

Consumers' Online Purchasing Intention During Pandemic and Post-Pandemic: A Comparative Study

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Abstract

This paper illustrates Covid-19 pandemic impact and post pandemic influence on purchase intention of consumers towards online shopping. 203 Bangladeshi respondents participated in the survey conducted through online for primary data to carry out a comparative study, however secondary data has also been collected. The result of this study unfolded that product price, quality, delivery or shipping service, customer service, and mental health has a significant impact on consumers' purchasing intention during pandemic with the boom of online businesses while escalating buying intention from online for post pandemic state. Therefore, the study can be beneficial for e-commerce sectors or online businessperson to improve their service or to understand their customer's viewpoints for customer retention and sustainability in the upcoming competitive marketplace.

Key words

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Introduction

Online business is one of the most growing industry in today's world where everyone is experiencing technological revolution on the other hand in Bangladesh, the

e-commerce's industry is becoming as a potential industry, since during the pandemic online shops and online selling has increased by 70 to 80% [1]. As the corona virus disease has firstly detected in China in December 2019 and due to the tremendous spread out

across the world, Covid-19 has been declared as pandemic by the World Health Organization. As a result, number of lockdowns has been placed in different big cities across the world [2]. In Bangladesh, the first Covid-19 case has detected in March 2020 and after that, lockdown and movement restriction has been imposed by the government. This pandemic had a vast impact on the consumers consuming behavior patterns. Each pandemic has brought a colossal change in the sector of economy, global policies, social behavior and the people's mentalities and the Covid-19 has a significant impact on the citizens of the society and their lifestyle [3].

According to ref. [4], online shopping is a part of e-commerce, by which consumers can order and purchase any goods from any online vendor shop through internet. People also can state this term as e-store, web store, virtual store, and online store. In a news article, ref. [5] stated that, the growth of e-commerce in Bangladesh has increased by 70 to 80 percent during the Covid-19 pandemic, moreover, all the local shoppers were started their business through online. He also stated that, during the pandemic, the online usage has increased by fifty percent. Therefore, this study aims to identify how the Covid-19 pandemic has created an impact on the consumer's online purchasing behavior and what will be consumer's intention towards the online shopping or e-commerce on post pandemic. Whether they will stick with the online shopping mood or will switch to the physical shopping mood.

Research objective: The first objective of this research study is consumer attitude or intention towards online shopping during the COVID 19 Pandemic and post pandemic on different variables in Bangladesh. Secondly, finding the factors those are affecting online shopping in Bangladesh during pandemic both positively and negatively is another objective. Lastly, based on the factors, find out the post-pandemic online purchase decision of the consumers.

Research Structure: In this paper, the following sections will be illustrated by literature review, research methodology, analysis & findings, and conclusion, recommendation, and limitations of the study, respectively.

Literature Review

Product Quality: Product can be defined as any tangible and intangible goods and services; it can be also people, idea, information, place, or anything which are capable to meet the needs, wants and desire of any consumer. Moreover, the quality of a product can be measured by few factors including, performance of the product, and features of the product, product reliability, and confirmation of product, product durability, serviceability, aesthetics, and perception of quality [2]. According to ref. [6], a product will be considered as a good quality product, when it can be able to fulfill the consumers' need and want properly. Ref. [7] Stated that, "quality design" can be defined, when consumer's satisfaction will be provided by designing the product based on the consumers' needs.

Product Price: Consumer's purchasing decision of a product can be affected by the pricing perception, as perception of price provides information about the product as well as the deep meaning to the consumers [6]. Moreover, ref. [8] stated that, price is an important factor for the frequently purchased product in the case of purchasing decision, and mentioned that, product price is divided into three dimensions including fair price, fixed price, and relative price. This entire dimension affects the consumers purchasing decision. Furthermore, ref. [9] explained the promotional pricing and their effects. According to the author, for the short run, consumers show interest to those firm's products which are offering promotional prices and try to stick with those companies or firms which are providing frequently promotional price. Basically, pricing is very important in business and thus customer has a big impact with that price. It determines the product's affordability and consumer's retention, sustainability, and growth [10].

