



A STUDY OF CONSUMER PERCEPTION TOWARDS ONLINE SHOPPING DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC

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Abstract

The COVID-19 outbreak has wreaked havoc throughout the world, including the business world. To prevent the virus from spreading, the whole planet was put under lockdown. This led to switching from traditional mode of shopping into online mode of shopping in order to survive. In this article an attempt was made to study the consumer perception towards online shopping during covid-19 pandemic and how it affects consumer behavior. The data was collected using a structured questionnaire through convenience sampling method out of which 149 residents of Cuttack city responded regarding the consumer perception towards online shopping during covid-19 pandemic. Various statistical tools were utilised for data analysis. According to the findings of this study, there is a strong association between online purchases before and after the appearance of COVID-19, implying that there is a considerable rise in the number of persons purchasing online throughout COVID-19 as opposed to the pre-covid phase. The 3 most compelling grounds for online shopping during COVID-19 were that too many firms were only available online, that health hazards were decreased, and that time was saved. The most common items purchased online by respondents were food, medications, and literature (magazines, newspapers).

Keywords: *Consumer Behavior, Online Shopping, Preference, COVID-19 Pandemic.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Human basics, such as food and electrical gadgets, can be made accessible and purchased online in the digital era of the twenty-first century. Digitization has benefited consumers by providing higher-quality commodities and more tailored demand options. This highlights how internet shopping has outpaced traditional shopping methods. Non-metro and rural communities are gradually gaining access to e-commerce, where it is recognised as one of the most useful, practical, and favored forms of transportation in metropolies and metropolitan regions. To attract customers, retailers make every attempt to make their online shopping experience more engaging and appealing. As mobile technology improvements have resulted in improved access to markets globally with the help of enhanced access to high-speed internet, customer buying patterns have also gone from traditional/old to electronic sources. Mobile phones, tablet devices, and computers, among other modern tele-communication gadgets, have not just brought people together electronically, but have also ushered in a new era of precise public service delivery. As per the World Health Organization, a novel coronavirus known as 'COVID-19' is to blame for the current pneumonia outbreak in Wuhan City, Hubei Province, China (WHO). COVID-19 has far-reaching repercussions for practically all human cultures. The COVID-19 virus quickly spread over the entire globe in early 2020 and eventually became unmanageable. The virus had triggered a pandemic, endangering world economic and health-care systems. In order to stop the widespread of the COVID-19 virus within the country, most countries have strictly limited social life and some have even mandated partially or completely lockdown on their citizens. Movement restrictions range from the ban of large gatherings to the closing down of schools and workplaces, and even a short term pause of the economy, in which workers in non-essential divisions of the country's economy are unable to get into the job. It's possible that some employees will be able to work from home, while others are on the point of being laid off because their jobs cannot be accomplished at home. Most retail and service businesses were forced to close their doors during the lockout. At the same time, rising unemployment put customers in a state of economic anxiety. Due to the temporary closure of numerous businesses, many customers are more reliant on internet purchasing to meet their needs.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Soopramanien (2011) investigated the benefits as well as the hazards of using the internet to conduct online shopping. This was then contrasted to the creation of consumer attitudes. In addition, the extent to which experience influences the establishment of an intention to buy anything online was investigated. Consumers were less hesitant to utilise the internet to make purchases if they had more online buying experience, according to the study. Customers with greater online purchasing experience were shown to have a better awareness of the dangers and rewards of doing so. The author proposes that distinctions between client groups be investigated based on specific shopping activities.

Khare and Rakesh (2011) performed research to learn more about Indian students' internet buying habits. According to the findings of their study, utilitarian values of online shopping websites, such as simplicity of use, ease of discovering information, convenience, flexibility, and comparisons, have the greatest effect on purchase intention. The results also revealed a variation in navigation techniques. or when choosing websites from which to make purchases. Future study might focus on the sorts of things that students buy online, as well as the precise aspects that they seek for when choosing websites to make purchases, according to the authors.

Mishra & Mathew (2013) made an attempt to figure out what elements led to a reduction in the level of uncertainty when purchasing online. They took into account the impact of internet use, the level of risk perceived by online shoppers, and the characteristics of websites used in this. According to the study, online customers' trust grows with more internet usage, and these consumers favour website qualities that improve utilitarian value above those that improve entertainment/hedonic value. Finally, the study revealed that perceived risks have a minor negative association with future purchase intent. A future study could look into how to increase an internet user's impression of benefits and trust.

