

## CONSUMER BUYING BEHAVIOR TOWARDS E-PHARMACY

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**Abstract:** E-pharmacies are becoming increasingly popular in India due to their convenience, discounts, user experience, customer care, and wide selection of medications. However, due to a lack of awareness or basic internet regulations, a significant portion of the Indian population is not purchasing medication online. This study investigates consumer purchasing behaviour when purchasing medications via online delivery apps. The study adopts a descriptive research design and probability sampling (simple random sampling). The results show that Netmeds is the most preferred, and Apollo is the least preferred e-pharmacy. The most common problem was the lack of authentic medicines. The research was conducted in Silchar, the city of Assam. The results of this study will provide intriguing new perspectives for examining consumer purchasing patterns in e-pharmacies from an academic standpoint. This study will also provide a better understanding of the connections between the various factors and consumers' motivation to use e-pharmacy at the managerial level.

**Keywords:** *Awareness, Buying Behaviour, E-pharmacy, Medicine, Online delivery.*

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### INTRODUCTION

The growth of e-commerce in India has led to an increase in online drug stores and web-based merchants of physician-approved capsules. This trend has been present since the late 1980s, with soma.com in the US being the first online drug store in 1999. There were over 1000 sites selling drugs in the UK as of mid-2004. However, due to a lack of awareness or basic internet regulations, a significant portion of the Indian population is not purchasing medication online.

The rise of computer literacy, internet availability, and smartphone popularity has made online drug shopping more convenient for consumers. Businesses provide customer support through email after purchase and post-purchase, allowing customers to visit websites for information on medication or overall performance. Generally, customers prefer online shopping for faster shopping, more options, and lower costs. Customers frequently visit online pharmacy websites 24/7, which facilitates easy product discovery.

The benefits of online shopping include higher advertising performance, lower transaction and search costs, faster shopping, more options, and affordable prices. Online buying of drugs is simple and convenient for consumers, and customers can easily compare their medications with similar ones based on price, colour, size, discount, and quality. We have divided e-commerce into two major sectors: business-to-business (B2B) and business-to-customer (B2C). Online drug shopping offers customers a variety of choices compared to traditional brick-and-mortar retail stores.

### LITERATURE REVIEW

According to (Liang et al., 2005), consumers are more likely to embrace online prescription filling if they believe there is less uncertainty involved in the procedure. Consumer trust in online websites is influenced by factors including website size, usability, quality, and simplicity of use; nevertheless, consumer experience has a greater influence on attitude, perceived risk,

and intention to purchase online (Agag & El-Masry, 2017). In B2C e-commerce, online transaction self-efficacy positively affects purchase intentions and trust in online merchants (Kim et al., 2009). According to (Bu & Go, 2008), consumers' inclination to buy and actual financial risk-taking are encouraged by trustworthy online shops, somewhat mitigating the impact of perceived risk on purchase intention. Among Jakartan university students, perceived risk and reputation have a beneficial impact on online purchase intention, and trust functions as a mediator between these variables and intention (Rahayu et al., 2020).

The degree to which consumers trust and are willing to make purchases on e-commerce websites is mostly determined by security, privacy, and reputation; website quality is only slightly important (Liang et al., 2005). According to (Nadeem et al., 2015), peer recommendations have a greater impact on the attitudes of females than males when it comes to online purchasing via Facebook and website service quality, both of which have a favorable impact on consumer trust in online retailing. Although Hungarian patients have access to Internet pharmacies, they currently favor brick-and-mortar pharmacies over online ones because of security concerns (Fittler et al., 2018).

India's online pharmacies are redefining healthcare decision-making and access by offering a wide range of medications and health items, encouraging user-friendly features, and altering customer preferences (Lakshmi & Sudha, 2017). Due to their convenience and contactless delivery, e-pharmacies are growing in popularity; 89.3% of respondents said they would use them in the future. Because they are cheaper for less affluent customers and offer convenience, discounts, user experience, customer care, and a wide selection of medications, e-pharmacies are becoming more and more popular in India (Agarwal & Parkhi, 2021) (J. Gupta et al., 2022) .

Online consumer purchasing behavior is greatly influenced by psychological and demographic aspects, especially for consumers who live outside of metro areas (Sonwaney & Chincholkar, 2019). Customers in Delhi NCR view internet pharmacies as cost-effective and handy, but they also have

concerns about return policies, payment security, and dependability (P. Gupta et al., 2022). Because they target unregulated people and raise drug prices without first consulting doctors, online pharmacies may be a public health danger. Their marketing tactics are better suited for a commodity market than for the pharmaceutical industry (Levaggi et al., 2009).