Mental Health: Mental health of a consumer has an impact on shopping experience. During Covid-19, people were lock down in houses for long, also some lost jobs or businesses, may stopped studying due to lack of earning, lost relationships, etc. all these caused depression or stress in people. Therefore, sometimes surfing on online and buying goods helps people to reduce stress while upset or stressed and it is known by shopping therapy. To define mental health, ref. [11] stated that, mental health can be defined as subjective

well-being, perceived self-efficacy, autonomy, competence, intergenerational dependence, and recognition of ability in terms of understanding human's intellectual and emotional potentials. Moreover, it is a state of well-being by which an individual can measure the ability of coping up with the normal stress of daily life, work life and the contribution to their society. Moreover, there is interconnection between mental, physical, and social functioning and therefore, we should not count mental health and physical separately [12].

Customer Service: Customer service can be defined as the activities of retailers by which value can be increased to the customers. Service is intangible but identifiable by all activities of the retailers which are alliance with goods and service sells to the customers [13]. In a previous research, ref. [14] expressed that, now a day's Customers are getting to be more mindful of the choices on offer, and due to the competitive pattern's consumers are demanding standard 'consumer service' based on their choice of demand. Moreover, Customer service is all activities whereby the relationship with consumer can be assured by delivering the product as well as helping them in trams of uses [15]. According to ref. [16] customer service is important to enhance product quality, gaining a competitive advantage, profitability growth because of an increase in sales as well as consumer satisfaction. Customer Service refers to answering customer queries before buying, solving customer problems, and giving after sales service [17].

Delivery Service: Delivery service is the driver of the customer satisfaction as it is a part of a supply chain and deals with customer straight away. Therefore, in terms of online shopping, reliable, safe, and timely delivery is the basic and vital concern of online buyers [18]. In a previous research, ref. [19] stated that home delivery service is a significant part for the consumers in terms of online purchase, as the delivery service performance can build both a positive and negative impact on its consumer's loyalty and the perception of its brand image. Delivery system or shipping does not only mean dropping off the product, but also includes manage payments, and return and change service in a proper manner if needed. Picking the product from merchant and dropping off the product to the customer is a very important factor as a firm needed care to handle the

product's safety and the behavior of the delivery person make an image of the business to the customer to be comfortable with buying in future which leads to repeating customer as well [17].

Product information: product information is another vital issue that a consumer seeks to know in terms of making any purchase decision as they cannot touch or feel and test the product. Therefore, given information about a product and service in website or the social media can influence the consumers purchase decision [20]. However, various product information and high-quality product description should be provided, to make consumers well informed about the product so that they can make proper purchase decisions [21].

Research Methodology

This study has been conducted to get an insight into the consumer's purchase intention in terms of online shopping during the Covid-19 pandemic and whether the intention will be changed or not in the post-pandemic. Since it is a comparison-based study, therefore, causal research has been conducted. This paper will help to understand which shopping mood (Online or Offline) consumers prefer during the pandemic, which factors are driving consumers to make online purchase decisions during the pandemic, and what will be their purchasing decision in the post-pandemic.

In this paper, both primary and secondary data have been collected. The information nature of this study is mainly primary data-based, and all primary data has been gathered by online survey questionnaire; however, secondary data has been collected to produce the Literature review.

For the research, a non-probability sampling technique has been used. Among the various types of non-probability sampling, convenience sampling and judgment sampling are used as it is very convenient as well as low cost. For conducting the study, a sample of 203 responses has been collected.

As the main purpose of this study is to get an insight into the consumer's purchase intention in terms of online shopping during the Covid-19 pandemic and whether the intention will be changed or not in the post-pandemic. Therefore, the questionnaire has been produced based on Product Quality, Product price, Mental

Health, Customer Service, Delivery System, and Product information factors. However, all the questions were prepared by following the close-ended method, as the close-ended questions are easier to code and analyze to the researcher rather than the open-ended question. Moreover, to prepare the questionnaire, five-point Likert scale method has been used. All the respondents are asked to point their responses on a five-point Likert scale aligning from strongly disagrees to strongly agree. All primary data are collected from Bangladeshi consumers who have already experienced online purchase during the pandemic, and to analysis the data, Excel has been used.

