

ONLINE SHOPPING: PAST, PRESENT & FUTURE

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Abstract:

Mainly the goods are made at the manufacturer's place and reach the consumer through many channels. Consumers buy these products from shops. This is a common method which has been going on for years, but since the facility of online shopping has come, customers have got an option other than buying goods, in which they get the facility of getting the goods delivered directly to their home. Online shopping has emerged in India in the last two decades and within a few years of its emergence, the way of shopping has brought a revolution in the retail sector. As a result, the availability of goods and services to the customers became easy. This change has completely changed both consumer behaviour and standard of living. Overall, we can say that this method of e-commerce has not only provided convenience to the customer but has also provided new employment opportunities for the workforce. Apart from all this, there are some challenges for this sector which we see in the future. The study will also examine the age-old ways of doing business and shopping in India along with the growth of employment opportunities in logistics, web development, digital marketing, customer support and electronic payment systems due to online shopping and study the future prospective.

Old ways of shopping and changes in it:

Before the invention of the internet, most retail transactions were done through neighbourhood shops and bazaars and these bazaars were the place of transaction for the merchants and the customers of that place. People could buy a variety of products from these bazaars including food, clothes, household items and crafts of artisans and these bazaars used to be bustling centres of trade. Merchants had to maintain large warehouses and shops to display the goods to the customers. This traditional way of shopping has been going on for centuries. This method has been completely influenced by many cultural and economic variables. This method played an important role in the exchange of goods and services not only in India but also in other ancient civilizations of the world like Mesopotamia, Egypt and Rome. The industrial revolution led to large scale production in factories which changed the way people bought goods to a great extent. Over time, as urbanization increased and economic progress was made in the society, big malls started opening along with

small shops. In many countries, commercial areas were built along the route for passing tourists and locals to purchase goods. During the 19th century, department stores and shopping malls gained popularity by offering customers an easy and enjoyable shopping experience under one roof. Shopping centers, mail-order catalogs, and self-service supermarkets were some of the innovations that transformed the retail landscape in the 20th century. These developments have resulted in a change in the way people shop, which has become more accessible, practical, and efficient. With stores available nearby, customers no longer have to travel for hours to visit a store.

Rise of Online Shopping in India:

The rise of online shopping in India has been a significant phenomenon over the last two decades and is growing progressively, completely changing the retail landscape and consumer behavior. When the way consumers shop and transact has changed across the world, how can India remain untouched by it. Earlier, shopping was done through stores and malls, but today, with the advent of the internet, there has been a new change known as online shopping or e-commerce; according to the Oxford dictionary, e-commerce means "buying and selling things over the internet". As e-commerce continues to evolve and expand its footprints, it is set to play a vital role in shaping the future of retail business in India. Here is an overview of its evolution:-

- 1. Initial Phase (1990-2000):** Online shopping in India began in the late 1990s and early 2000s with the emergence of a few e-commerce players such as Rediff Shopping and Indiaplaza (Fabmart was India's first online shopping platform launched in 1999 which was later renamed as Indiamart). Limited internet availability, inaccessibility of online transactions, poor logistics and mistrust of this new method hindered the growth of the sector during this period.
- 2. Leading Players (Mid-2000s):** The mid-2000s saw the founding of online shopping in India with pioneering companies such as Flipkart (founded in 2007) and Snapdeal (founded in 2010), Myntra (founded in 2007). These companies initially focused on specific categories such as books and electronics, offering competitive pricing, wide selection and convenient delivery services.
- 3. Smartphone Revolution (2010s):** The proliferation of smartphones and affordable mobile data in the early 2010s revolutionised online shopping in India. The advent of mobile internet brought a new revolution in e-commerce platforms and e-commerce emerged as a new force in the form of m-commerce, with consumers increasingly using their smartphones to browse and purchase products. E-commerce platforms adapted their websites and launched mobile apps to cater to this growing trend.
- 4. Advanced phase:** The availability of internet in India forced new online shopping companies to stake their claim in the Indian market. As a result, today we have many options for online shopping. Amazon, the world's largest company in terms of online shopping, started its business in India in 2013. Along with this, many companies like Snapdeal (2010), Pepperfry (2011), Shopclues (2011), FabFurniture (2012), Nykaa (2012), Miso (2015), Ajio (2016), Tatacliq (2016) established their business here.

Main reasons for change in the behavior of Indians: -

- 1. Social factors:-** At the time of independence, there were mainly two classes in India, one rich and the other poor, but with the meaningful efforts of the governments, a new class emerged in the country which came to be known as the middle class and in the coming times, due to this middle class, many changes came in the economic scenario of the country. The biggest change was urbanization, due to which people started coming to the cities. There is also a lot of difference between rural and urban mentality and standard of living. For a long time, the population of the country was inclined towards accumulation, due to which expenses were

limited. Urbanization influenced people with each other, due to which their social life changed completely and People also started spending on their lifestyle.

