

CONSUMER BEHAVIOR FOR E-PHARMACY AFTER COVID-19

Dissertation submitted to



IIHMR University, Jaipur

for the partial fulfillment for the award of the
degree of Master of Business Administration

(MBA)

in

Pharmaceutical Management

by

Chaitali Dilip Desale

(Roll no. 0234)

Under the Supervision and Guidance of

Mr. Rahul Sharma

Assistant Professor

(School of Pharmaceutical Management)

2022

CONSUMER BEHAVIOR FOR E-PHARMACY AFTER COVID-19

Dissertation Submitted to



IIHMR University, Jaipur

for the partial fulfillment for the award of the
degree of Master of Business Administration

MBA in

Pharmaceutical Management

By

Chaitali Dilip Desale

(Roll no. 0234)

Under the Supervision and Guidance of

Mr. Rahul Sharma
Assistant Professor
(School of Pharmaceutical Management)

2022

DECLARATION BY STUDENT

I hereby declare that this dissertation titled **CONSUMER BEHAVIOR FOR E-PHARMACY AFTER COVID-19** is the bonafide record of my original research work. I declare that it has not been submitted to any other university or institution for the award of any degree or diploma. Information derived from the published or unpublished work of others has been duly acknowledged in the text.

Name of Student: Chaitali Dilip Desale
Date : 02 July 2022

CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that dissertation titled **CONSUMER BEHAVIOR FOR E-PHARMACY AFTER COVID-19** is a record of the research work undertaken by **Chaitali Dilip Desale** in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of the degree of MBA (Pharmaceutical Management) from the IIHMR University, Jaipur under my guidance and supervision and her approach to the research study has been sincere, scientific, and analytical.

Prof. Rahul Sharma

Faculty Guide
IIHMR University,
Jaipur
Date: 02/07/2022

Dr. Saurabh Kumar Banerjee

School Dean
IIHMR University,
Jaipur
Date:02/07/2022

Abstract

As all people have different perception of looking at one thing, they have different opinions which are hindered by various factors. Thus, this happens with any decision which is made to do something. COVID-19 has changed this perception of people towards their health and their choices about health. People are now becoming more health conscious and tend to more curious while it comes to their health. During pandemic, sudden announced lockdown caused people to sit indoors while avoiding contact with other people. Patients having chronic illness or acute or the people who are health conscious were unable to go out and refill their prescription or purchase some health tracking appliances respectively. Thus, “e-pharmacy” attracted them for the same reason. The convenience, no-contact delivery of medicine at doorstep, no wastage of time in going to pharmacy etc. are the factors which influenced the people most. There are more factors which have changed the consumer behaviour. This study will focus on identifying those factors and understanding the change in trend in e-pharmacy by considering post covid-19 and post Covid-19 scenario. It will also help us to understand whether people are still using the e-pharmacy platforms as they used to do during pandemic or the frequency of using e-pharmacy.

Keywords: Consumer behaviour, drug, pandemic, buying pattern, online medicines, e-pharmacy

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

There is a race for existence in the current competitive environment, and only those with the courage to advance will win. This endeavour functions as a link between theoretical and practical activity. I began working on this project with this willingness.

I want to start by giving thanks to the Almighty God, who has always led me to pursue the right course in life. This project would not have been possible without his grace. My parents are standing next to him, and I owe them a tremendous deal for loving and supporting me all the way up to this point.

It is a genuine pleasure to express my deep sense of thanks and gratitude to my mentor, philosopher and guide **Mr. Rahul Sharma** (Associate Professor, School of Pharmaceutical Management, IIHMR University, Jaipur). His dedication, keen interest and above all his overwhelming attitude to help his students had been solely and mainly responsible for completing my work.

I thank profusely, all the Faculty of School of Pharmaceutical Management, IIHMR University, Jaipur for their kind help and cooperation throughout my Dissertation Project.

I am incredibly grateful to all of my friends who have supported and encouraged me at every turn during this time.

I extend my gratitude to the Indian Institute of Health Management and Research University, Jaipur for giving me this opportunity.

Any omission in this brief acknowledgement does not mean a lack of gratitude or is intentional, only the absence of valuable words to express my thanks.

Table of Content

Chapter No.	Content	Page No.
1	Introduction	8
2	Literature Review	11
3	Methodology	15
4	Result	17
5	Discussion	21
6	Conclusion	24
7	Reference	25

INTRODUCTION

In India, various factors such as growth in e-commerce has attracted customers to buy products from online platforms. For healthcare products, online platform is not new, it is been there from long time but the pandemic that is COVID-19 brought a major crowd to online pharmacy stores.

The easiest way, no-contact delivery and many more factors which we will come to know by conducting this study, has major impact on consumer behaviour for online pharmacies.

Consumer behaviour plays an important role in maintaining sustainable business and market reputation of any product and it has been impacted severely due to COVID-19 pandemic.

" Customers are extremely worried about COVID-19's effects, both from a health and an economic perspective." ("COVID-19: Impact on Consumer Behavior Trends | Accenture") The COVID-19 epidemic has significantly altered consumers' purchasing habits.