Data Analysis

As the study is based on descriptive causal analysis, different type of responses and the statistical data is given below where 203 respondents participated. Besides that, different survey questions that can provide the insight of the research questions that were mentioned in the beginning is analyzed in detail considering other question’s answers.

Experiences of online shopping versus online shopping frequencies

From the fig. 1 chart shows, 59 respondents among 203 participants of the survey means 30% shopped online more than 10 times. Those can be called a frequent buyer or consumer of online shops. Besides, 56% said they shopped 1 to 5 times from online. Interestingly, 5 respondents or 2.5% people never shopped

online. But 9% people said they shopped at least once approximately.

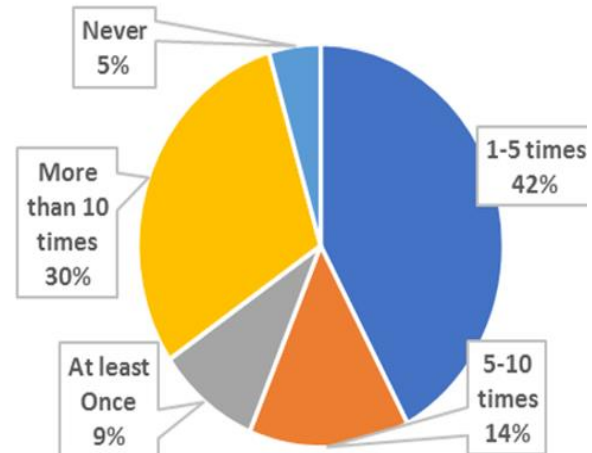


Figure 1. How many times you did online shopping over the internet during the Covid-19 pandemic (Approximate)?

When the respondents were asked to rank their comfort level (fig. 2) in online shopping from 1 to 5 scale where 1 is the lowest comfortable level, the result came out interesting on 203 respondents. 75 respondents marked level 3 for their comfort which is neutral where 37 and 21 people ranked level 4 (comfortable) and 5 (very comfortable) accordingly. Approximately 30 people marked level 1 which is very uncomfortable, and 40 people marked level 2 which is uncomfortable for their comfort level while shopping online

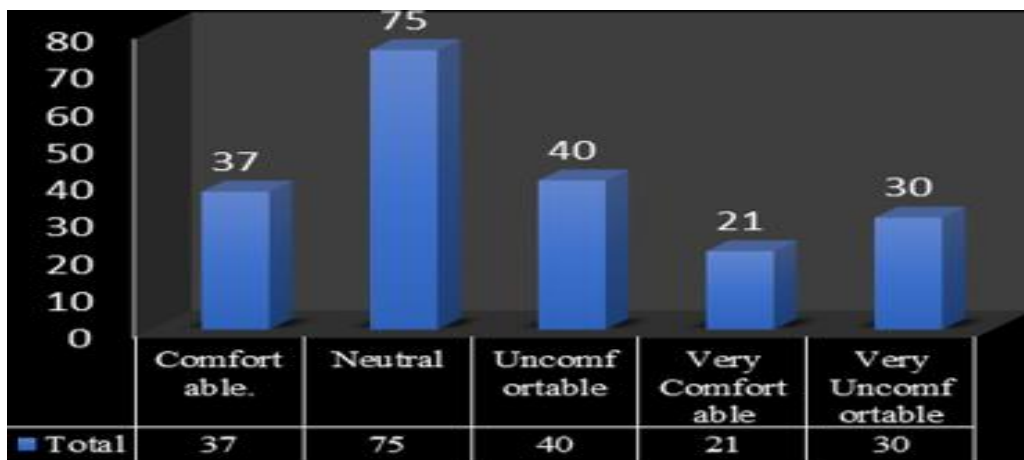


Figure 2. How much comfortable are you in online shopping?

