

## **A Study of Consumer Behavior with reference to Online Book Selling in India**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Online shopping is becoming daily shopping of various goods and services in developing countries like India. The online bookstores have come up with latest technologies to attract more customers. Consumer behavior in the offline stores and particularly online stores has been created major interest for researchers. There is scope to study consumer behavior from different aspects as regards to online shopping. This paper presents the current scenario of Indian Publishing industry and various online marketing strategies adopted by leading publishing houses. This study also discuss about the key factors of consumer behavior like facility of online shopping, website tie-up with other websites, convenient online shopping experience, online shopping preference for variety and price of books. The understanding of consumer behavior in online book selling would be helpful for the publishers, customers and the academicians.

**Keywords:** PUBLISHING HOUSES, CONSUMER BEHAVIOR, ONLINE MARKETING, ONLINE BOOK SELLING, NATIONAL BOOK TRUST, NELSON, AMAZON, FLIPCARD, E-BOOK, DIGITAL INDIA.

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### **INTRODUCTION**

Currently India is ranked among top seven countries in the world in book publishing industry. India is also ranked third position in world for publishing books in English language which is after United States and United Kingdom. The Indian publishing industry is the largest book sales is dominated by academic books at 40% and children's books at 30%. The remaining 30% captured by agriculture, forestry and fishers etc.

Today India becomes 'Digital India' not just doing import and export to various countries but in actual way India has adopted and implemented digital technologies for all types of industries, obviously book selling is not an exception for that. Traditionally book selling activity is conducted through publishers, suppliers, dealers, agents and finally reaches to customers. There is tremendous market for book selling for variety of reference books, educational books, religious books, regional books and so on.

Publishers are also played important role in the Indian Publishing Industry. Most of the publishers aware the importance and convenience of information technology. No doubt publishers engaged some offline marketing activities to attract the customers like discount, offers, free sample, attending exhibitions and trade fairs, author's meet, membership, cash on delivery, gift cards and other advertising methods like TV, radio and newspapers. Due to direct contact with customers, publishers easily understand what are the exactly requirements and expectations of the customers. Considering this publishers come with strategy and apply into market for selling of books.

As regards to Indian publishers are trained with the traditional publishing as well as global publishing techniques. Due to emergence of technology in printing, publishing, supply chain, marketing communication and customer service publishers are advanced to serve better to society. Though there is big market for all types of books in India but a new trend has launched in India that is Online Book selling. This is become need of Indian publishing market.

Currently most of the Indian publishers are come with something new and innovative ideas to attract potential customers. It includes introduction of website, E book, CD, DVD, audio book, video conferencing, bar code and QR code etc. For online book selling just website is not enough it should be regularly updated with features of online shopping, E - catalog, online payment, tracking, SMS and email alerts, chat support, customized services etc. Most of the publishers actively performs their operations through social networking applications and websites like What's App, Facebook, Twitter, Blog etc. All these online activities - likes, comments, share the new book or photo or news will create

a good impact in online marketing. It will also enhance public relations through chatting and writing review on publishing houses.

In India, more than 40 online shopping websites are available which also deals in online book sales. The E-book sales include 2% to 5% of total sales. The leading book publishers in India like Springer, Wiley and Elsevier claims that 60% of sales volume is coming from their website with the advanced development of information technology. Now a day's Bookadda, Amazon, Flipcart, Snapdeal and leading websites also deals in books and E - books in Indian market. Amazon has introduced especially Kindle device for accessibility of E - book for customers. Some publishers provide facility of Print on Demand (POD) for their customers with the help of high tech machineries.

Authors are made an attempt to know what is exactly happening in Indian book publishing industry particularly consumer behavior trends with special reference to online book selling in India. This article tried to find out difference between traditional shopping versus online shopping on the basis of shopping experience and price preferences as a part of consumer behavior. The authors also studied various factors of online shopping which will make impact on consumer behavior.

