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## A study on students' platform preference and perception towards online shopping

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### Abstract

The rapid expansion of digital platforms has transformed trade and commerce, facilitating convenient, cost-effective and borderless transactions. This study explores students' perceptions and platform preferences in online shopping, emphasizing how digital platforms contribute to trade facilitation in Dharwad District. Data were collected from 179 undergraduate students through a structured questionnaire, covering demographic variables, frequency of online shopping, platform preference and perceptions regarding convenience, cost-effectiveness, security, product quality and delivery services. Findings revealed that Meesho (57.50%), Amazon (51.40%) and Flipkart (38.00%) were the most preferred platforms. Students perceived online shopping as time-saving (69.30%), convenient (41.30%) and supportive of Digital India initiatives, though issues like product quality (27.40%) and service reliability persisted (10.60%). The study concludes that digital platforms play a significant role in modern trade facilitation, particularly among youth consumers, highlighting the need for improved transparency and consumer trust mechanisms.

**Keywords:** Digital platforms, trade facilitation, online shopping, perception

### Introduction

The rapid advancement of digital technologies has transformed the global marketplace, making online shopping an integral part of modern consumer behavior. With increasing internet penetration, affordable smartphones and secure digital payment systems, consumers now have the opportunity to purchase goods and services from the comfort of their homes. This digital revolution has not only enhanced convenience and accessibility but has also redefined the traditional concepts of trade, bridging geographical and economic boundaries that once restricted market participation.

In India, the e-commerce sector has witnessed remarkable growth over the past decade. Platforms such as Amazon, Flipkart, Myntra, Meesho and Snapdeal have emerged as dominant players, offering diverse product categories ranging from electronics to apparel and groceries. The government's initiatives under Digital India and the promotion of cashless transactions have further accelerated this transformation. The COVID-19 pandemic also played a crucial role in reinforcing online shopping habits, as consumers increasingly relied on digital platforms for safety, accessibility and timely delivery of essential goods.

Among the different consumer groups, students represent a significant and dynamic segment of the digital economy. Their familiarity with technology, inclination toward modern shopping trends and active engagement with social media platforms make them a key driving force in shaping future e-commerce patterns. Understanding their perceptions, preferences and challenges provides valuable insights for businesses aiming to design youth-oriented marketing strategies and improve service quality. With this background, the present study seeks to explore the online shopping behavior of undergraduate students in Dharwad District focusing on their preferences, perceptions and the challenges faced.

### Objectives of the Study

1. To study the socio-demographic profile of students involved in online shopping.
2. To examine platform preferences and online shopping behavior.
3. To analyze students' perceptions toward online shopping
4. To identify major problems and suggestions to improve digital trade facilitation

## Methodology

The study was conducted among undergraduate students in Dharwad District, Karnataka. A total of 179 respondents were selected using random sampling. A structured questionnaire consisting of both closed and open-ended questions was administered to collect primary data. The instrument covered variables such as demographic characteristics, shopping frequency, preferred platforms, spending patterns and perceptions on various aspects of online shopping. Descriptive statistics like frequency and percentage were used to analyze the data, while results were interpreted using tables and graphs for clarity.

## Results and Discussion

The demographic profile of the respondents presented in Table 1 reveals that a majority (51.40%) of the students belonged to the 18-20 years age group, followed by 38.00 percent in the 21-23 years group and only 10.60 percent were above 23 years. This indicates that most of the respondents are young adults, representing the age category that is generally more familiar with digital technology and more likely to engage in online shopping activities. With regard to gender, the data show that females constituted a large proportion (79.30%) of the respondents, while males accounted for only 20.70 percent. The predominance of female respondents could be due to higher enrolment of girls in the selected colleges or a greater willingness among them to participate in the study. This gender composition

also has implications for online shopping behaviour, as several studies suggest that women tend to shop online more frequently, particularly for fashion and lifestyle products. In terms of academic background, more than half (56.40%) of the respondents were pursuing B. Com, while 43.60 percent were from B.Sc courses. Regarding the year of study, the second-year and third-year students together formed the largest group (64.30%), followed by first-year (20.10%) and final-year students (15.60%). This suggests that most of the respondents were in the middle phase of their undergraduate education, a stage where they have gained sufficient exposure to online environments and independent decision-making, which could contribute to their active engagement in online shopping.