Online shopping during and post pandemic period and Reliability

As we perceived, COVID-19 period a very crucial moment and Online shopping was a rescue for all; 89.7% used online shopping for safety measures. And their experiences and participations show the recent increasing number of online shops and retails websites.

Interestingly. When 10.3% people did not shop online during pandemic, 8.4% strongly dissatisfied (fig. 3) with the term of buying online during pandemic. But 34% was somewhat agreed and 22.7% and 13.3% respondents agreed and strongly agreed to buying online.



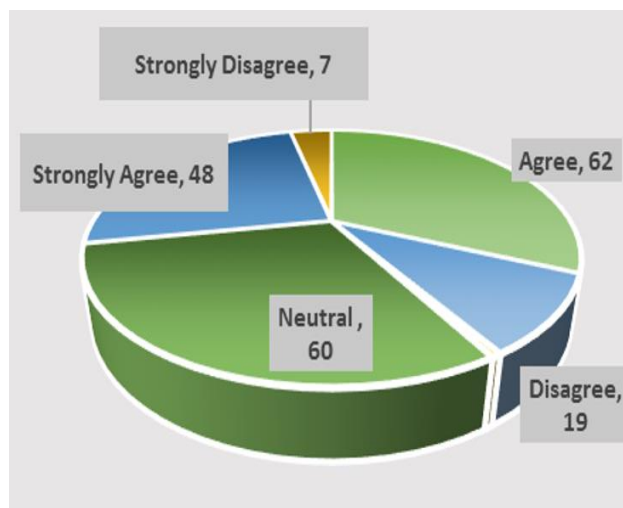
Figure 3. How much satisfied you are buying from online during the Covid-19 pandemic

Furthermore, 54% respondent agreed to the reliability of online shopping in Bangladesh (fig 4). And 31% was neutral which is somewhat agreed. Compared to the marketplace, 14% people disagreed to rely on.

Figure 4. I can rely on online shopping during the Covid-19 pandemic

Shopping Preferences

The world is still facing the pandemic situation and though everything is falling into a new normal condition. Online shopping is now a new normal for Bangladesh as well. People who are getting used to buy or shop online, they will prefer to continue do that as the research started presuming. When the respondents answered the question based on their intention of buying and how much comfortable they will be, the result is interesting indeed. 14% people said they are disagreed in different level. On contrary, 33% said they are somewhat agreed, 29% people are comfortable, and 24% people are highly comfortable. These shows that 86% respondents will be Comfortable in different level while buying or shopping online even after pandemic. (fig 5)



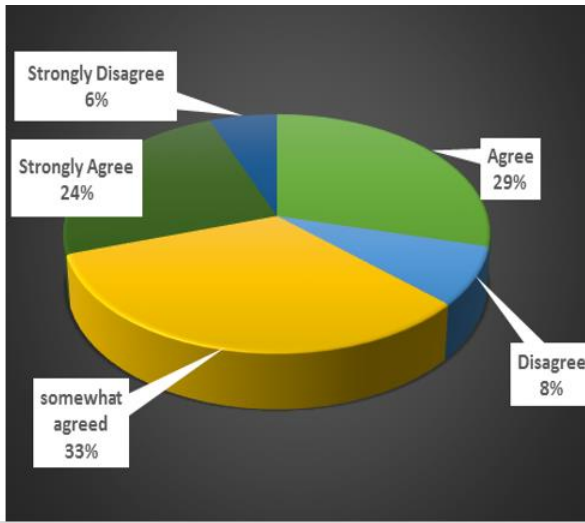


Figure 5. I will prefer online shopping after the Covid-19 pandemic

Product price and quality both play a vital role in any business. According to survey responses, 42% people said that they are strongly agreed with buying from online with the same price, where 21% people said agreed, 26% somewhat agreed or neutral, and rest 10% approx. were disagreed during pandemic. And this shows that customers are more intended to buy online. (fig 6)