In such scenario of novel COVID-19, "E-pharmacy" has solved many healthcare needs. E-pharmacy platforms provided instant delivery of pharmaceutical products with discounts and multiple offers.

"Consumers are responding to the pandemic crisis in a variety of ways. Some feel anxious and worried, buying of medical devices and hygiene products. At the other arm, some consumers remain indifferent to the pandemic and are continuing their business as usual, despite recommendations from government and health professionals." (12)

For Indian population, online pharmacy was not much known and even if few of them know about it, they won't use it. Most of the population preferred retail pharmacy stores over online pharmacies before COVID-19.

If we consider general observation which we all have done, before COVID-19 people were aware about online pharmacy but not willing to buy from it.

There are around 300 e-pharmacy startups in India, among which Netmeds, PharmEasy, Tata 1mg, mChemist, Apollo 24, Medlife remains at the top.

Consumer Behavior:

Process used by humans to choose, buy, utilize, and diagnose goods and services in order to satisfy their needs and wants.

Pharmacy service in India:

E-pharmacy or we can term it as selling medicine online, that means we can order pharmaceutical products by using online pharmacy platforms like Netmeds, PharmEasy etc. and we will receive our medicines or order at our doorsteps without stepping outside of our home.

In India, e-pharmacy is still in a budding stage, but COVID-19 has driven focus of consumers to the online pharmacy platforms, we can that e-commerce is blooming in India and thus use of online platforms for ordering medicines is rising.

Retail pharmacy stores being the traditional way of pharmacy service has many benefits but after pandemic, people can recognize importance of no-contact purchasing of medicine as they tend to be more health conscious now. Sudden rise in the use of e-pharmacy has created confusion in the mind of society regarding the safety, lack of dosage instructions, and sale of prescription drugs which are unregulated. It seems that Indian retail pharmacy services are sorted but the ignorance of most important factor that is patient counselling is being ignored by retail

pharmacists. As we know there should be a registered pharmacists in every pharmacies but still we can see other helping hands in those pharmacies (moreover local pharmacy stores). People nowadays, avoid going to retail pharmacies, especially patients suffering from chronic illness. They prefer online medicine order because of timely delivery of medicines at their doorstep. It is convenient to use, easy access, and availability of medicine plays an important role here.

“The e-commerce business comes under the domain of the Information Technology Act, 2000, the legislations governing the sale of drugs in India comes within the ambit of the Drugs and Cosmetics Act, 1940, The Drugs and Cosmetic Rules, 1945, The Pharmacist Act 1948, The Indian Medical Act, 1956. However, the legislations mentioned neither permits nor prohibits online sale of medicines in India.” (6)

e-Pharmacy Models:

- **Organized e-pharmacy:**

Two models are there in this category,

Market place model- Neighbourhood pharmacies are connected to the consumers by a technology company.

Inventory based model- Here, e-pharmacy is an online service of an offline licensed pharmacy.

- **Non organized e-pharmacy-**

In this model, there is no seriousness of understanding genuineness of order as the staff is not qualified that much to understand it. Even no regular record keeping can be seen in it.

- **International trade through e-pharmacy illegally-**

Trading of prescription as well as non-prescription drugs to the international market without taking prior authorization of designated authorities.

An Overview of Indian e-pharmacy regulations:

- In India, regulatory powers are handled by two bodies that are Central Government and State Government of India. Drugs imports licensing is handled by central government of India and the distribution, sales and manufacturing of drugs is handled by state government.
- These days, e-pharmacy is working under Drugs and Cosmetic Act 1940, Pharmacy Act 1948, and Information technology Act 2000
- Lack of strict guidelines regarding e-pharmacy in India raises the question against health and QOL (quality of life) of patients. Improper knowledge about medicines and dosage and lack of counselling from pharmacist while purchasing medicines will ultimately lead to safety and efficacy of medicines.

Challenges

- Absence of concrete laws for e-pharmacies in India
- To take money before delivery of drugs/medicines is questionable
- Selling or shipment of drugs to minors
- Reach of technology driven model to illiterate people due to lack of knowledge about internet
- Speed of internet
- Prescription related issues
- Legality of electronic signature
- Identity and reliability of legal e-pharmacy
- Protection of consumer rights
- Security and confidentiality of information exchanged
- Security of financial transactions
- Regulatory control over e-pharmacies operating outside the jurisdiction of India
- Unclear laws on inter-state transfer of drugs/medicines.
- Drug importation and re-importation issue