**Table 1:** Demographic Profile of Respondents, (n=179)

Variable	Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Age group	18-20 years	92	51.40
	21-23 years	68	38.00
	Above 23 years	19	10.60
Gender	Female	142	79.30
	Male	37	20.70
Course of study	B. Com	101	56.40
	B. Sc	78	43.60
Year of study	1st Year	36	20.10
	2nd Year	61	34.10
	3rd Year	54	30.20
	Final Year	28	15.60

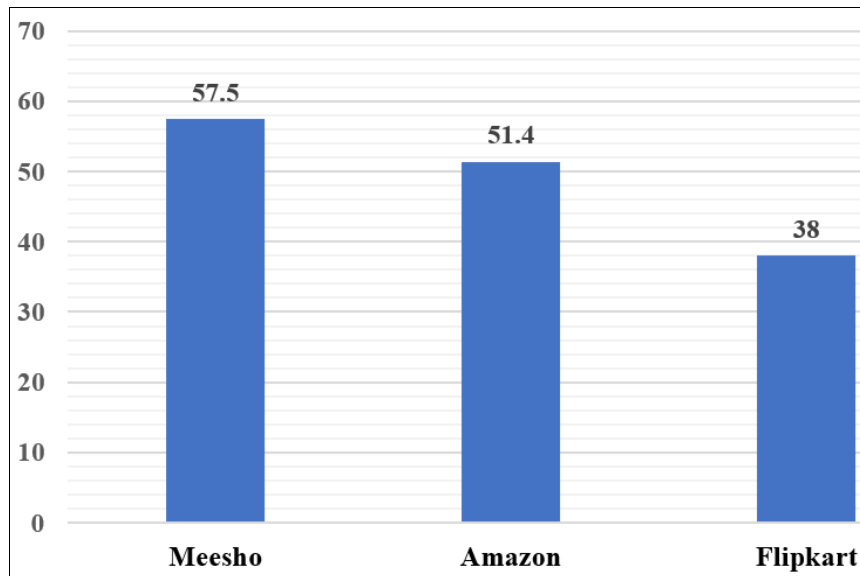
**Table 2:** Online Shopping Behaviour of Respondents, (n=179)

Variable	Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Shopping Frequency	Once a month	84	46.90
	2-3 times a month	62	34.60
	Weekly	21	11.70
	Rarely	12	6.80
Average Time Spent Online	Less than 5 hours	116	64.80
	6-10 hours	45	25.10
	11-15 hours	18	10.10
Products Purchased	Clothes & Accessories	142	79.30
	Electronics / Gadgets	61	34.10
	Books / Stationery	48	26.80
Average Spending per Month	< ₹500	57	31.80
	₹500-₹1000	74	41.30
	₹1000-₹5000	48	26.80

Table 2 highlights the online shopping behaviour of the respondents. Nearly half (46.90.00%) of the students reported shopping online once a month, while 34.60 percent did so two to three times a month. Only 11.70 percent shopped weekly and 6.80 percent rarely made online purchases. This pattern indicates that online shopping is a regular yet moderate activity among college students, reflecting convenience-driven rather than impulsive behaviour.

Regarding time spent online, a majority (64.80%) of the respondents spent less than five hours daily on the internet, while 25.10 percent spent between six and ten hours and

only 10.10 percent spent more than ten hours. This shows that even though students have limited online time, they are efficiently using it for browsing, communication and online shopping. When asked about the types of products purchased, the majority (79.30%) of them mentioned clothes and accessories, followed by electronics and gadgets (34.10%) and books or stationery items (26.80%). This finding is consistent with the gender composition, as female students-who form the majority-tend to prefer purchasing apparel and fashion-related items online. The preference for electronics and stationery reflects the growing educational and technological needs of students.