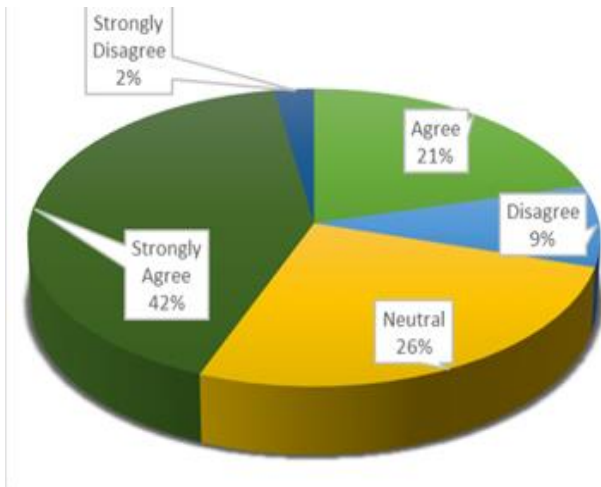


Figure 6. I Preferred to buy a product from online shop during Covid-19, if the product has the same price both in shops and on the internet

On the other hand, approximately 62% people responded that they would have different level of satisfaction in buying online even after pandemic. (fig 7)

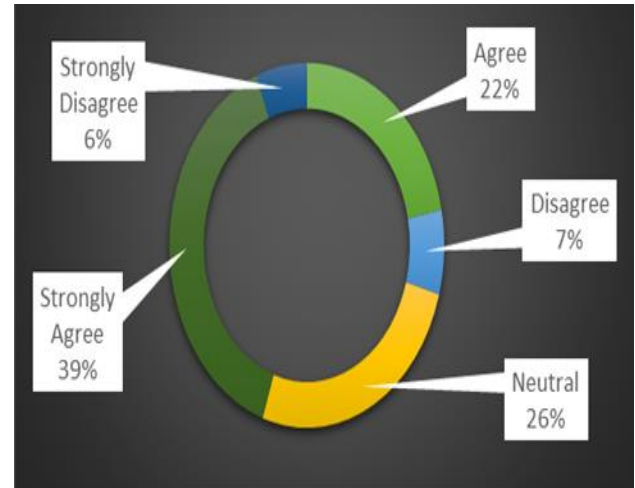


Figure 7. I will Prefer to buy a product from online shop during Covid-19 pandemic, if the product has the same price both in shops and on the internet

26% people rated somewhat satisfied or neutral with the price even after pandemic with the idea of buying online. In terms of quality, 39% people said they are completely agreed with the quality of the products they bought online, 22% people were satisfied and 26% rated neutral during pandemic (fig 8).

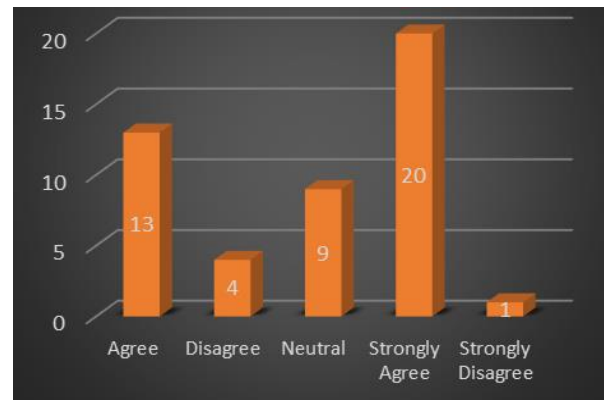


Figure 8. I Preferred to buy a product from online shop during Covid-19, if the product has the same Quality both in shops and on the internet

Besides, approximately 88% people were comfortable to buy online with same quality as retail physical store even after pandemic. And 10% people were uncomfortable buying online even after pandemic with the same quality. (fig.9).

Delivery or shipment Quality and Service

As delivery system is very vital part of an online business, this service is done by the seller solely or a third-party company who give service to the seller while charging for it. Therefore, sometimes the third-party company creates issues with customer by disappointing them with so many things.

Survey shows that more than 80% people are satisfied and positive towards the delivery or shipping system of online purchased products. When respondents were asked to rate their satisfaction, level based on the delivery time and maintaining the given time while delivering, 59% ranked them as satisfied and 30% said

somewhat satisfied. Approximately, 11% are not satisfied with the time frame. (Fig 10).