### **BACKGROUND**

The research area of consumer behavior has attracted the attention of marketing researchers in the offline retail stores as well as online stores (Beatty & Ferrell, 1998; Zhang et al., 2007). Piyush et al. (2010) found that all kind of products could be purchased impulsively and all consumers engage in impulse buying at various occasions. The different contemporary marketing innovations such as twenty four hours stores, television and internet shopping promote impulse buying. The growth of online retailing and the increasing consumer orientation of many societies offer greater opportunities for impulse purchases (Kacen & Lee, 2002). The online stores are capitalizing on this behavior by developing an interactive media and providing consumers a scope to buy at any time round the clock (LaRose, 2001).

Consumers are motivated by convenience and are likely to shop online for specific types of products and services, e.g., books and magazines and travel (Rohm & Swaminathan, 2004). According to Associated Chambers of Commerce and Industry of India (Assocham) survey 2012, the online retail market in India may grow to Rs 70 billion (over \$1.30 billion) by 2015 from Rs 20 billion. The Nielsen report 2011 stated that Indians are most likely to buy books (41 per cent) followed by travel ticket/reservations (40 per cent), and electronic equipment such as TV and camera (36 per cent) online. The online bookstores and other formats of retailing have been fostered by the development and penetration of Internet and World Wide Web. The success of Amazon in 1995 has motivated different players to make a foray into the online market. In 1997, an established bookstore Barnes & Noble opened its online bookstore to join the battle against Amazon. After the success of Amazon and Barnes and Noble; Books-A-million also entered in the online bookselling arena with the launch of e-commerce website in 1998. Now it is almost a common trend for the various booksellers to have presence in online as well as brick and mortar avatar. Amazon has also launched Kindle which is dedicated for reading E-books only. At the same time Amazon also deals in online business of hard bound books also.

In the case of India, the online retail giant Flipkart has a wide and powerful presence in the virtual market which has started with the bookselling business. It has also become the first Indian online retail company to achieve the worth of 1 billion dollar. In the present scenario there are scores of bookselling websites such as Infibeam, Bookadda, Homeshop18, Indiaplaza and Landmarkonnet which have given a tough competition to the Flipkart established business. The huge competition poses a need to understand the book retailing business and the customer's behavior in the online book selling websites. In order to be successful, the online retailers especially the booksellers must understand the consumer's characteristics and needs. It is therefore important for the retailers to comprehend the online impulse purchase behavior and the different factors that could possibly influence the buyers involving in it.

Like all other countries India also suffered and still suffering from COVID – 19 pandemic. The article clearly and strongly mentioned that Indian book readers behavior are read so many books and also spend more time for reading than they did before the lockdown. The Nielsen Book India have conducted online survey in 14 May to 7 June, 2020 of 1,084 Indian respondent out of which 60% are female and 40% are male. It was studied that impact of reading and buying behavior on leisure books excluding academic books. The report has identified important findings, it includes change in time spent for reading behavior, various formats (e-book, audio book, printed book) used for reading, popular genres during pandemic, author and language preferences, methods for selecting and searching of books and

purchasing behavior for printed books. The major findings are 20% of reader preferred E-books and 30 % preferred print books, both male & female sexes more interested in crime / thrillers and literacy / classic fiction interest reading behavior, men are shown interest in reading historical / political reading whereas women are very much interested in romance related books, English is most popular language followed by Hindi language, before lockdown almost 60% customers buy books from physical stores and during lockdown 70% customers preferred online book shopping.

Online bookselling is one of the most competitive areas when it comes to online retailing. With the increasing growth of the Internet, the online book stores have to adjust their respective strategies to maintain presence online and compete. This paper therefore focuses on the different aspects of online book purchases and changing consumer behavior trends in terms of buying style and preferences.

**MAIN FOCUS OF THE ARTICLE**

This article focus on the study of consumer behavior with reference to online book selling in India. The authors are considered educational books which was published by various book publishing houses in India only. Total 184 Indian publishers as respondents were approached and the data were supported by in-depth interviews and face-to-face questionnaires. This research is an outcome of both primary and secondary data collection methods. Primary data was collected with the help of structured questionnaire and interview to find out consumer behavior. Secondary data was collected from books, journals, internet, newspapers, articles and research papers.