**Fig 1:** Online platforms preferred by the students

With respect to preferred platforms, Meesho (57.50%) was the most popular, followed by Amazon (51.40%) and Flipkart (38.00%). The high preference for Meesho can be attributed to its affordability, discounts and wide range of low-cost fashion and household products, which are particularly attractive to students with limited disposable income. Amazon and Flipkart remain strong choices due to their reliability, brand reputation and fast delivery services (Fig.1).

In terms of expenditure, a large proportion (41.30%) of respondents reported spending between ₹500 and ₹1000 per month on online shopping, followed by 31.80 percent who spent less than ₹500 and 26.80 percent who spent between ₹1000 and ₹5000. This pattern indicates that most students are price-sensitive and budget-conscious, which is typical of their age and economic status. Their spending patterns reflect careful purchasing decisions influenced by affordability rather than luxury consumption.

**Table 3:** Perception towards Convenience and Time Saving in online shopping, (n=179)

Sl. No.	Statement	Agree	Disagree	Neutral
1	Online shopping saves time.	124 (69.30)	07 (3.90)	48 (26.80)
2	Shopping at any time of the day through online platforms.	132 (73.70)	12 (6.70)	35 (19.60)
3	Online shopping is more convenient than shopping in physical stores.	74 (41.30)	29 (16.20)	76 (42.50)
4	Online shopping makes comparison of products/prices easy.	113 (63.10)	09 (5.00)	57 (31.80)
5	Home delivery facilities when purchasing online.	141 (78.80)	05 (2.80)	33 (18.40)

The results in Table 3 indicate that the majority of students perceived online shopping as a convenient and time-saving mode of purchase. A large proportion (69.30%) of respondents agreed that online shopping saves time, while only 3.90 percent disagreed and 26.80 percent remained neutral. This shows that most students recognize the time efficiency of online shopping, which eliminates the need to travel to physical stores and allows them to complete purchases quickly. Similarly, 73.70 percent of the respondents agreed that they can shop at any time of the day through online platforms, emphasizing the continued accessibility of e-commerce websites and apps all the day. The ability to shop at one's own convenience, regardless of time or location, is a major attraction for college students who often have busy academic schedules.

Regarding the convenience of online shopping compared to physical stores, opinions were mixed. About 41.30 percent

of respondents agreed that it is more convenient, 16.20 percent disagreed and 42.50 percent expressed a neutral stance. This suggests that while many students value the ease of online shopping, a considerable portion still prefers the tactile experience of traditional shopping, where they can physically inspect products before purchasing. Moreover, 63.10 percent of the respondents agreed that online shopping makes it easy to compare products and prices, which highlights the role of digital transparency in decision-making. Students can browse multiple brands, read reviews and check prices across platforms before choosing a product. The highest level of agreement (78.80%) was seen for the statement that online shopping offers home delivery facilities, which is considered a major advantage by most respondents. Home delivery not only saves time but also adds to the convenience and comfort of the shopping process.

**Table 4:** Students' Perception towards Cost Effectiveness and Variety, (n=179)

Sl. No.	Statement	Agree	Disagree	Neutral
6	Online shopping is more cost effective than traditional shopping.	85 (47.50)	25 (14.00)	69 (38.50)
7	Online prices are usually lower than physical stores.	95 (53.10)	19 (10.60)	65 (36.30)
8	Selection of goods available on the internet is very broad.	99 (55.30)	20 (11.20)	60 (33.50)
9	The variety of products available online is better than in physical stores.	97 (54.20)	22 (12.30)	60 (33.50)
10	Online shopping is a sustainable option compared to traditional shopping.	89 (49.70)	24 (13.40)	66 (36.90)

The data in Table 4 focuses on students' perceptions regarding cost effectiveness and product variety in online shopping. Nearly half of the respondents (47.50%) agreed that online shopping is more cost-effective than traditional shopping, while 14 percent disagreed and 38.50 percent were neutral. This indicates that many students perceive online shopping as economically beneficial, largely due to discounts, offers and price comparisons available across websites. Similarly, 53.10 percent agreed that prices on online platforms are usually lower than in physical stores, which reflects their awareness of competitive pricing and online deals that attract cost-conscious buyers.