LITERATURE REVIEW

Sr. No.	Title	Author	Year	Study Location	Sample size	Sampling Technique
1	“Consumers’ usage and adoption of e-pharmacy in India”(1)	Mallika Srivastava, M. Raina	2020	Urban and suburban area of Bangalore	184 respondents	Simple Random Sampling
2	“Analysing the dynamics of the Indian pharmaceutical industry in light of the covid-19 pandemic” (13)	Anandini B, Mugdha B, Yashika C, Dhairya D	2021	Tier 1,2 and 3 cities	190 respondents	Simple Random sampling
3.	E-pharmacy impacts on society and pharma sector in economical pandemic situation: a review	Himani N Singh, Majumdar	2020	PAN India	NA	NA
4.	A Study on the Post Pandemic Impact on the Pharmaceutical Industry of India	Runumoni Lahkar Das, Safiqul Haque, Bishal Patowary	2022	PAN India	126 respondents	Convenience sampling technique
5	A Review: E-Pharmacy Vs Conventional Pharmacy	Priti B. Savant, Manjusha S. Kareppa	2022	-	-	- (it’s a review article)
6.	“E-pharmacies Regulation in India: Bringing New Dimensions to Pharma Sector”(6)	Priyanka VP and Ashok BK	2016	-	-	-
7.	Application of E-Pharmacies in India	Aman A, Shilpa P	2021	PAN India	20 to 40 years of age population,	Simple random sampling

					106 responses	
8	“Boom in the online pharmacy market in India and the challenges ahead” (8)	Televisory (blog)	2020	PAN India	-	(Secondary Data)
9	“E-pharmacy in India is Winning the Battle over Traditional Medicines” (9)	IBEF (Indian Brand Equity Foundation)	2021	PAN India	-	(Secondary Data)
10	“Has the outbreak of the Coronavirus pandemic impacted the online pharmacy in India.”(10)	Sameer S, Vaishali C M	2020	PAN India	-	(Secondary Data)

- “The study was done by Mallika Srivastava and M. Raina on Consumers’ usage and adoption of e-pharmacy in India (2020).”(1) Though e-pharmacy was there in India since long time ago, the Lack of awareness of e-pharmacy and adoption of it was taking place. Author conducted a study to identify the factors for adoption, usage and recommend e-pharmacy. There is a need of demonstrating the use of e-pharmacy and it’s important to elaborate the benefits of e-pharmacy to Indian population. It is not that gender and educational background is responsible for adoption of e-pharmacy but the improper information and lack of knowledge of e-pharmacy is creating mis-trust among people. If right information regarding e-pharmacy is provided, which includes, benefits of e-pharmacy, less time consuming, home delivery of medicines, etc then it might motivate people to buy from online sources.(1)

- “e-Pharmacies at COVID-19 Frontline, Fighting the Odds”(2). Serving the Nation, (2020)by FICCI a whitepaper focusing on how e-pharmacy and retail pharmacy stores provide benefits to the consumer. The complete data about how e-pharmacy is evolving and the usage of e-pharmacy in pre-COVID-19 era, during COVID-19 and what is the expected usage for post-COVID-19 is depicted. The various difficulties faced by e-pharmacies due to sudden work on the ground. Increased demand of medicines, inter-state lockdown, sudden increased practical work on the ground has created many challenges for e-pharmacy. In spite of this, lack of manpower to deliver medicines at home was a major problem which resulted in late delivery of medicinal products. But as manpower and supply chain disruption due to inter-state lockdown got resolved, e-pharmacies were able to perform at their best. The data shows that, in pre-COVID-19 era, 3.5Mn households were using e-pharmacies, during COVID -19 it increased to 9 Mn and post Covid-19 forecasts states that it will increase to 70 Mn households using e-pharmacy platform. 70% people are willing to adopt use of e-pharmacy due to COVID-19 impact. Co-existence of e-pharmacies and retail pharmacy store will have greater impact on

consumers. Government has adopted e-pharmacy technology which will influence consumers to use e-pharmacy. (2)

- “In the article e-Pharmacy impacts on society and pharma sector in economical pandemic situation: a review”(3) by Himani N Singh, Majumdar, it has been clearly shown that COVID-19 has impacted on the consumer behaviour majorly. Sudden increase in use of e-pharmacy and the sustain use of it can be seen in post-COVID-19 era. Various challenges and basic issues related to e-pharmacy like less manpower during Covid-19 and improper knowledge of usage

S. No.	E-pharmacy	Retail Pharmacy
1	One can order medicines anywhere through internet so it is more convenient form.	Patients go to store for the buying medicines so it is consider as less convenient form.
2	Availability of procurement is larger so more inventory items	Less inventory
3	It saves time because of doorstep delivery	It is time consuming as compared to e-pharmacy.
4	Range of medicines are more	Range of medicine is less
5	It provide discount on medicines so offer lower price	They are not give such offer like online pharmacy due to less margin

of e-pharmacy platforms etc. has been stated in the literature. How e-pharmacy can be beneficial for the consumer and pharmaceutical sector is stated in the article. (3)