According to (Srivastava & Raina, 2020), there is a need to provide clients with increased teaching along with demonstrations of the use and benefits of e-pharmacies due to the general public's lack of understanding regarding these benefits. (Rithoriya et al., 2023) pointed out that one of the main issues with e-pharmacy is self-medication and recommended that appropriate regulations and prescription verification be put in place to stop drug abuse.

According to (M. S. Gupta, 2020), there is still a need to educate consumers about the numerous risks connected to purchasing medication from online pharmacies, even though consumer awareness of e-pharmacies is high. According to (Salter et al., 2014), in order to stop drug abuse, accurate scanning of prescriptions should be done both when placing the order and again when it is delivered.

In a study on consumer pharmaceutical purchasing behavior, (Pujari, 2016) discovered that people prefer their prescription based on their own choice and price, and that factors such as a doctor's recommendation, magazines, online literature, family, and friendly advice influence purchasing behavior.

While a number of studies have looked at the purchasing habits of consumers at E-Pharmacy in the Cachar area of Silchar city, none have addressed customer satisfaction or the most and least popular online apps for delivering medications. Prior studies have mostly examined the opinions of customers in general regarding the quality of the services they receive, without taking into account variables such as gender, age, occupation, education, and geography. Based on these considerations, this study attempts to explore customer behavior when purchasing medications via online delivery apps.

## Research Objectives

The main objective of this paper is to study the **Consumer Buying Behavior towards E-pharmacy**.

The detailed objectives are:

- To know the awareness level of the customers regarding E-pharmacy.
- To find out the most preferred E-pharmacy by the consumers.
- To know how often consumers prefer to buy from the E-pharmacy.
- To find out which mode of buying medicines is preferred by the consumers.
- To know the factors that motivates the consumers to buy medicines from E-pharmacy.
- To find out the factors that prevents the consumers from buying medicines from E-pharmacy.
- To know the difficulties faced by the consumers while ordering from E-pharmacy.

## Research Hypothesis

The Hypothesis leading the study is given below:

Ho: there is no significant relationship between the awareness level of customers of E-pharmacy and the preferred choice of the customer.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The researcher selected Ward No. 13 of Silchar Town as the study area due to logistics, cost, and heterogeneous population. An appropriate sample size of 341 was taken out of approximately 3000 population at a 95% confidence level using a sample size calculator. Simple random sampling was used for data collection. The questionnaire was distributed to all the residents who were 18 years and above. Finally, 318 responses were received. The descriptive statistics and correlation were calculated using IBM SPSS.

## FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

### Objective No. 1: Customers' awareness of the different E-pharmacy

The following table depicts the awareness about different E-pharmacies.

**Table 1: Customers' awareness of the different E-pharmacy**

S.No.	E-pharmacy	Respondents	Percentage
1.	Tata 1 mg	114	35.8
2.	Quickmeds	66	20.7
3.	Quick-o-book	69	21.7
4.	PharmEasy	138	41.4
5.	<b>Netmeds</b>	<b>171</b>	<b>53.7</b>
6.	Apollo	18	5.6
	Total	318	100.0

## Interpretation

The above table shows that most of the respondents know about Netmeds, and Apollo is the least known e-pharmacy.

### Objective No. 2: Most preferred E-pharmacy

The following table depicts the customers' most preferred E-pharmacy

**Table 2: Customers' most Preferred E-pharmacy**

S.No.	E-pharmacy	Respondents	Percentage
1.	Tata 1 mg	45	14.2
2.	Quickmeds	45	14.2
3.	Quick-o-book	54	17.0
4.	Pharmeasy	78	24.5

5.	Netmeds	93	29.2
6.	Apollo	3	.9
	Total	318	100.0

### Age-wise preference of E-pharmacy

The following table depicts the customers' Age-wise preference of E-pharmacy

**Table 3: Age-wise preference of E-pharmacy**

S.No.	E-pharmacy	Age				Total
		20-30	30-40	40-50	50 and above	
1.	Tata 1 mg	42	3	0	0	45
2.	Quickmeds	30	9	6	0	45
3.	Quick-o-book	42	12	0	0	54
4.	Pharmeasy	63	9	3	0	75
5.	Netmeds	75	9	3	6	93
6.	Apollo	3	0	0	0	3
	Total	255	42	12	6	318