In terms of product selection and variety, more than half of the respondents (55.30%) agreed that the selection of goods available on the internet is very broad, while 33.50 percent were neutral. Likewise, 54.20 percent agreed that the variety

of products online is better than in physical stores. This shows that students appreciate the diverse product range and easy access to brands that may not be available locally. Online shopping offers a wider marketplace where consumers can explore multiple options in terms of design, size and brand at one place, which enhances the overall shopping experience.

Interestingly, when asked whether online shopping is a sustainable option compared to traditional shopping, 49.70 percent agreed, 13.40 percent disagreed and 36.90 percent remained neutral. This suggests that while many students associate online shopping with environmental and resource efficiency-owing to reduced travel and paperless transactions-a significant number are uncertain about its actual sustainability impact, possibly because of packaging waste and frequent deliveries.

**Table 5:** Students' Perception towards Security and Trust (n=179)

Sl. No.	Statement	Agree	Disagree	Neutral
11	Online shopping is as secure as traditional shopping.	83 (46.40)	31 (17.30)	65 (36.30)
12	While shopping online, I am hesitant to give my credit/debit card number.	105 (58.70)	24 (13.40)	50 (27.90)
13	Cash on delivery rather than online payment.	135 (75.40)	18 (10.10)	26 (14.50)
14	Lack of trust in online vendors prevents shopping online.	79 (44.10)	24 (13.40)	76 (42.50)
15	I hesitate to give personal information on online websites.	115 (64.20)	13 (7.30)	51 (28.50)

The students' perception towards security and trust in online shopping, as presented in Table 5, reveals a mix of confidence and concern among respondents. Nearly half (46.40%) of the students agreed that online shopping is as secure as traditional shopping, while 17.30 percent disagreed and 36.30 percent remained neutral. This indicates that although a considerable number of students believe in the security of online platforms, a sizeable proportion still express uncertainty reflecting partial trust in digital transactions.

A majority (58.70%) of the respondents reported feeling hesitant to provide their credit or debit card details while shopping online, whereas only 13.40 percent disagreed and 27.90 percent remained neutral. This suggests that fear of data misuse, fraud, or privacy breaches continues to influence students' online payment behaviour. Supporting

this, an overwhelming 75.40 percent of respondents stated that they prefer cash-on-delivery over online payment options, showing that traditional payment methods still dominate among students due to the perceived safety and assurance of paying only after product delivery.

When asked about their trust in online vendors, 44.10 percent agreed that lack of trust prevents them from shopping online, 13.40 percent disagreed and 42.50 percent were neutral. This highlights that while some level of distrust exists, many students are undecided, possibly depending on previous shopping experiences or brand reputation. Additionally, a large proportion (64.20%) admitted that they hesitate to share personal information such as addresses or contact details on websites, reflecting ongoing privacy concerns and the need for better security assurances from online platforms.

**Table 6:** Students' Perception towards Product Information and Quality (n=179)

Sl. No.	Statement	Agree	Disagree	Neutral
16	Product descriptions on websites are accurate.	77 (43.00)	32 (17.90)	70 (39.10)
17	The information given about products/services online is sufficient for decision-making.	102 (57.00)	24 (13.40)	53 (29.60)
18	The quality of products purchased online is satisfactory.	76 (42.50)	17 (9.50)	86 (48.00)
19	If there is no warranty/guarantee not prefer to buy online.	103 (57.50)	23 (12.80)	53 (29.60)
20	Worried about receiving wrong or damaged products.	120 (67.00)	20 (11.20)	39 (21.80)

The students' perception towards product information and quality, as shown in Table 6, provides insights into how they evaluate online shopping experiences beyond convenience and cost. About 43.00 percent of respondents agreed that product descriptions on websites are accurate, while 17.90 percent disagreed and 39.10 percent were neutral. This indicates that although many students find product details helpful, a substantial share remain uncertain about the reliability of the information provided online. Similarly, 57.00 percent agreed that the information available about products or services is sufficient to make purchase decisions, suggesting that most students are generally satisfied with the level of information provided, though nearly 30 percent remain neutral.