**Issues, Controversies, Problems**

In today’s world of globalization, like other sectors Indian book publishers also face some issues and problems not only running the business but also survival in the tough competition. Authors are tried identified some issues and problems which will may be applicable to some publishing houses. It includes emergence of new technology, high cost of paper, lack of skilled labor, high cost of transportation and schemes launched by Government and support.

As far as major controversies cum problem is concerned, piracy of books is the biggest headache in front of Indian book publishers. It was found that, popular selling book titles and out of print titles are easily available at market with very cheap rate. In some case high selling books are translated into other language and sold without intimation to Author and Publisher. In such case Publishers suffers a lot not only in financial aspects but also in non-financial aspects too.

**CONSUMER BEHAVIOR IN ONLINE BOOK SELLING:**

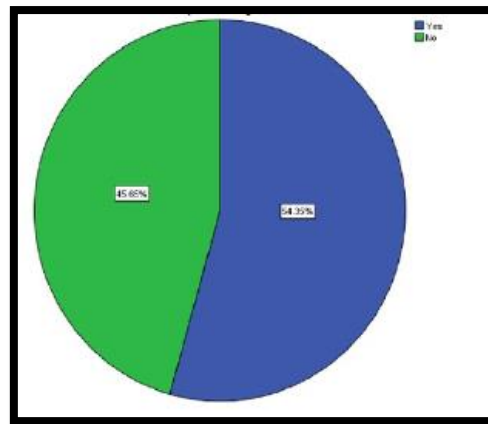
It is become very difficult to find out exact consumer behavior in any type of Industry or business. On the basis of primary (184 Indian book publishers) and secondary sources researchers have tried to identify the major factors which influence consumer behavior in online book selling India. It includes facility of online shopping facility, website tie-up with other online shopping websites, convenient offline v/s online shopping experience, preference online shopping for variety, offline v/s online price preferences, discounts and offers.

**a) Facility of online shopping facility:**

Respondents were asked to tell whether publishers provides the facility of online book selling using two response options - Yes and No.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	100	54.3	54.3	54.3
	No	84	45.7	45.7	100.0
	Total	184	100.0	100.0	

(Table No. 1.a - Frequency Distribution Table for Online Shopping Facility)



(Pie Chart No. 1.a - Online Shopping Facility)

From the above frequency table and pie chart it can be seen that, out of 184 respondents 54.3% said Yes, they are provide facility of online shopping of books on their website and 45.7% said they do not provide online shopping facility.

Hence, it can be concluded that majority of the book publishers have online shopping facility.

**b) Website tie-up with other online shopping websites:**

Respondents were asked to comment on website tie-up with other online websites. They were given options like Amazon, Bookganga, Snapdeal, Flipcart, E-bay, Jabong, Homeshop18.

		N	Responses Percentage	Percent of Cases
Website tie-up with other online shopping websites	Amazon	33	25.6%	39.3%
	Bookganga	45	34.9%	53.6%
	Snapdeal	6	4.7%	7.1%
	Flipcart	33	25.6%	39.3%
	E-bay	3	2.3%	3.6%
	Jabong	1	0.8%	1.2%
	Homeshop18	8	6.2%	9.5%
Total		129	100.0%	153.6%

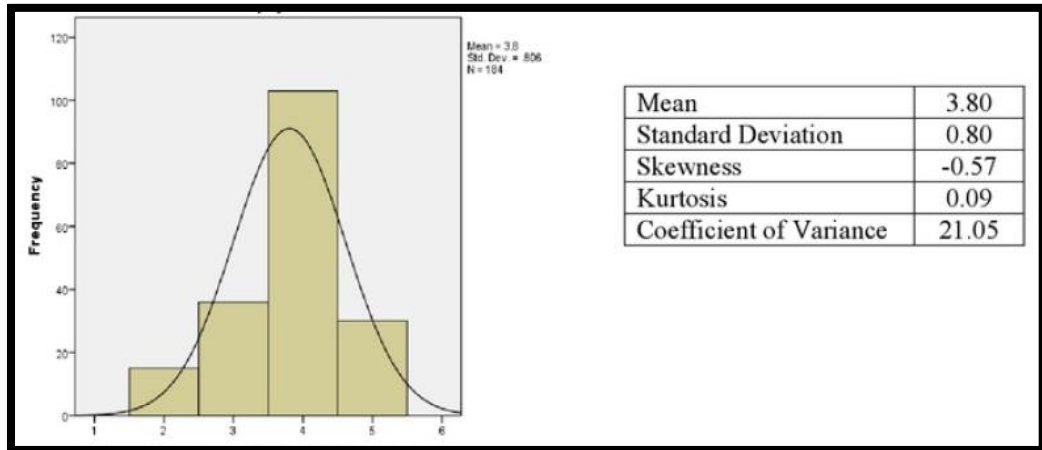
(Table No. 1.b - Frequency Distribution Table for Website tie-up)