Joshi & Achuthan (2016) tried to find out whether there were any restrictions on using the website when purchasing online. For the research, they took into account several qualities of an online shopping website, such as user impressions of practicality of features, usefulness as viewed by customers, and customer trust. The study's findings show that website-related factors have a favourable influence on affirmations, emphasising the relevance of website-related characteristics.

Premalatha and Revathi (2018) The goal of this study was to determine how customers felt about internet buying. The study took place in Coimbatore, and data was obtained from 600 people using a convenience sample approach. According to the findings, educational qualifications, employment level, yearly income, and time spent on the internet all have a substantial impact on people's willingness to save money by purchasing online. The data revealed that respondents' one click buying convenience score differed significantly depending on their gender, yearly income, and internet connection.

Gaudel (2019) The research focused on the elements that may have impacted consumers' attitudes toward shopping online in Nepal. The study is based on empirical evidence. The study uses an easy selection procedure to choose a sample size of 200 people from the population of Nepal's Kathmandu Valley. According to the conclusions of the study, convenience is the most essential parameter for online shoppers in Kathmandu, followed by security and time efficiency. The researchers also showed that for Nepalese internet users, website functions and capabilities are a big issue.

3. RESEARCH GAP

The majority of research on online purchasing behavior has been undertaken in the Western countries, with only a few studies conducted in India. Existing research has mostly investigated customers' online "buying intention," with a few additional papers delving into topics such as the emotional impact of online shopping and online purchasing incentives. However, no significant research has been conducted to assess the influence of consumer perception of online shopping during covid-19. However, no comprehensive study has looked into the influence on consumer perceptions of online purchasing during the Covid - 19 pandemic. The purpose of this study is to look into customer attitudes concerning online buying during the Covid-19 epidemic. Furthermore, this study looks at the challenges surrounding the consumer transaction experience.

4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.1. Data and methods

Following the development of the COVID-19 in Cuttack, the fundamental objective of this article is to enhance the understanding of customer behavior on online shopping platforms. The Chi-square test with a significance level of 5% was used to evaluate the relationship between online purchases before and after the arrival of the COVID-19. For this study, an online questionnaire was prepared and circulated over social media.

There were 14 questions in the questionnaire. It was meant to capture the beginning of the COVID-19's presence in Cuttack, the beginning and end of the crucial time (peak period).

5. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

O1- To study the perception of people during pandemic.

O2- To study the role of online shopping during the covid-19 pandemic.

O3-To study the challenges in online shopping during pandemic

6. RESEARCH HYPOTHESIS

H0: There is no significant relation between purchasing online before Covid- 19 and after Covid-19

H1: There is a significant relation between purchasing online before Covid-19 and after Covid-19.

7. Perception of People during Pandemic

Table1

	Frequency	(%)
Do you shop online for goods and services during the COVID-19 pandemic?		
Yes	124	83.2
No	25	16.7
During the COVID-19 pandemic, how often do you purchase goods and services online?		
Not even once	25	20.16
Once a month	98	79
Once a week	11	8.9

On weekly basis	9	7.2
Once Each day	6	4.8
What type of products do you buy when you shop online?		
Convenience goods	42	33.8%
Shopping goods	32	25.8%
Specialty goods	22	17.7%
Unsought goods	28	22.5%
Others	8	6.4%
During the COVID-19 pandemic, which internet shopping platforms did you prefer to buy products and services?		
Flipkart	53	42.7%
Amazon	29	23.4%
Medplus	16	12.9%
JioMart	18	14.5%
Future pay	06	4.8%
Others	02	1.6%
Which consumers' online shopping site do you consider was most effective during the COVID-19 pandemic?		
Flipkart	53	42.7%
Amazon	29	23.4%
Medplus	16	12.9%
JioMart	18	14.5%
Future pay	06	4.8%
Others	02	1.6%
What are the drawbacks of buying a product or service over internet for you?		
Stores are out of stock	59	16%
Lengthy Delivery period	26	35%
Possibility of dealing with scammers	29	46%
Miscellaneous	10	4%
What issues do you encounter when buying goods and services over internet?		
Damaged items delivered	15	15%
Substandard customer service	19	23%
Purchased incorrect goods and services	08	26%
Not able to make purchase if do not have an e-wallet or bank cards	57	15%
The online application is tough to operate	18	14%
Miscellaneous	07	6%