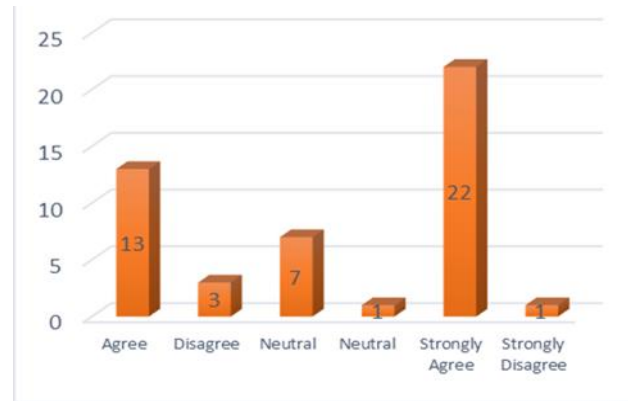


Figure 9. I will Prefer to buy a product from online shop during Covid-19 pandemic, if the product has the same Quality both in shops and on the internet

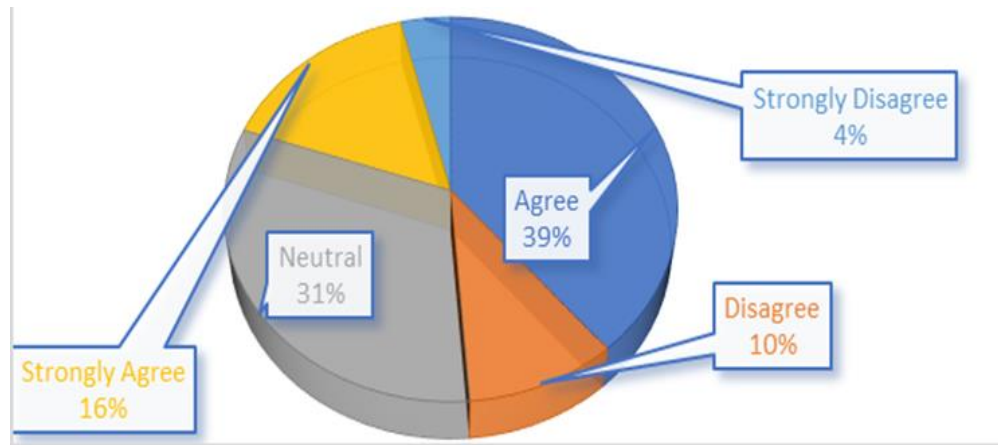


Figure 10. Delivery or shopping processes of online shops are satisfactory and make items available for delivery within a suitable time frame in Bangladesh

Customer Service of Online shopping

Customer service is very important part of any business which helps to gain returning customer and marketing works through the current customers as well. In present world, during online shopping it is more important than anything as 3Ps formula of customer service needed to be worked out. 3Ps: professionalism, patience, and people-first attitude are the key as dealing with consumer online.

When respondents answered 2 questions regarding customer service where in the first one, they were asked to mention their satisfaction level in general for online shopping customer service and the other one was about the service during pandemic. IN the first question, (fig 11) in general, 36.5% people were neutral, 25.6% were satisfied, and 15.3% people were strongly satisfied. On contrary, 14.8% and 7.9% were dissatisfied and strongly dissatisfied consecutively.

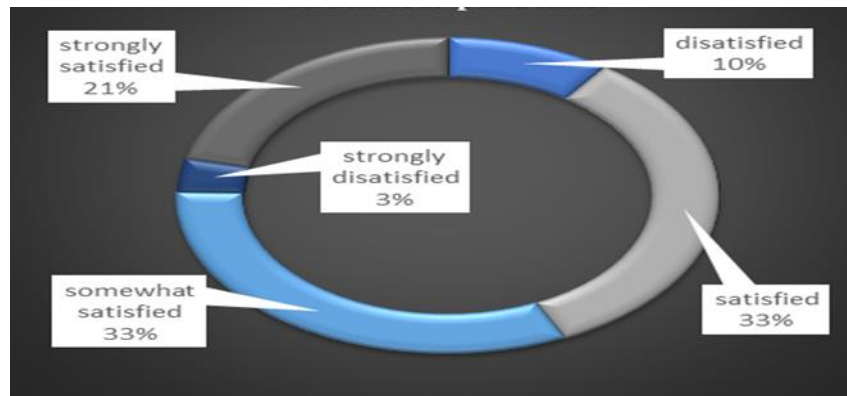


Figure 11. I found an excellent consumer service in online shopping during the Covid-19 strongly dissatisfied pandemic