### Gender-wise preference of E-pharmacy

The following table depicts the Gender-wise preference of E-pharmacy

**Table 4: Gender-wise preference of E-pharmacy**

S.No.	E-pharmacy	Gender		Total
		Male	Female	
1.	Tata 1 mg	30	15	45
2.	Quickmeds	21	24	45
3.	Quick-o-book	21	33	54
4.	PharmEasy	51	27	78
5.	Netmeds	63	30	93
6.	Apollo	3	0	3
	Total	189	129	318

### Interpretation

The data presented in the tables show respondents' preferences for different e-pharmacies. Netmeds is the most preferred e-pharmacy, followed by PharmEasy, Quick-o-book, Tata 1 mg, Quickmeds, and Apollo. When analyzing the preferences based on age groups, Netmeds is the most preferred among respondents aged 20–30, Quick-o-book is the most preferred among respondents aged 30–40, and Quickmeds is the most preferred among respondents aged 40-50. Among

respondents aged 50 and above, Netmeds is the most preferred e-pharmacy. Apollo is consistently the least preferred e-pharmacy across all age groups. In terms of gender, Netmeds is the most preferred among male respondents, and female respondents prefer Quick-o-book.

### Objective No. 3: How often people buy from E-pharmacy

The following table depicts the frequency of purchase from E-pharmacy

**Table 5: How often people buy from E-pharmacy**

S.No.	Frequency	Respondents	Percentage
1.	Weekly	21	6.6
2.	Monthly	81	25.5
3.	Quarterly	27	8.5

4.	Sometimes	189	59.4
	Total	318	100.0

**Age-wise how often people buy from E-pharmacy**

The following table depicts the Age-wise frequency of purchase from E-pharmacy

**Table 6: Age-wise how often people buy from E-pharmacy**

S.No.	Frequency	Age				Total
		20-30	30-40	40-50	50 and above	
1.	Weekly	18	3	0	0	21
2.	Monthly	54	15	6	6	81
3.	Quarterly	27	0	0	0	27
4.	Sometimes	156	24	6	0	186
	Total	255	42	12	6	318

**Gender-wise how often they purchase from E-pharmacy**

The following table depicts the gender-wise frequency of purchase from E-pharmacy

**Table 7: Gender-wise how often they purchase from E-pharmacy**

S.No.	Frequency	Gender		Total
		Male	Female	
1.	Weekly	9	12	21
2.	Monthly	39	42	81
3.	Quarterly	18	9	27
4.	Sometimes	123	66	189
	Total	189	129	318

**Interpretation**

The tables show that a majority of respondents buy medicines from e-pharmacy sometimes, with a smaller percentage buying monthly, quarterly, or weekly. Among different age groups, Netmeds is the most preferred among those aged 20–30, while Quick-o-book is preferred by those aged 30-40. Among males, the majority buy medicines

sometimes, while among females, the majority buy them occasionally or monthly.

**Objective No. 4: Mode of shopping consumers prefer the most**

The following table depicts the most preferred mode of shopping consumers prefer to purchase medicine.

**Table 8: Mode of shopping consumer prefer the most**

S.No.	Mode	Respondents	Percentage
1.	Online	69	21.7
2.	Offline	30	9.4
3.	Both	219	68.9
	Total	318	100.0

**Age-wise mode of shopping consumers prefer the most**

The following table depicts the age wise preferred mode of shopping consumers prefer to purchase medicine.

**Table 9: Age-wise method of shopping consumers prefer the most**

S.No.	Frequency	Age				Total
		20-30	30-40	40-50	50 and	
1.	Online	45	21	3	0	69
2.	Offline	24	3	3	0	30
3.	Both	186	18	6	6	216
	Total	255	42	12	6	318

**Gender-wise method of shopping consumers prefer**

The following table depicts the gender wise preferred mode of shopping consumers prefer to purchase medicine

**Table 10: Gender-wise mode of shopping consumers prefer**

S.No.	Mode	Gender		Total
		Male	Female	
1.	Online	33	36	69
2.	Offline	18	12	30
3.	Both	138	81	219
	Total	189	129	318

**Interpretation**

The majority of respondents prefer to buy medicines from both online and offline sources. A smaller percentage prefer to buy medicines exclusively online or offline. This preference is consistent across different age groups and genders.

