pharmacies have increasingly gained transaction in the last few years and currently to represent 2%-3% of overall medicine sales. E-pharmacy is still at its transient stage in India, but it has the potential to be a very large industry segment in the near future. The purchase of online medicines is gaining momentum in India. It is expected that e-pharmacy model could account for 15%-20% of the total Medicine sales in India over the next 10 years. The e-Pharmacy market India was estimated to be around US \$512 million (3500 Crores) in 2018 and is estimated to grow at CAGR of 63% to reach US \$3,657 (25,000 Crores) by 2022. The pandemic situation has contributed majorly to the growth of e-Pharmacies. Nineteen State Governments declared e-Pharmacy as an essential service during lockdown. The households using e-pharmacies grew 2.5 times in COVID 19 lockdown. In 2020, Covid-19 has pushed many consumers towards buying their medicines online. A report also shows that over 60 to 70% of the medicines that are ordered through e- Pharmacy platforms are from chronic patients as it more affordable and accessible for them. The present scenario the awareness about e-platform is important for every social media users. To create awareness, the researcher has to study about Consumer Awareness and Preference of e-Pharmacy in Coimbatore city.

2. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

India is a booming online market more than one decade in the world with almost everything available through online and recently medicines also under this category. There are more than 60 e-pharmacies doing business in India. But the awareness about the e-pharmacies is comparatively less in most of the regions, people are either unaware of the e-pharmacies or they do not prefer it over the traditional pharmacies. To explore the awareness about e-commerce platform, the researcher has chosen the topic of Consumer Awareness and Preference of e-pharmacy with special reference to Coimbatore city.

3. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

To study about consumer awareness and preferences of e- Pharmacy.

4. RESEARCH DESIGN

A quantitative, non-experimental, descriptive research was used to explore the consumer's awareness and preference towards e- pharmacy services in the research area. The sample population was chosen using Convenience sampling technique.

The researcher has developed questionnaire and distributed to people of Coimbatore city with the help of the Google forms services. Later the data from the 127 respondents were collected and analysed with the help of statistical tool to derive to the results.

5. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Ms.Gupta (2014) in her paper "E-Commerce: Role of e-commerce in today's business", presents a comprehensive definition of e-commerce while isolating it from e-business. The paper enlists the different e-commerce models i.e. B2B, B2C, B2G and C2C, narratively analysing the nitty gritty of each. Researcher also elaborates the different levels of awareness about E-commerce among the people, at the same time, defining the degree to which they are preferred online mode of operations in our country.

Mishra & Kotkar (2015) trace the timeline and development of B2C e-commerce in "A Study on Current Status of E-Commerce in India: A Comparative Analysis of Flipkart and Amazon" with its inception in the mid-1990s through the advent of matrimonial and job portals. However, due to limited internet accessibility, weak online payment systems and lack of awareness, the progress was very slow. The Indian B2C e-commerce industry got a major boost in mid 2000s with the expansion of online services to travel and hotel bookings which continue to be major contributors even today.

6. ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF DATA

TABLE NO. 1 GENDER-WISE CLASSIFICATION

| GENDER | NO OF RESPONDENTS | % |
|--------------|-------------------|---------------|
| Male | 89 | 70.08 |
| Female | 38 | 29.92 |
| TOTAL | 127 | 100.00 |

Source: Primary Data

The table no .1 shows that 70.08 percent of the study respondents were Male and remaining 29.92 percent of the respondents were Female.

TABLE NO- 2 AGE-WISE CLASSIFICATION

| AGE | NO OF RESPONDENTS | % |
|--------------------|-------------------|---------------|
| 20 -30 years | 16 | 12.60 |
| 31-40 years | 25 | 19.69 |
| 41-50 years | 33 | 25.98 |
| 50 years and above | 53 | 41.73 |
| TOTAL | 127 | 100.00 |

Source: Primary Data

The above table clearly stated that 41.73 percent of the respondents were above 50 years of age group, 25.98 percent of the respondents were age group between 41-50 years, 19.69 percent of the respondents were 31-40 years of age and 12.60 percent of the respondents were belongs to 20-30 years of age.