The responses to online shopping options are seen in the table above. According to the report, 1149 people (83.2 percent) bought COVID-19 vaccines online during the epidemic. The majority of respondents (79%) purchase products or services online once every month. The majority of participants tend to buy convenience items online (33.8 percent). Flipkart has surpassed Amazon as the most popular online buying website (42.7 percent). Flipkart was named the best online buying platform by 53 respondents (42.7 percent). Amazon is the second most popular ecommerce website, with 23.4 percent of users rating it as the best. Flipkart is the finest platform to visit, according to our respondents, because the things are cheaper than on other websites and it is pretty easy to find what they want. However, buying using an online shopping site has significant drawbacks,

such as the elevated risk of encountering fraudulent vendors (46 percent). When buying products or services online, one issue that respondents may encounter is broken items upon delivery (15 percent).

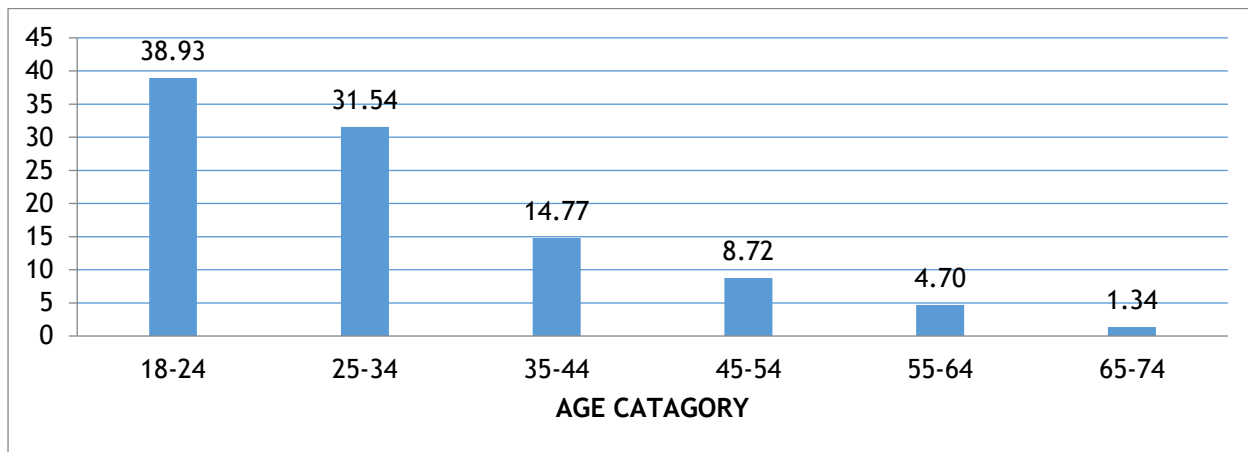


Figure 1. The representation of responders by age demographic

Figure1 shows that the maximum percentages of responders are between the ages of 18 and 24. (38.93 percent). Figure1 show that the 65-74 age bracket has the least percentage (1.34 percent).