- A study on the post pandemic impact on the pharmaceutical industry of India, by Runu Das, S. Haque, Bishal Patowary states that India has achieved tremendous growth in domestic as well as international economic sector. As a result of Covid-19, use of digital platforms and development of e-commerce can be seen. During pandemic, people have realised the importance of no contact delivery, delivery of products at door step in less time and with more economical benefits. They have realised that it is safer to order medicines online. As it is the great opportunity for doing investment in business, companies like Amazon, Reliance etc started investing into these digital platforms. (5)
- “E-pharmacies Regulation in India: Bringing New Dimensions to Pharma Sector, by Priyanka VP and Ashok BK.” (6) Buying medicine is also been compared with the people having smartphones so that they can access e-pharmacy apps and other platforms. As the number persons using smartphone is increasing over years, people are reaching out to the newer advancement in buying products such as using apps to buy product. Therefore, e-pharmacy use is growing. Even though e-pharmacies are on the rise, India's lax e-pharmacy laws and regulations could make it risky to purchase medications. The Drugs and Cosmetic Act of 1940 was introduced at a time when internet usage was extremely low or there was limited internet access. But in modern times, the situation has drastically changed. People are getting more tech-savvy and are able to access everything using internet and that makes the Drugs and Cosmetic Rules and regulations old one which cannot be applied in this era. (6)
- Sudden announced lockdown by government due to spike in Covid-19 cases forced people to stay indoors and accept digital way to earn money and in every aspect where they need not to go outside. People having chronic disorders and even the acute one were not able to go to a pharmacy and refill the medication. In this case, those patients got most attracted to the online platforms which will help them to get medicine at doorstep. At the same time, health consciousness increased which led to buying of health tracking products online. While availing all these medications and products, consumer tend to look at other factors of it which influences

their buying behaviour. This includes discounts offered by e-pharmacies, convenience to use and order medicines, availability, safety, privacy etc. (7)

- Legal Regulations for e-pharmacy still remains a major problem in India. Even if there is a boom in e-pharmacy in India but the future of e-pharmacy is threatening if not worked on the legal issues associated with e-pharmacy. Currently, the Pharmacy Act of 1948, the Information Technology Act of 2000, and the Drugs and Cosmetics Act of 1940 all apply to online pharmacies. But internet users were not much by that time when these rules and regulations were formulated. Later on the Union Health Ministry came out with few rules regarding accessibility of genuine drugs from legal online websites. But these rules are still to be finalized and hence, it's still pending. (8)

- The factors which have put the pharmaceutical industry mainly concern with the e-pharmacy at higher growth includes, increasing in use of internet that is internet penetration, Change in Consumer preferences, Initiatives taken by government to motivate people to buy medicines online (Pradhan Mantri Bhartiya Janaushadhi Pariyojana) which mainly focuses on the quality and affordability of medicine across the country. Despite of booming of e-pharmacy in India, there are few challenges which needs to be addressed. These includes support for the consumer who is unaware of how to avail medicine online, lack of trust where people have fear of receiving wrong medication, lack of regional language support, privacy of data which a patient enters while ordering medicines. (9)

- e – pharmacy is now becoming a way which is also motivating people to use other health related applications and thus there will be increase in demand of medicines and health related products. People from not only urban areas but also the people from sub-urban areas are becoming more health conscious because of pandemic. So, it will ultimately have a great positive impact on the pharmaceutical industry. (10)

METHODOLOGY

Research Question:

1. How COVID-19 has affected consumer behaviour for purchasing of pharmaceutical products from e-pharmacy platforms?

Objectives:

1. To know the current trends in e-pharmacy business.
2. To understand the buying behavior of consumers from e-pharmacy platforms.
3. To identify and understand factors influencing buying pattern of consumers from e-pharmacy.

MATERIAL AND METHODS:

- **Study type:** Descriptive, quantitative analysis.
- **Sampling:** Non- randomization technique
- **Sample selection:** Students, all the consumers using mobile phone and people who can access internet.
- **Setting:** PAN India
- **Sample size:** 60 people depending on the survey conducted for 15 days. This survey included people from different regions of India.
- **Study Tool:** Questionnaire (google form)

Study Population:

- **Inclusion criteria:** Healthcare providers (nurse, physician, medical student).All the consumers having mobile phones.
- **Exclusion Criteria:**

People who never used online pharmacy platforms.

Duration of study: 21st March 2022 to 18th June 2022

Data Collection procedure:

- **Primary data:** A questionnaire created using google forms to gather primary data to know recent approaches and other data. The survey was done for 15 days and included people from different region in India.
- **Secondary data:** Research articles, research papers and related documents from internet. Blogs related to e-pharmacy and Covid-19 correlation and news articles were used to understand the trend in e-pharmacy in India.

Ethical Considerations:

- Informed consent will be obtained from all the study participants. Appropriate measures will be stated to ensure data security, privacy, and confidentiality.

Implications Of Research:

E-pharmacy platforms can use the result obtained from this research to identify the buying behavior of consumers, to identify challenges and to do need gap analysis for the same.

Data Collection and analysis:

While collecting primary data, first half of the questionnaire focused on demographic profile such as gender, age, educational qualification. So that we can get a overview of consumer behaviour based on their age and qualification as well as gender. And another half of questionnaire focused on the part which will give a overview of change in consumer behaviour and the factors affecting consumer behaviour while using e-pharmacy. This will also help us to identify buying pattern for e-pharmacy.

The data has been tabulated, displayed in a pie diagram, graphs with the help of Microsoft Excel so that we can easily analyse the data and can reach to the conclusion part.