**Objective No. 5: Factors that motivates the consumers to buy from E-pharmacy**

The following table depicts the factors that motivates the consumers to buy from E-pharmacy

**Table 11: Factors that motivates the consumers to buy from E-pharmacy**

S.No.	Factors	Respondents	Percentage
1.	Time saving	78	24.5
2.	Affordable	42	13.2
3.	Discounts offered	105	33.0
4.	Quick delivery	21	6.6
5.	Satisfying customer services	12	3.8
6.	Order can be placed anytime	60	18.9
	Total	318	100.0

**Age-wise factors that motivates the consumers to buy from E-pharmacy**

The following table depicts the age-wise factors that motivates the consumers to buy from E-pharmacy.

**Table 12: Age-wise factors that motivates the consumers to buy from E-pharmacy**

S.No.	Factors	Age				Total
		20-30	30-40	40-50	50 and above	
1.	Time saving	66	9	3	0	78
2.	Affordable	21	6	6	6	39

3.	Discounts offered	78	27	0	0	105
4.	Quick delivery	18	0	3	0	21
5.	Satisfying customer services	15	0	0	0	15
6.	Order can be placed anytime	60	0	0	0	60
	Total	258	42	12	6	318

### Gender-wise factors that motivates the consumers to buy from E-pharmacy

The following table depicts the gender-wise factors that motivate the consumers to buy from E-pharmacy.

**Table 13: Gender-wise factors that motivates the consumers to buy from E-pharmacy**

S.No.	Factors	Gender		Total
		Male	Female	
1.	Time saving	42	36	78
2.	Affordable	21	21	42
3.	Discounts offered	72	33	105
4.	Quick delivery	18	3	21
5.	Satisfying customer services	3	9	12
6.	Order can be placed anytime	33	27	60
	Total	189	129	318

### Interpretation

Customers primarily use e-pharmacy due to the discounts it offers, and they are less likely to use it due to their dissatisfaction with customer service. In the age group of 20–30, the main reasons for using e-pharmacy are discounts, time-saving, and the ability to place orders anytime.

In the age group of 30–40, the main reasons are discounts, time-saving, and affordability. In the age group of 40–50, the main reason is affordability. In the age group of 50 and

above, all respondents prefer E-pharmacy due to affordability. Male respondents mainly use E-pharmacy for discounts, while female respondents use it for time-saving and discounts. For males, customer service is the least motivating factor.

### Objective No. 6: Factors that prevent the consumers to order from E-pharmacy

The following table depicts the Factors that prevent the consumers to order from E-pharmacy.

**Table 14: Factors that prevent the consumers to buy from E-pharmacy**

S.No.	Factors	Respondents	Percentage
1.	Glitch in App	54	17.0
2.	Slow App	36	11.3
3.	Transaction doesn't feel safe	45	14.2
4.	Unavailability of medicines you need	90	28.3
5.	Unavailability of authentic medicines	93	29.2
	Total	318	100.0

### Age-wise factors that prevent the consumers to order from E-pharmacy

The following table depicts the age-wise factors that prevent the consumers to order from E-pharmacy.

**Table 15: Age-wise factors that prevent the consumers to buy from E-pharmacy**

S.No.	Factors	Age				Total
		20-30	30-40	40-50	50 and above	
1.	Glitch in App	48	9	0	0	57
2.	Slow App	30	6	0	0	36
3.	Transaction doesn't feel safe	42	3	0	0	45
4.	Unavailability of medicines you need	69	12	0	6	87
5.	Unavailability of authentic medicines	69	12	12	0	93
	Total	258	42	12	6	318

### Gender-wise factors that prevent the consumers to order from E-pharmacy

The following table depicts the gender wise factors that prevent the consumers to order from E-pharmacy.

**Table 16: Gender-wise factors that prevent the consumers to buy from E-pharmacy**

S.No.	Factors	Gender		Total
		Male	Female	
1.	Glitch in App	33	21	54
2.	Slow App	12	24	36
3.	Transaction doesn't feel safe	30	15	45
4.	Unavailability of medicines you need	69	21	90
5.	Unavailability of authentic medicines	45	48	93
	Total	189	129	318

### Interpretation

The tables show that the main factors preventing respondents from using e-pharmacy are the unavailability of authentic medicines and the unavailability of medicines needed. A slow app is the least significant factor. Among different age groups, all respondents in the 40–50 age group mentioned the unavailability of authentic medicines, while all respondents in the 50 and above age group mentioned the unavailability of medicines needed. Among

male respondents, the main factor mentioned is the unavailability of medicines needed, while among female respondents, the main factor mentioned is the unavailability of authentic medicines.

### Objective No. 7: Difficulties faced while ordering from E-pharmacy

The following table depicts the Difficulties faced while ordering from E-pharmacy.