Interestingly, during pandemic, the result has changed. 33% and 21.2% people were satisfied and strongly satisfied, and 32.5% people were somewhat satisfied. And the number of dissatisfied shoppers has decreased to 9.9% and 3.4%. (fig 12).

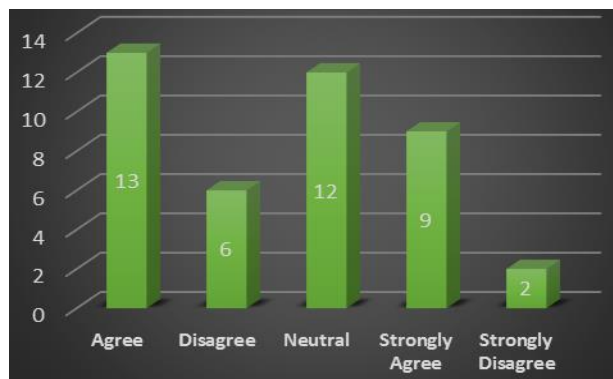


Figure 12. Consumer service is more satisfactory in online shopping rather than retail store

Mental Health vs Online shopping

The study tried to analyze the mental health during Covid-19 and thus got another result to add. People are suffering depression due to the pandemic where 44.8% people felt down for his/ her family or failure several days and 9.4% felt that nearly every day. 10.8% people felt better off dead in more than half the days due to loss of jobs, broken relationships, loss in business, loss of family member etc. during covid-19. Psychologists suggests that shopping therapy sometimes works as medicine for depressed people, the

respondent's answer showed that 46.3% people consider the online shopping during covid-19 helped them reduce stress on several days. And 13.3% people felt better after surfing in more than half the days. Only 37.9% respondents answered that it did not help and that is completely reasonable.

Pandemic is going on from the year 2020 and they needed to be focused on the most recent. Thus, the survey asked the same respondents regarding their mental health in last 1 month which can portray the middle of the pandemic situation and the verge of ending of pandemic situation.

It shows that the number of sufferers has decreased. 45.3% people has said that they did not feel depressed or better off dead in last one month of the year 2021. And 34.5% people still suffered in several days, and 9.4% people felt nearly every day where 10.8% people felt in more than half the day. So, it is still a matter of concern (fig 13).

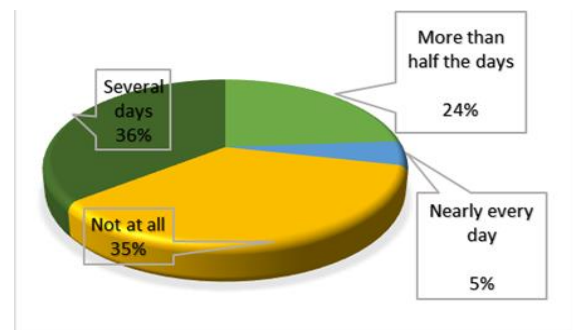


Figure 13. Have you felt down, extremely depressed or thought of hurting yourself or better off dead during Covid-19?

In last one month in the year of 2021, survey respondent felt better surfing and buying online where 50.7% felt in several days, 10.3% felt in more than half the days, and 2.5% felt nearly every day. Only 36.5% said it did not work for them and which is normal as all therapy does not work on everyone. (Fig 14).