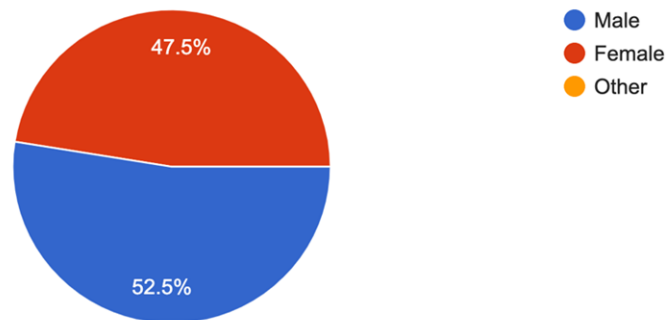
Following is the data obtained from primary data analysis:

RESULTS

Demographic profile of respondents:

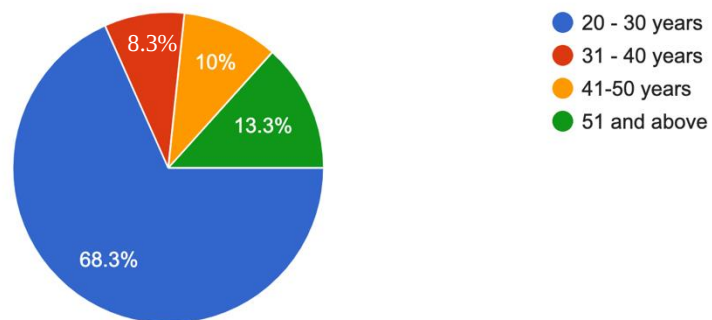
Gender

59 responses



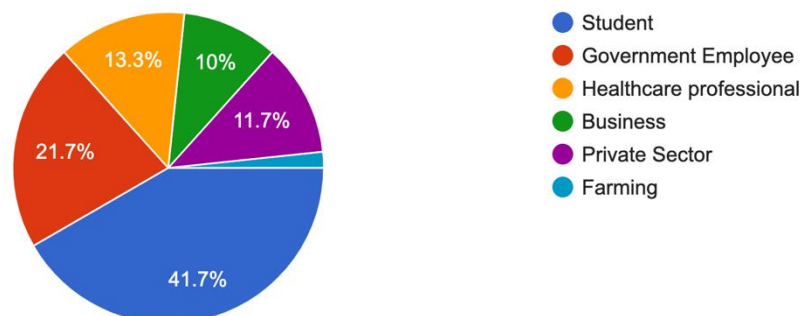
Age

60 responses



Occupation

60 responses



Sample responses of whether they use e-pharmacy or not

Around 65 % people use e-pharmacy currently, this is enough number of consumers who are still using e-pharmacy.

60 responses

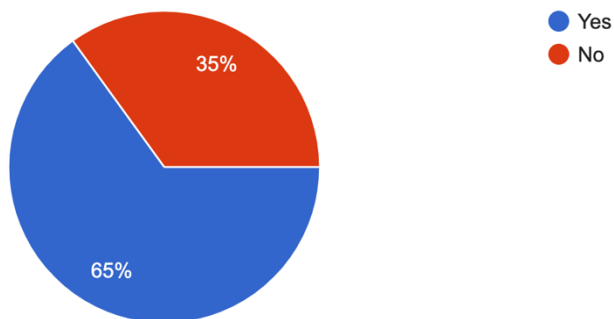


Fig. 1

Sample responses of reason for buying medicines online

Around 28% people are buying medicines/ other pharmaceutical products on online pharmacy because of convenience. The result of this also focuses on which e-pharmacy platforms should focus on to engage customer.

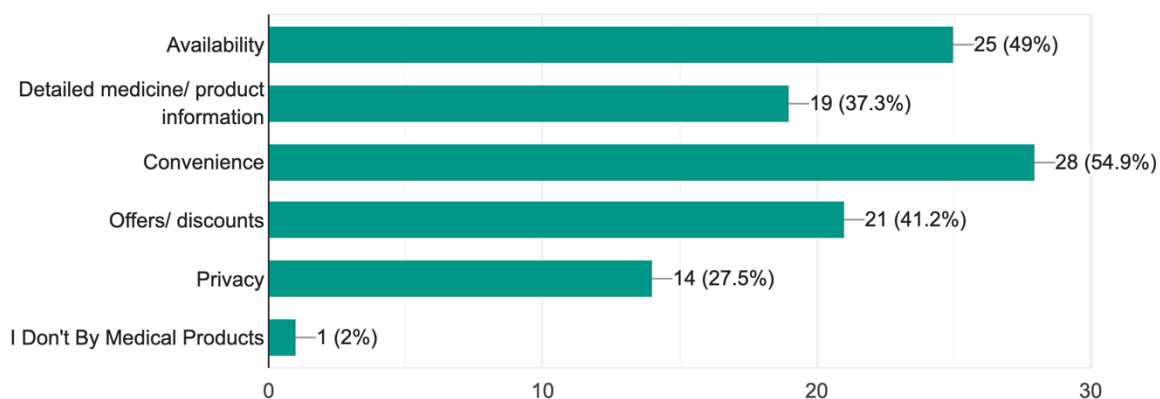


Fig. 2

Sample responses showing frequency of buying medicine/ other pharmaceutical products

These responses majorly concern the frequency of buying medicines using e-pharmacy platforms which will result in understanding that how patients are sticking to purchase from e-pharmacy.