**Table 17: Difficulties faced while ordering from E-pharmacy**

S.No.	Difficulties	Respondents	Percentage
1.	Glitches in App	42	13.2
2.	While uploading prescription online	36	11.3
3.	Transaction issues	27	8.5
4.	Unavailability of medicines or out of stock	120	37.7
5.	Delivery time takes long	93	29.2
	Total	318	100.0

**Age-wise difficulties faced while ordering from E-pharmacy**

The following table depicts the age wise difficulties faced while ordering from E-pharmacy.

**Table 18: Age-wise difficulties faced while ordering from E-pharmacy**

S.No.	Difficulties	Age				Total
		20-30	30-40	40-50	50 and above	
1.	Glitches in App	36	9	9	0	45
2.	While uploading prescription online	27	6	6	0	36
3.	Transaction issues	27	0	0	0	27
4.	Unavailability of medicines or out of stock	90	15	15	6	120
5.	Delivery time takes long	78	12	12	0	93
	Total	258	42	42	6	318

**Gender-wise difficulties faced while ordering from E-pharmacy**

The following table depicts the gender wise difficulties faced while ordering from E-pharmacy.

**Table 19: Gender-wise difficulties faced while ordering from E-pharmacy**

S.No.	Difficulties	Gender		Total
		Male	Female	
1.	Glitches in App	18	24	42
2.	While uploading prescription online	24	12	36
3.	Transaction issues	18	9	27
4.	Unavailability of medicines or out of stock	84	36	120
5.	Delivery time takes long	45	48	93
	Total	189	129	318

**Interpretation**

The tables show that respondents faced difficulties with the medicines not being available, delivery times taking too long, glitches in the app, uploading prescriptions, and transaction issues. The most common difficulty among different age groups was the lack of medicines, while transaction issues were the least common. Among male and female respondents, the most common difficulties were medicines not being available and long delivery times.

**Testing of Hypothesis**

H<sub>0</sub>: There is no significant relationship between the awareness level of customers of E-pharmacy and the preferred choice of the customer.

H<sub>1</sub>: There is a significant relationship between the awareness level of customers of E-pharmacy and the preferred choice of the customer.

**Table 20: Cross Tabulation**

S.No.	E-pharmacies	Awareness	Most preferred
1.	Tata 1 mg	114	45
2.	Quickmeds	66	45
3.	Quick-o-book	69	54
4.	Pharomeasy	138	78
5.	Netmeds	141	93
6.	Apollo	18	3

**Table 21: Pearson Correlation**

		<b>Awareness</b>	<b>Most Preferred</b>
<b>Awareness</b>	pearson correlation	1	.905
	sig. (2-tailed)		.008
<b>Most preferred</b>	pearson correlation	.905	1
	sig. (2-tailed)	.008	

From the above table it is observed that

$$r = .905$$

$$p = .008$$

It is observed that the  $p$  value is 0.008 i.e.  $p < .05$ . Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected and the alternative hypothesis is accepted. Hence there is a significant relationship between the awareness level of customers of E-pharmacy and the preferred choice of the customer.

## **FINDINGS, RECOMMENDATION AND CONCLUSION**

A company's ability to analyze consumer behavior and product purchasing patterns is crucial. The pharmaceutical industry is highly volatile because purchasing medication and clothing are two completely different things. However, with the emergence of new competitors in the pharmacy industry, consumers now have more options. This study's main goal was to determine how people in Silchar City's Cachar area buy things from online pharmacies. According to the results, Apollo is the least preferred e-pharmacy, while Netmeds is the most preferred one.

Customers typically prefer both online and offline purchasing methods, and they only purchase medications from e-pharmacy on an occasional basis. People prefer e-pharmacies for chronic diseases, primarily due to their discounts. The lack of authentic medicines is the main barrier to using e-pharmacies. The absence of genuine medications is the primary barrier that keeps users from using e-pharmacies.

These findings lead to several recommendations. First and foremost, medication distribution needs to be expedited, particularly in emergency situations. Second, all medications for both acute and chronic illnesses should be kept in stock. E-pharmacy apps should also provide a better user experience for easy order

placement and round-the-clock customer support. Cash-on-delivery transactions should be seamless, and rural locations should be able to receive deliveries. All things considered, these upgrades will raise client pleasure and experience with E-pharmacy services. It is crucial to acknowledge that the study has certain limitations, such as a small sample size and a restricted geographic scope, which may result in an incomplete representation of the purchasing behavior of customers in Silchar or India. To obtain a more thorough understanding of consumer behavior toward e-pharmacies, larger-scale research is advised.

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