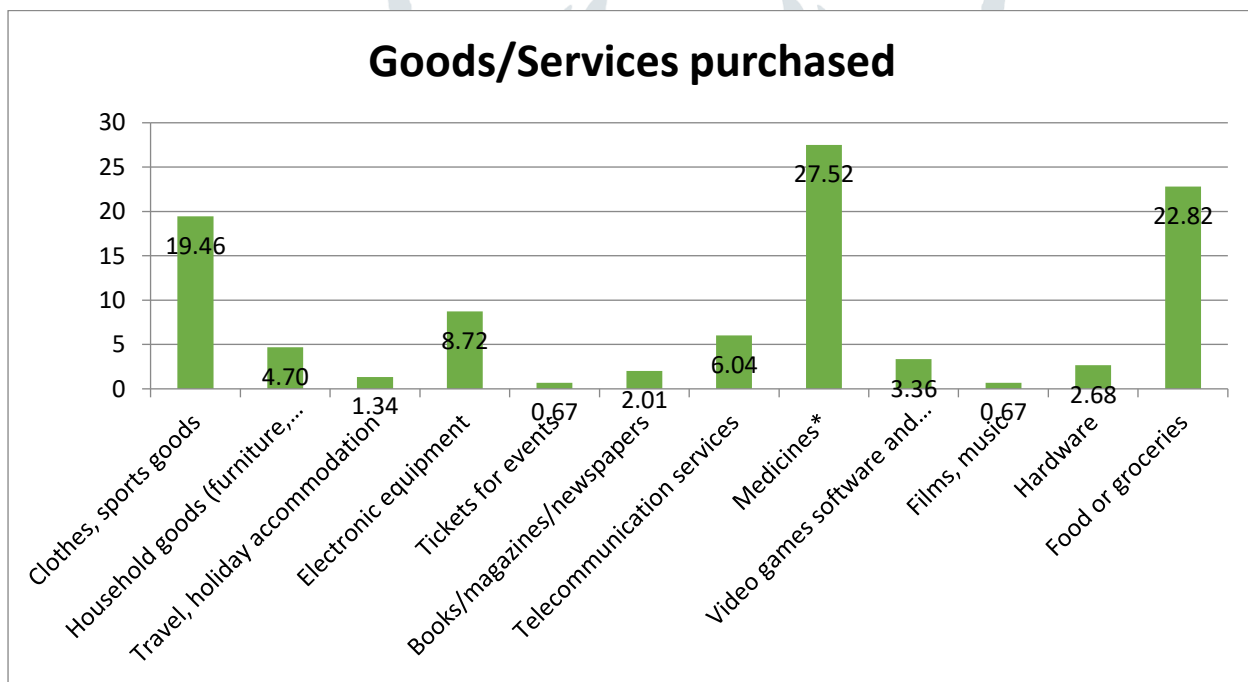


Figure2.Respondents in Cuttack purchased or bought products or services for personal use over the internet in the time following the release of the COVID-19 (percentage of respondents)

Here, we can draw conclusion from this that survey participants from the representative sample spent more money on food (groceries), pharmaceuticals and clothing, and sporting goods. Respondents, on the other hand, reduced their purchases of traveling, vacation lodging, and entertainment, movie, & concert tickets.

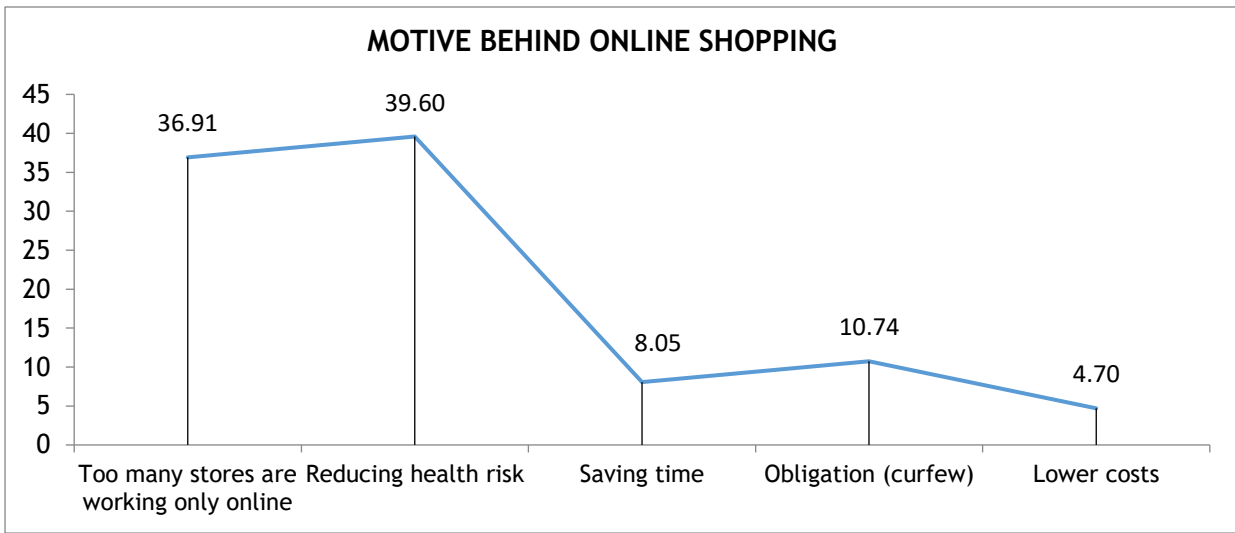


Figure3. Common grounds for online purchases following the release appearance of the COVID-19 (percentage of the respondents)

The Government's policies had quite an impact on consumer behavior, then one of the primary purpose of buying online is that certain stores who had to shut due to Government restrictions now market their products and services through the internet.