Regarding product quality, responses were more varied

42.50 percent agreed that the quality of products purchased online is satisfactory, while 9.50 percent disagreed and a large segment (48.00%) remained neutral. The high level of neutrality indicates that students may have mixed experiences, where product quality sometimes meets expectations but may occasionally fall short, possibly due to mismatched product descriptions or images. Furthermore, 57.50 percent agreed that they avoid purchasing items without warranty or guarantee, signifying that product assurance is a crucial determinant of trust and purchase decisions. A significant majority (67.00%) of respondents expressed worry about receiving wrong or damaged products, with only 11.20 percent disagreeing. This concern underscores persistent doubts regarding product handling, packaging and delivery processes in online shopping.



**Table 7:** Students' Perception towards Delivery and Services during online shopping, (n=179)

Sl. No.	Statement	Agree	Disagree	Neutral
21	A long time is required for the delivery of products/services.	94 (52.50)	34 (19.00)	51 (28.50)
22	Buying only if the website ensures fast delivery.	129 (72.10)	11 (6.10)	39 (21.80)
23	I avoid websites that do not provide EMI facilities.	75 (41.90)	46 (25.70)	58 (32.40)
24	I avoid online shopping due to poor return/replacement policies.	91 (50.80)	17 (9.50)	71 (39.70)
25	I am dissatisfied with online shopping due to past negative experiences.	71 (39.70)	40 (22.30)	68 (38.00)

The perception of students towards delivery and services in online shopping, as shown in Table 7, reveals mixed opinions reflecting both satisfaction and concerns. More than half of the respondents (52.50%) agreed that a long time is required for the delivery of products or services, while 19 percent disagreed and 28.50 percent were neutral. This indicates that despite technological advances and logistic improvements, delivery delays remain a common issue that affects overall satisfaction. However, a large majority (72.10%) stated that they prefer buying only from websites that ensure fast delivery, while just 6.10 percent disagreed. This finding emphasizes that delivery speed plays a crucial role in influencing purchasing decisions, particularly among young consumers who value quick service and instant gratification.

Regarding financial flexibility, 41.90 percent of the respondents agreed that they avoid websites that do not provide EMI facilities, while 25.70 percent disagreed and

32.4 percent were neutral. This suggests that while EMI options are appreciated, they are not a decisive factor for all students, possibly due to the relatively low cost of most student purchases such as clothes and accessories. Furthermore, half of the respondents (50.80%) agreed that they avoid online shopping because of poor return or replacement policies, reflecting a significant concern about post-purchase service quality. Such apprehensions highlight the importance of transparent and customer-friendly return processes to enhance buyer confidence.

In addition, 39.70 percent of students expressed dissatisfaction due to past negative experiences, whereas 22.30 percent disagreed and 38.00 percent remained neutral. This indicates that a notable segment of students encountered issues such as defective products, delayed delivery, or poor customer support, which have influenced their trust in online platforms.

**Table 8:** Students' Perception towards Psychological and Social Aspects, (n=179)

Sl. No.	Statement	Agree	Disagree	Neutral
26	Online shopping affects consumer psychological aspects (stress, satisfaction, excitement).	94 (52.50)	34 (19.00)	51 (28.50)
27	Online shopping contributes to Digital India initiatives.	120 (67.00)	12 (6.70)	47 (26.30)
28	Online shopping supports a cashless society.	104 (58.10)	28 (15.60)	47 (26.30)
29	Online shopping has increased after demonetization.	106 (59.20)	19 (10.60)	54 (30.20)
30	Online shopping contributes to India's economic development.	125 (69.80)	13 (7.30)	41 (22.90)

The students' perception towards psychological and social aspects of online shopping, presented in Table 8, provides insights into how e-commerce influences emotional well-being and broader societal changes. Over half (52.50%) of the respondents agreed that online shopping affects psychological aspects such as stress, satisfaction and excitement, while 19 percent disagreed and 28.50 percent were neutral. This reflects that online shopping not only serves functional needs but also evokes emotional responses, with students experiencing both excitement from offers and convenience, as well as stress due to payment or delivery uncertainties.