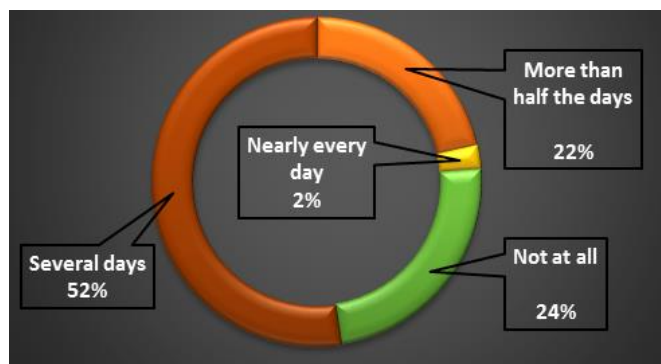


Figure 14. Have you felt better after surfing online and buying stuffs or does shopping therapy work for you to reduce stress?

Discussion

The study is conducted based on the survey that was taken through Google form and respondents are mostly from Dhaka city of Bangladesh. Also, the number of respondents is only 203 where the more respondents can show more in-depth results. In addition to that, the collected data are primary in nature as collected from the consumer. Therefore, some data can be biased due to different factors. Moreover, there are some limitations in the study as well.

The result from the graphs of “Experiences of online shopping versus online shopping frequencies” shows that the experience is developing with time and the frequency of online shopping helps in the process of development of their participation better judgement.

Likewise, it shows the online experience was more than satisfactory. But the disagreement can be caused due to various factors. Some people might be struggling with the process of ordering or getting idea of the product by reading or seeing the picture online. These are just possibilities as in Bangladesh, almost everybody uses cellphone and most of them are smartphone, but they are still not user friendly with the

idea of ordering online and this number of people are decreasing with the advancement.

Similarly, studies showed that online shopping has broken the trend of people to go to the physical store to buy stuffs after seeing in person. And during Pandemic, the physical shops also moved from brick and mortar to click and order format keep pace with growing online businesses. And consumers are more comfortable and satisfied online shopping with price and quality because that is more convenient, easy, and time saving.

From the survey, the result has perceived that during pandemic delivery system was good and customers are looking forward to more better delivery service keeping in mind that the packaging, time, delivery person's behavior, etc. affects the whole delivery system and the satisfaction from using it. The analysis also shows that online shops are getting better at their service and customers intention of buying will be increased even after the pandemic if they can keep the same clients' trust and reliability. Intriguingly, mental health and the psychological impact due to covid-19 has an enormous influence in consumer's purchasing intention. Therefore, online business should focus on this variable besides other factors while doing market research, product planning, and market positioning.

Conclusion

The study began with some objectives regarding the consumer online purchasing intention during COVID-19. After conducting a survey, the study has got some results on variables which showed that during Covid-19, people got an extra help or support with online shopping in terms of service quality, pricing, product quality, contactless delivery, and mental health. Study showed that all these variables influenced the intention of the customer in different ways while shopping. As online shopping has a disadvantage of not touching or seeing the product in person, quality depends on the pictures. Therefore, miscommunication results in misunderstanding and dissatisfaction.

Besides, Online shops has a lack in terms of providing the right product according to the consumers' review which can be overcome by the seller. Thus, the online shopping experience can be upgraded for the consumer just by understanding the customer feedback

and their satisfaction, intention, and attitude. Every business sector got an impact due to COVID-19 where online businesses have got a positive effect owing to the safety and security in health concerning factors, and considering other risk factor, ease of delivery, easy accessibility, less time consumption, more variety in one place, easy comparability, etc. Besides other factors, Mental health had a great impact on buyers as people were suffering due to lockdown situation. Hence, seller should focus on this part as well. Fundamentally, this research is a contribution towards the society as it is concerning the ICT industry connected to all kind of business sector who are affiliated with online business. In Bangladesh, Covid-19 has shaken everyone and so many people lost their jobs or has a loss in business. This might help them to find some solution to get more customer satisfaction leading consumers' intention of positive buying and business growth consequently. Academically, new researchers can work on this new concept of exploring different research areas which are affected by COVID-19 and get more results to solve different problems. Further study can be done reflecting new variables and adding more respondents to get more reliable study with time.

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