2. **Economic factors:-** Since independence, the income of the people of India has been increasing continuously and when the income increases, the standard of living changes and with the change in the standard of living, the expenses also increase. One of the main reasons for the increase in expenses is the easy availability of loans. When the middle class started getting inclined towards online shopping, online shopping got a boost in India. The loan facility increased the access of people to mobiles, consumer durables, electronic products and automobiles etc.
3. **Availability of online services and goods:** Earlier only books and some electronics were available in online shopping, later apart from these, many types of services like clothes, groceries, home appliances and furniture also started becoming available, so people of every class started shopping from e-commerce platforms. Due to many facilities like cash-on-delivery, easy returns, same day or next day delivery, the online shopping experience became even better and people's trust also increased.
4. **Rise of digital payment:-** The rise of digital payment solutions like mobile wallets, UPI (Unified Payments Interface) and digital banking has made online transactions more convenient in India. These convenient and secure payment methods have encouraged more consumers, including tier 2 and tier 3 cities, to adopt online shopping.
5. **Post-Covid effect:** The Covid pandemic confined the whole world to their homes and when Indians were unable to step out, they realized the importance of online shopping for their household needs and as a result, they turned to e-commerce platforms after the lockdown. Today, e-commerce platforms have witnessed a surge in demand for not just essential goods but also non-essential items, driving further growth and expansion of the sector.

Overall, the rise of online shopping in India is driven by a combination of technological advancements, changing consumer behaviour, and favourable market conditions. As internet penetration continues to grow and infrastructure improves, online shopping is expected to play an increasingly important role in the Indian retail landscape.

Main Impact of online shopping: Increasing employment:-

Indian e-commerce was valued at \$46.2 billion in 2020 and is expected to grow by 18.29 percent to \$136.47 billion by 2026. Amazon India has played an important role in employment generation. They have created more than 13 lakh direct and indirect jobs in the country and will create 20 lakh jobs by 2025. These jobs are spread across various sectors including IT, e-commerce, logistics, manufacturing, content creation and skill development. Additionally, according to Flipkart, more than 70,000 direct and millions of indirect seasonal jobs were created during its Big Billion Days sale. Online shopping has created vast employment opportunities in various sectors. Here are some of the types of jobs that have been created or expanded due to the growth of online shopping:

1. **E-commerce Operations:** The day-to-day work operations of online shopping companies mainly involve website management, product listing, inventory management and order processing etc. and these require a lot of people.
2. **Digital Marketing and Advertising:** Advertising plays an important role in the growth of online shopping, which can promote goods and products through digital channels like search engines, social media, email marketing and online advertising, for this the demand for digital marketing and advertising professionals is increasing. Many jobs of digital marketing, social media and search engine experts are being created in this category.

3. **Customer service and support:** Before and after the sale of goods and services through online shopping there is a need for experienced customer service representatives who can assist buyers with inquiries, resolve complaints and provide support during the purchase process. Customer service jobs in e-commerce may include call center agents, chat support representatives and email support specialists.
4. **Logistics and Supply Chain Management:** Ensuring the delivery of goods to customers after online shopping depends heavily on efficient logistics and supply chain management. Jobs in this sector include warehouse managers, inventory controllers, logistics coordinators, and transportation specialists who oversee the movement of products from suppliers to distribution centers.
5. **Delivery and last-mile services:** The rise in online shopping has led to a rise in demand for delivery and last-minute services. This category includes delivery drivers, couriers, and logistics workers who are responsible for delivering goods from fulfilment centers to customers' doorsteps.
6. **Technology and software development:** E-commerce companies need skilled professionals to develop and maintain their online platforms, mobile applications, and backend systems. Jobs in this sector include software engineers, web developers, graphic designers, and data analysts who work on improving the functionality, performance, and user experience of e-commerce websites and apps.

Overall, online shopping has created diverse job opportunities in various industries ranging from technology and marketing to logistics and customer service, contributing to employment growth and economic development.

Future of Online Shopping: -

Looking at the growing economy in India, it seems that the future of online shopping is going to be tremendous in the coming times, in which there is a possibility of growth as follows:-

1. India's online shopping market has grown in the last two decades and it is likely to grow many times more in the coming years. The most important contribution in this is the expansion of the Internet as well as the availability of digital resources.
2. After the invention of Artificial Intelligence (AI), the scenario of the whole world is going to change. There is hardly any technical sector that AI cannot affect. Most companies are developing AI based chatbots instead of customer service representatives for information about their products, so that customers can get accurate information in a very short time. Along with AI, the era of Augmented reality (AR) is about to come, with the help of which you can understand how the product will look through 3D programs.
3. The expansion of the internet has not only increased online shopping, but today people are spending most of their time on social media like Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, YouTube, so how can online shopping companies stay away from these platforms, so all of them are also advertising their products and services on social media platforms and some companies are also using these platforms to sell their products.
4. ONDC Platform - Open Network for Digital Commerce (ONDC) seeks to democratize virtual trade by promoting honest competition and transparency. This initiative subsidized by the Government of India is expected to significantly increase the adoption of e-commerce, benefiting every shopkeeper and dealer, especially direct-to-patron (D2C) brands

5. Increased digital pricing options: The adoption of virtual banknotes and cryptocurrencies is expected to increase. This will lead to more secure and greener ways of doing business, which will significantly facilitate the growth of online commerce

These characteristics indicate that the net retail landscape in India is set for dynamic change, moving through the era, changing customer behavior, and with government assisting infrastructure and motivating brands to adopt those modifications and use of technology, the upcoming victory in this fast-growing market will be truly worth taking.

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