60 responses

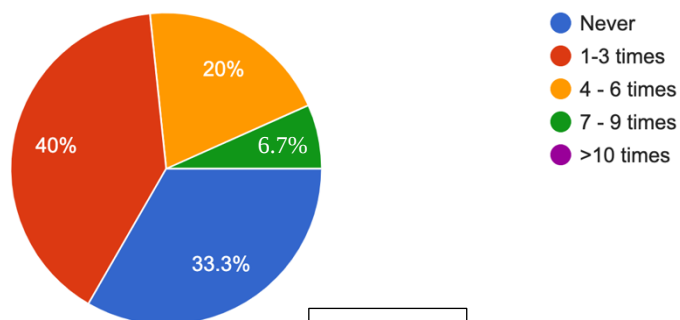


Fig. 3

Sample responses showing the most used e-pharmacy platforms for purchasing pharmaceutical products

e-pharmacy platforms which is most successful in engaging customers can be understood by these responses.

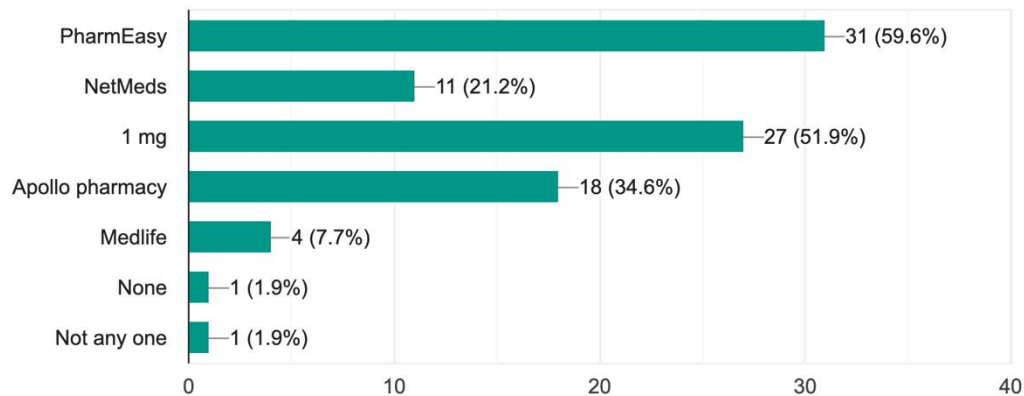


Fig. 4

Sample responses of rating e-pharmacy on rating scale 1 to 5

Considering parameters like accessibility, safety, availability and affordability, people have given responses based on their experience with e-pharmacy.

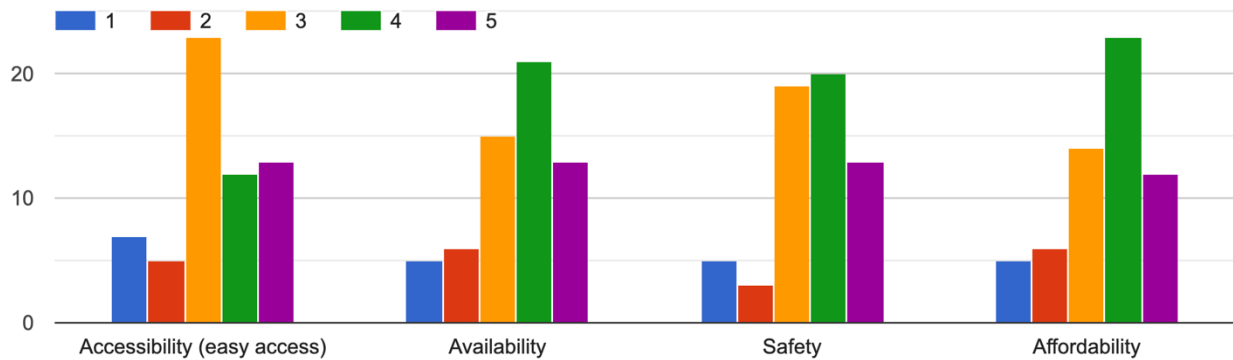


Fig. 5

Sample responses of rating offline pharmacy/ traditional pharmacy on the scale of 1 to 5

Rating offline pharmacy/traditional pharmacy based on accessibility, availability, safety and affordability so that the lacuna can be identified and closely analyzed.