TABLE NO- 3 PREFERENCE OF E-PHARMACY COMPANIES

| E-PHARMACY | NO OF RESPONDENTS | % |
|------------|-------------------|-------|
| NETMEDS | 40 | 31.50 |
| 1mg | 22 | 17.32 |

| | | |
|-----------------|------------|---------------|
| Pharm Easy | 15 | 11.81 |
| MEDLIFE | 30 | 23.62 |
| Apollo Pharmacy | 12 | 9.45 |
| Easy Medico | 8 | 6.30 |
| TOTAL | 127 | 100.00 |

Source: Primary Data

Table no.3 shows that 31.50 percent of the respondents were to preferred NETMEDS e-Pharmacy company to buy medicine, 23.62 percent of the respondents were to preferred MEDLIFE e-Pharmacy company, 17.32 percent of the respondents choice to preferred 1mg e-Pharmacy company, 9.45 percent of the respondents were to preferred a e-Pharmacy company as Apollo Pharmacy, and 6.30 percent of the respondents were to preferred Easy Medico e-Pharmacy company.

TABLE NO- 4 FREQUENCY OF BUYING MEDICINE THROUGH ONLINE

| FREQUENCY | NO OF RESPONDENTS | % |
|--------------------|-------------------|---------------|
| Once a Week | 41 | 32.28 |
| Once in a Two Week | 53 | 41.73 |
| Once in a Month | 21 | 16.54 |
| Occasionally | 12 | 9.45 |
| TOTAL | 127 | 100.00 |

Source: Primary Data

The above table clearly states that, 41.73 percent of the respondents were to buying medicine through online as a frequency of once a two week period, 32.28 percent of the respondents were to buying medicine through online as a frequency of once a week, 16.54 percent of the respondents were to buying medicine through online as a frequency of once in a month and 9.45percent of the respondents were to buying medicine through online occasionally.

TABLE NO-5 NATURE OF BUYING MEDICINE THROUGH ONLINE

| NATURE | NO OF RESPONDENTS | % |
|---------------------------|-------------------|---------------|
| Only with Prescription | 64 | 50.39 |
| With/without Prescription | 47 | 37.01 |
| Without Prescription | 16 | 12.60 |
| TOTAL | 127 | 100.00 |

Source: Primary Data

The table no.5 reveals that, 50.39 percent of the respondents were to buying medicine through online only with Doctor's Prescription, 37.01 percent of the respondents were to buying medicine through online with or without Doctor's Prescription, and 12.60 percent of the respondents were to buying medicine through online without Doctor's Prescription.

TABLE NO- 6 MODE OF PAYMENT TO BUYING MEDICINE THROUGH ONLINE

| MODE OF PAYMENT | NO OF RESPONDENTS | % |
|-------------------|-------------------|---------------|
| Cash on Delivery | 25 | 19.68 |
| Debit Card | 35 | 27.56 |
| Credit Card | 54 | 42.52 |
| UPI/Money Wallets | 13 | 10.24 |
| TOTAL | 127 | 100.00 |

Source: Primary Data

The above table no.6 shows that 42.52 percent of the study respondents were to use Credit Card to buying medicine through online, 27.56 percent of the respondents were to use Debit Card to buying medicine through online, 19.68 percent of the respondents were to buying medicine through online Cash on Delivery mode and 10.24 percent of the respondents were to use UPI/Money Wallets to buying medicine through online.

TABLE NO- 7 EXPECTED TIME TO DELIVERY

| DELIVERY TIME | NO OF RESPONDENTS | % |
|------------------|-------------------|---------------|
| 12-24 Hours | 53 | 41.73 |
| 1- 2 Days | 47 | 37.01 |
| 2-3 days | 17 | 13.89 |
| 3 days and above | 10 | 7.87 |
| TOTAL | 127 | 100.00 |

Source: Primary Data

The above table no.7 states that, 41.73 percent of the respondents were expected to delivery of medicine through online by 12 -24 hours' time period, 37.01 percent of the respondents were expected to delivery of medicine through online by 1- 2 days period, 13.89 percent of the respondents were expected to delivery of medicine through online by 2- 3 days period, and 7.87 percent of the respondents were expected to delivery of medicine through online by above 3 days period.

TABLE NO- 8 PREFERENCE TO BUY MEDICINE THROUGH E-PHARMACY

| PREFERENCE | NO OF RESPONDENTS | % |
|----------------|-------------------|---------------|
| Price | 69 | 54.33 |
| Packaging | 10 | 7.87 |
| Quick Delivery | 31 | 24.41 |
| Availability | 17 | 13.39 |
| TOTAL | 127 | 100.00 |

Source: Primary Data

The table no.8 clearly reveals that, 54.33 percent of the respondents were preferred to buy medicine through e-pharmacy by means of 'Price', 24.41 percent of the respondents were preferred to buy medicine through e-pharmacy by means of 'Quick Delivery', 13.39 percent of the respondents were preferred to buy medicine through e-pharmacy by means of 'Availability' and 7.87 percent of the respondents were preferred to buy medicine through e-pharmacy by means of 'Packaging'.