A majority of students (67.00%) agreed that online shopping contributes positively to the Digital India initiative, indicating awareness of its role in promoting digital literacy and technological adoption. Similarly, 58.10 percent of respondents agreed that online shopping supports a cashless society, showing recognition of the shift towards digital payments and financial inclusion. The data also reveal that 59.20 percent believe online shopping has increased after demonetization, suggesting that government policies and cash restrictions have accelerated the transition to digital commerce and online payments.

Furthermore, a strong majority (69.80%) of respondents agreed that online shopping contributes to India's economic development, while only 7.30 percent disagreed. This shows that students perceive e-commerce not just as a personal convenience but also as a driver of national economic growth, creating employment opportunities, fostering

entrepreneurship and strengthening digital infrastructure.

**Table 9:** Problems Faced During Online Shopping, (n=179)

Dimension	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Product Quality Issues	58	32.40
Delivery & Timeliness	34	19.00
Price & Affordability	21	11.70
Service & Platform Reliability	38	21.20
Customer Satisfaction / Miscellaneous	28	15.60

The data in Table 9 show that the most frequently reported issue was related to product quality, accounting for 32.4 percent of responses. Students mentioned receiving fake or low-quality items and damaged products, indicating that mismatches between online descriptions and delivered goods remain a significant concern. This reflects a lack of trust in product authenticity and emphasizes the need for stricter quality control by online vendors.

The next major issue reported was service and platform reliability, mentioned by 21.20 percent of respondents. These issues included difficulties in product returns, concerns over data privacy and security of online transactions. Such challenges highlight that, while digital shopping is convenient, reliability and transparency in service operations are crucial to maintaining consumer confidence.

Problems related to delivery and timeliness were cited by 19.00 percent of students, who experienced late or incorrect

deliveries. This finding supports earlier observations (Table 7) that timely delivery plays a vital role in shaping satisfaction levels. Price and affordability issues were also noted by 11.70 percent of respondents, indicating dissatisfaction with high product prices or perceived mismatches between cost and quality.

Interestingly, 15.60 percent of the students provided neutral or positive comments, suggesting that while challenges exist, many respondents are generally satisfied with their online shopping experiences.

**Table 10:** Suggestions to overcome the problems of online shopping, (n=179)

Dimension	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Product Quality Improvement	49	27.40
Delivery & Timeliness	36	20.10
Price & offers	44	24.60
Customer Satisfaction / Improvement	31	17.30
Service Reliability	19	10.60

The students also offered several constructive suggestions to enhance online shopping experiences. The most common suggestion, made by 27.40 percent of respondents, was for product quality improvement, including the need for better product-image matching, genuine items and proper quality checks before dispatch. This indicates a strong desire for greater product authenticity and accuracy in online representations.

Suggestions related to price and offers were made by 24.60 percent of respondents, emphasizing that students prefer more affordable pricing, discounts and promotional deals. This reflects their price-sensitive nature, typical of young consumers with limited disposable income. Delivery and timeliness was another key area highlighted by 20.10 percent of students, who recommended faster delivery within 2-3 days and improved coordination in delivery schedules.

About 17.30 percent of respondents mentioned aspects of customer satisfaction and general improvements, with comments such as “shop carefully” and “all good,” indicating that some students were content with their experiences but encouraged cautious purchasing practices. Finally, 10.60 percent of respondents stressed the need for improved service reliability, particularly regarding better return and refund processes, which are crucial for building consumer trust and satisfaction.

### Conclusion and Suggestions

Digital platforms have significantly transformed trade facilitation by simplifying access, comparison and purchase processes. The study highlights that students view online shopping as an essential part of their daily consumption pattern. While platforms like Meesho and Amazon dominate preferences, the perception of convenience is tempered by concerns over quality and service reliability. Improving transparency in product information, timely delivery and better customer grievance mechanisms can enhance user trust. To ensure sustainable digital trade growth, e-commerce platforms should invest in secure technologies and customer education initiatives.

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