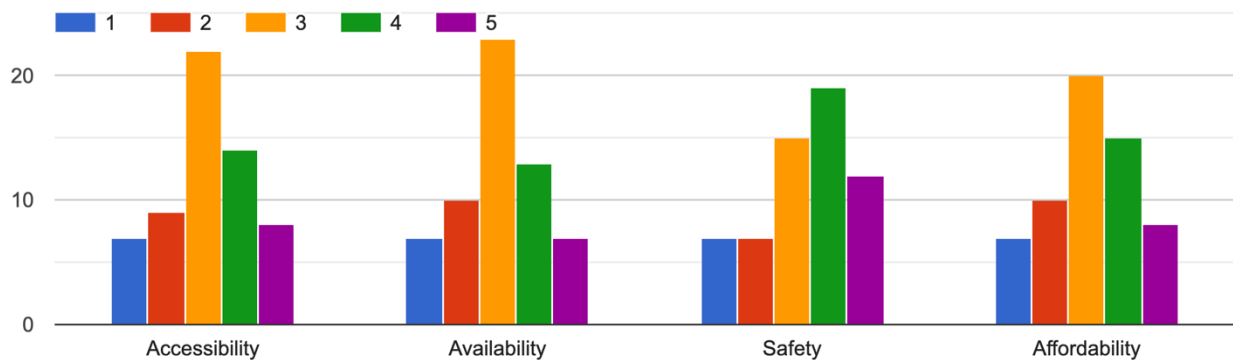


Fig. 6

DISCUSSION

e-pharmacy being the most convenient platform for buying medicinal/ other pharmaceutical products, it's important to analyse whether consumers are completely aware about it or not. Consumer experience about pharmacy which may be e-pharmacy or traditional pharmacy, plays an important role in understanding the consumer point of view, knowing consumer's needs, problems which they are facing with current available facilities etc.

Knowing consumer's buying behaviour and current trend in the market will help e-pharmacies to be more patient centric.

Apart from consumer point of view, the rules and regulations regarding e-pharmacy which is making a new chaos. The regulations were made in 1940 which were regarding e-pharmacy. But by that time not much people were aware about e-pharmacy and even very few of them were able to access internet. Nowadays, maximum number of people have their smartphone and they spend more money on buying all the internet expenses. Hence, the laws made in 1940 are not suitable for current situation in India.

Talking about the results obtained in the survey, 52.5% male and 47.5% female respondents were there. Amongst which, 41 respondents were of 21-30 years old, 8 people of 31 and above age, 6 people of 41-50 years old, 5 people of age range 31-40 years are there. It can be seen in the received data that around 65% of consumers are still ordering from e-pharmacy platform and people who choose offline pharmacy over e-pharmacy are only 35%.

Coming to the part of reason behind people buying from e-pharmacy platform is majorly because of following factors:

1. Convenience (54.9%)
2. Availability (49%)
3. Discounts/ other offers (41%)
4. Detailed information of product (37.3%)
5. Privacy (27.5%)

Convenience of ordering medicine is the major reason behind use of e-pharmacy. As people need not to go outdoor and buy medicines. It is less time consuming, available payment options, no contact delivery is what making it more convenient for use.

Availability of medicine which is another important aspect. During pandemic there was supply chain disruption due to which there was less transportation facilities available. This resulted in low availability of products in retail pharmacy stores. In this case even if consumer approached retail pharmacy stores, they didn't get the product. This ultimately turned them to use e-pharmacy so that they can fulfill their need and order medicines.

Discounts/ other offers, as discounts and multiple offers on purchase of any product is being there in the market since long time. It is ultimate strategy of attracting a pool of customer towards the product. In e-pharmacy also, discounts play an important role in attracting customers. Generally it has been seen that in retail pharmacy stores, very less discount offers are applied for the consumers whereas people find more discount options available on e-pharmacy and thus a pool of customers engages with e-pharmacy.

Detailed information about product, which a consumer can get before buying product. The dosing schedule, indications, usage of medicines all these points are mentioned in the product information part. In retail pharmacy stores, lack of patient counselling by pharmacists makes people uncomfortable and thus they try to opt for the product information on online platforms. Hence, it results in more preference of e-pharmacy over retail pharmacy.

Privacy, as e-pharmacy doesn't reveal the name of person ordering medicine and the medicine being ordered by him/her. It provides complete privacy for the patient. Whereas in case of retail pharmacy stores, consumer gets uncomfortable in buying some medicinal products because of presence of other customers at the purchasing counter of pharmacies. Hence, e-pharmacy provides most privacy for ordering medicines online.

Frequency of buying medicine or related products online:

This data says a lot about frequency of using e-pharmacy. As 40% of total respondents, have order 1-3 times. This might be due to the pandemic, as they preferred buying medicines online only during pandemic. 20% of consumers who ordered medicine online for 4-6 times. 6.7% people ordered 7-9 times. 33% respondents never ordered medicines using e-pharmacy platform.

Most used platform for e-pharmacy

People preference for choosing e-pharmacy platforms:

1. PharmEasy (59.6%)
2. 1mg (51.1%)
3. Apollo Pharmacy (34.6%)
4. NetMeds (21.2%)
5. Medlife (7.7%)

So, PharmEasy being most used platforms by the consumers. Apart from PharmEasy, 1mg, Apollo Pharmacy, Netmeds are gaining more number of consumers than Medlife.

Rating of use of e-pharmacy on the scale of 1-5:

e-pharmacy has gained highest rating in affordability, followed by availability, safety and accessibility respectively. People find it more affordable than that of the retail pharmacy stores, this might be due to discounts and various offers offered by e-pharmacies.

As on e-pharmacy, there is very less chances of availability of products so availability being the 2nd most rated factor affecting consumer behaviour.