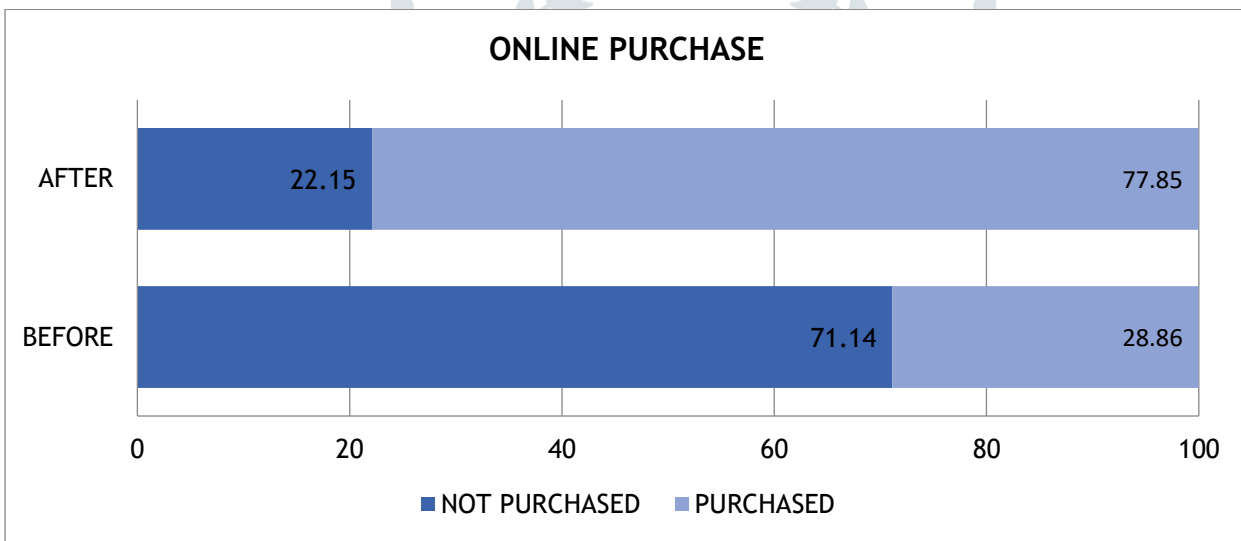


Figure4. Consumer buying behavior before and after COVID-19 was actually appeared

As shown in Figure4, 71.14 percent of respondents who had not bought earlier continued to do so after the COVID-19 appeared.

8. THE ROLE OF ONLINE SHOPPING DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

H0: There is no significant relation between purchasing online before covid-19 and after covid-19

H1: There is a significant relation between purchasing online before covid-19 and after covid-19

Table 2

Case Processing Summary

	Valid		Cases Missing		Total	
	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent
DID YOU BUY ONLINE BEFORE COVID-19 * DID YOU BUY ONLINE AFTER COVID-19	149	100.0%	0	0.0%	149	100.0%

Table 3

DID YOU BUY ONLINE BEFORE COVID-19 * DID YOU BUY ONLINE AFTER COVID-19 Crosstabulation

		DID YOU BUY ONLINE AFTER COVID-19		Total	
		YES	NO		
DID YOU BUY ONLINE BEFORE COVID-19	YES	Count	84	0	84
		Expected Count	69.9	14.1	84.0
		% within DID YOU BUY ONLINE BEFORE COVID-19	100.0%	0.0%	100.0%
	NO	Count	40	25	65
		Expected Count	54.1	10.9	65.0
		% within DID YOU BUY ONLINE BEFORE COVID-19	61.5%	38.5%	100.0%
Total	Count	124	25	149	
	Expected Count	124.0	25.0	149.0	
	% within DID YOU BUY ONLINE BEFORE COVID-19	83.2%	16.8%	100.0%	