TABLE NO- 9 LEVEL OF SATISFACTION TO USE E-PHARMACY

| SATISFACTION LEVEL | NO OF RESPONDENTS | % |
|--------------------|-------------------|---------------|
| Highly Satisfied | 66 | 51.97 |
| Satisfied | 38 | 29.92 |
| Dissatisfied | 23 | 18.11 |
| TOTAL | 127 | 100.00 |

Source: Primary Data

The above table shows that, 51.97 percent of the respondents were highly satisfied to buying medicine through e-pharmacy companies, 29.92 percent of the respondents were satisfied to buying medicine through e-pharmacy companies and 18.11 percent of the respondents were dis- satisfied to buying medicine through e-pharmacy companies.

TABLE NO-10 LEVEL OF AWARENESS ABOUT E-PHARMACY

| LEVELS | NO OF RESPONDENTS | % |
|------------------|-------------------|---------------|
| Highly Awareness | 73 | 57.48 |
| Little Awareness | 41 | 32.28 |
| No Awareness | 13 | 10.24 |
| TOTAL | 127 | 100.00 |

Source: Primary Data

The table no.10 reveals that 57.48 percent of the respondents were highly aware about e-pharmacy, 32.28 percent of the respondents were little aware about e-pharmacy and 10.24 percent of the respondents were No aware about e-pharmacy.

FINDINGS

- Majority (70.08%) of the respondents were Male to use E-pharmacy.
- Majority (41.73%) of the respondents were the age group of 50 years and above to use E-pharmacy to buy medicine.
- Majority (31.50%) of the respondents were to prefer NETMEDs E-pharmacy to buy medicine.
- Majority (41.73%) of the respondents were to buy medicine once in a two week through E-pharmacy.
- Majority (50.39%) of the respondents were to buy medicine through E-pharmacy only with Doctor's Prescription.
- Majority (42.52%) of the respondents were to use Credit Card to buy medicine through E-pharmacy.
- Majority (41.73%) of the respondents were to expect the delivery of medicine by 12 – 24 hours through E-pharmacy.
- Majority (54.33%) of the respondents were to prefer E-pharmacy by means of 'Price' as key factor.
- Majority (51.97%) of the respondents were highly satisfied to buy medicine through E-pharmacy.
- Majority (57.48%) of the respondents were highly aware about to buy medicine through E-pharmacy.

SUGGESTIONS

- The researcher suggested that the male gender and 50 years and above age group mostly prefer E-pharmacy, so they should create awareness to female with middle age group to buy medicine through online.
- Researcher also suggest that, among the e-pharmacy companies NETMEDs has the highest market share thanks to their effective advertising, 1mg and Medlife are its main competitors. So, it's safe to say that with effective marketing and building a good consumer loyalty e-pharmacy companies have a great scope in Coimbatore being a better market space due to the development of IT sectors.
- Many people are hesitant to buy through e-pharmacies due to various reasons such as delivery time, people feel that instead of waiting for 2-3 days for a medicine they could easily buy it from the nearby store, uncertain of the quality, people are uncertain of the quality of the products because they do not see the products before buying them, there's a lack of trust among the people. So the researcher would like to suggest that e- Pharmacy Company creating good loyalty and trustworthiness among the consumers will help e-pharmacies to grow more.
- The people use e-pharmacies buying medicine without Doctor's prescription whenever required, and they use it mostly for chronic diseases, thus e-pharmacies can target those people and provide subscription modules. The researcher suggests that e-pharmacy Company should follow business ethics by sale of medicine only with Doctor's prescription to save the people from diseases.
- E-pharmacy Company should create some more awareness and building good logistics service to deliver medicines within short span of time and may increase level of satisfaction through prompt and availability of all medicine and also creating good loyalty and trustworthiness among the consumers will help e-pharmacies to grow in Coimbatore city.

CONCLUSION

Purchasing medicines from online pharmacies was not a common practice among the respondents. Consumers need to be educated about the risks and benefits associated with buying drugs through e-pharmacy platforms. Educational measures should be coupled with adequate monitoring of online pharmacies from Medical Board of State and Central Government Regulatory Authorities. The main limitations of e-pharmacies found through this study were the delivery time, sale of medicine without prescription and trustworthiness. If the e-pharmacy companies focus on these segments it sure that e-pharmacy can thrive, and it will change the buying behaviour of medicines in India.

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