Rating of use of retail pharmacy stores on the scale on 1-5:

In case of retail Pharmacy stores, consumers have rated all the 4 aspects as an average. That is, accessibility, availability, safety and affordability all are rated as 3 out of 5, except safety which has got 4 out of 5. Thus there is huge difference in consumer preference for the same factors considering e-pharmacy.

FINDINGS

By conducting survey, it was found that,

1. Most consumers are getting attracted by discounts/ offers offered by e-pharmacies which makes it affordable.
2. Choosing right platform for use of e-pharmacy also plays important role. Consumer might have used physician's or any other colleague's opinion before purchasing of any product. So these opinions also leads to change in consumer preference.
3. Talking about frequency of ordering medicines, during Covid-19 people were using e-pharmacies the most. After Covid-19 very few of them are still stucked to ordering medicines online.
4. The detailed information of product such as side effects, maximum dose, indications, route of administration which is lacking in retail pharmacy stores because of lack of pharmacist's counselling while purchasing medicines offline. Thus detailed information about product has influenced consumer preferences.
5. E-pharmacy being more customer centric as its offer's various additional benefits such as discounts, free home delivery of medicines etc. helps in **customer relationship management**. Here, retail pharmacy stores fail to manage customer relationship because of less attention given by pharmacist to the consumers.
6. Covid-19 has affected all the businesses which include one-to-one contact with customers and forced them to go for contact-less delivery of medicines and other products. This is the change in trend in pharmacy sector while delivering medicines. Consumers' attraction to e-pharmacies is mostly influenced by contact-free medication delivery.

CONCLUSION

In India, e-pharmacy is blooming even after Covid-19, it can contribute positively in healthcare system. As pandemic affected supply chain of medicinal products, e-pharmacy is giving new hope for continuing medication to the patients by supplying it in each corner of country

Here, by performing this study, we got to know the most factors which affects consumer behaviour while it comes to offline pharmacy and e-pharmacy. The main distinguishing factors for retail pharmacy stores and e-pharmacies can be understood by this study.

By performing this study we got to know that 3 major factors which affects consumer preference while choosing between retail pharmacy stores and e-pharmacy are Accessibility, Availability and Affordability, where consumer finds most convenience and they consider all these 3 points before purchasing products.

This study has also brought an attention to the rules and regulations of e-pharmacy. The Rules and regulations which were implemented in 1940 and 2000 (IT Act) does not suits for the current situation in the market for e-pharmacy. Thus, few of them should be reframed by considering current scenario where majority of people have smartphones, and they can access internet.

Few limitations were there while doing this study such as, this study includes 60 participants only so there might be slight change in the results when we consider more than 1000 participant.

REFERENCE –

- (1) Mallika Srivastava, M. Raina. Consumer's usage and adoption of e-pharmacy in India. International Journal of Pharmaceutical and Healthcare Marketing. 23rd Oct 2020. DOI:10.1108/ijphm-01-2020-0006
- (2) Dilip Chenoy, FICCI. E-pharmacies at CIVID-19 Frontline. Fighting Odds. Serving the Nation. Aug 2020.
- (3) Himani N Singh, Majumdar. e-Pharmacy impacts on society and pharma sector in economical pandemic situation: a review. Journal of Drug delivery and therapeutics. 15th June 2020. Corpus ID: 225668084
- (4) Pragya Gupta, Anunay Shrivastava. Tough times call for tough measures, The immediate need to regulate e-pharmacy. RGNUL student research review. Digital Healthcare in India. Blog. 27th June 2020.
- (5) Das, R. L., Haque, S., & Patowary. A study on the post pandemic impact on the pharmaceutical industry of India. International Journal of Health Sciences. 2022. 6(S2), 1022–1031.
- (6) Priyanka VP and Ashok BK. E-pharmacies Regulation in India: Bringing New Dimensions to Pharma Sector. Pharmaceutical Regulatory Affairs: Open Access. Oct 2016
- (7) Aman A, Shilpa P. Application of E-Pharmacies in India. Journal of Pharmaceutical Research International. 2021. Article no. JPRI.78142
- (8) Televisory. A Blog. Boom in the online pharmacy market in India and the challenges ahead. Financial Market Data. 2020
- (9) IBEF (Indian Brand Equity Foundation). E-pharmacy in India is Winning the Battle over Traditional Medicines. Jan 2021.
- (10) Sameer S, Vaishali C M. Has the outbreak of the Coronavirus pandemic impacted the online pharmacy in Serving the nation or capitalization of business opportunities in India? Journal of Management Research. Vol. 12 Issue - 2. Oct 2020
- (11) Gautam S, Sandra P, Vaibhav C. E-pharmacies in India: Can they improve the pharmaceutical service delivery? National library of medicine. Journal of Global Health. 2019 Jun; 10(1): 010301
- (12) COVID-19: Impact on Consumer Behavior Trends | Accenture. April 2020.
(<https://www.accenture.com/us-en/insights/consumer-goods-services/coronavirus-consumer-behavior-research>)
- (13) Anandini B, Mugdha B, Yashika C, Dhairya D. Analysing the dynamics of the Indian pharmaceutical industry in light of the covid-19 pandemic. 2021.