Table 4

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (1-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	38.821 ^a	1	.000		
Continuity Correction ^b	36.116	1	.000		
Likelihood Ratio	48.186	1	.000		
Fisher's Exact Test				.000	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	38.561	1	.000		
N of Valid Cases	149				

a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 10.91.

b. Computed only for a 2x2 table

H0: There is no significant relation between purchasing online before covid-19 and after covid-19

H1: There is a significant relation between purchasing online before covid-19 and after covid-19

Decision rule for assessing if the test is significant for (Alpha) $\alpha = 0.05$

If $p \leq 0.05$ the test is significant there is significant relationship between purchasing online before covid-19 and after covid-19.

If $p > 0.05$ the test is not significant there is no significant relation between purchasing online before COVID-19 and after COVID-19

Summarising the result from the study we can interpret that

There is a significant relation between purchasing online before COVID-19 and after covid-19 $\chi^2(1, N=149) = 38.82$

Table 5

Symmetric Measures

		Value	Approximate Significance
Nominal by Nominal	Phi	.510	.000
	Cramer's V	.510	.000
N of Valid Cases		149	

Effect size:

Cramer's V applies to the table where at least one variable had only two categories for example 2×2 tables, 2×3 tables etc.

Small = 0.10, medium = 0.30 and large = 0.50, Here it is 0.51 which is large effect size in the study

9. COVID-19 RELATED CHALLENGES

- ❖ Consumer protection online is one of the vulnerabilities which the COVID-19 pandemic has brought to the forefront.
- ❖ There have been allegations of fraudulent and deceptive practises, such as certain online merchants offering false or unsafe hand sanitizers, surgical face masks, or disinfectants, as well as

price-gouging by certain manufacturers and shops hoping to profit from the surge in demand. Health and safety regulations are observed.

- ❖ The surge in the number of smaller boxes ordered directly by consumers has posed new issues in terms of ensuring adherence to quality standards, health and safety norms in importing nations, as well as safeguarding the health of employees managing and assessing the goods.
- ❖ The latter difficulties are due in part to the fact that government entities and other bodies in charge of determining product conformity with standards are not always authorized to inspect massive quantities of small parcels coming, for instance, via postal or delivery company networks.
- ❖ Furthermore, the speed with which some tasks are carried out has drastically impacted the logistics system, particularly as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. This presents new problems and barriers for border security agencies, who must intrude not only to scrutinise but also to obtain and share pertinent information and evidence on an international scale, permitting them to identify the risks associated with each transaction, including sanitary and technical obstacles to trade governmental factors of goods.

10. SUGGESTION AND CONCLUSION

According to the conclusions of this study, there is indeed a direct relationship between online purchases before and after the COVID-19 was emerged. In Cuttack, 71.14 percent of respondents did not buy anything online before the COVID-19 arrived, but 77.85 percent bought after the COVID-19 arrived. The number of people who bought something through internet before and after the COVID-19 was 76 percent. Just so many stores only functioned online, it lowered health concerns, and it helped in saving time were the three key reasons for E-purchasing. The first two reasons are just like earlier mentioned for those who did not buy online prior to the launch of the COVID-19 but did so later. The distinction is in the final point, which is a lower cost. Food (groceries), medications, and books were among the most popular items bought online by the major proportion of participants (magazines, newspapers). Participants who did not buy online before the COVID-19 was published but started later bought mostly garments, sporting goods, and household items, following by food and books, journals, and newspapers.

The majority of people were afraid to go out in public during the pandemic. As a result, e-commerce is a great way of shopping because it makes life easier and removes socializing. However, a number of disadvantages keep people from using e-commerce applications. Some delivery agencies demand high shipping charges, driving up the cost of goods. Moreover, the poor management of the picking of venerable items like fruits renders internet shopping undesirable for obtaining these items. Although online buying has become much more popular internationally, it has some major shortcomings while comparing it to the conventional purchasing. Consumers who buy things on the internet are just unable to touch and feel the items they are purchasing. A disparity between consumer expectations and the actual items can also be linked to a lack of product knowledge and physical scrutiny. We should be cautious

about fraud and safety when conducting online transaction. As a result, online business owners should provide pay-on-delivery options to protect customer privacy and psychological comfort while purchasing things from online sites.

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