From the above frequency distribution table it can be seen that, out of 129 YES responses, 25.6% accounted for Amazon, 34.9% accounted for Bookganga, 4.7% accounted for Snapdeal, 25.6% accounted for Flipcart, 2.3% accounted for E-bay, 0.8% accounted for Jabong and 6.2% accounted for Homeshop18.

Hence it can be concluded that, the publishing houses who don't have their own website have tie-up with Bookganga, Amazon and Flipcart.

**c) Convenient offline v/s online shopping experience:**

Respondents were asked to comment on whether online shopping find more convenient than traditional shopping at book store using five response. (5 = strongly agree, 4 = agree, 3 = neutral, 2 = disagree and 1 = strongly disagree)



(Histogram 1.c - Convenient offline v/s online shopping experience)

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Disagree	15	8.8	8.2	8.2
	Neutral	36	19.6	19.6	27.7
	Agree	103	56.0	56.0	83.7
	Strongly agree	30	16.3	16.3	100.0
Total		184	100.0	100.0	

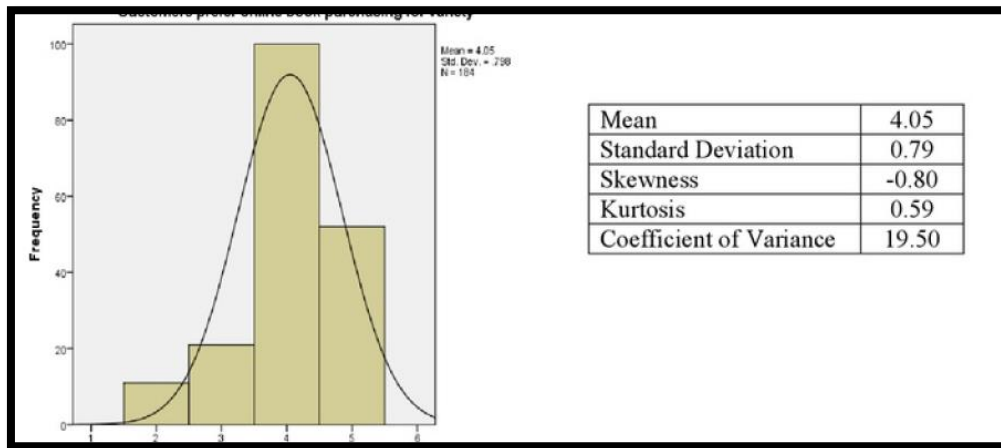
(Table No. 1.c - Frequency Distribution Table for Convenient offline v/s online shopping experience)

Since coefficient of variance is less than 33% mean is meaningful value. Skewness = -0.57. Since Skewness is negative value the curve is left skewed curve and data are piled up on the right. Kurtosis = 0.09. Since Kurtosis is zero the curve has a normal height. Skewness and Kurtosis values further reaffirm the meaningfulness of mean.

Hence it is concluded that, most of the customers go for online book shopping as they find it more convenient than traditional shopping.

**d) Preference online shopping for variety:**

Respondents were asked to tell whether customers prefer online book selling for variety of books available using five response options. (5 = strongly agree, 4 = agree, 3 = neutral, 2 = disagree and 1 = strongly disagree)



(Histogram 1.d - Preference online shopping for variety)

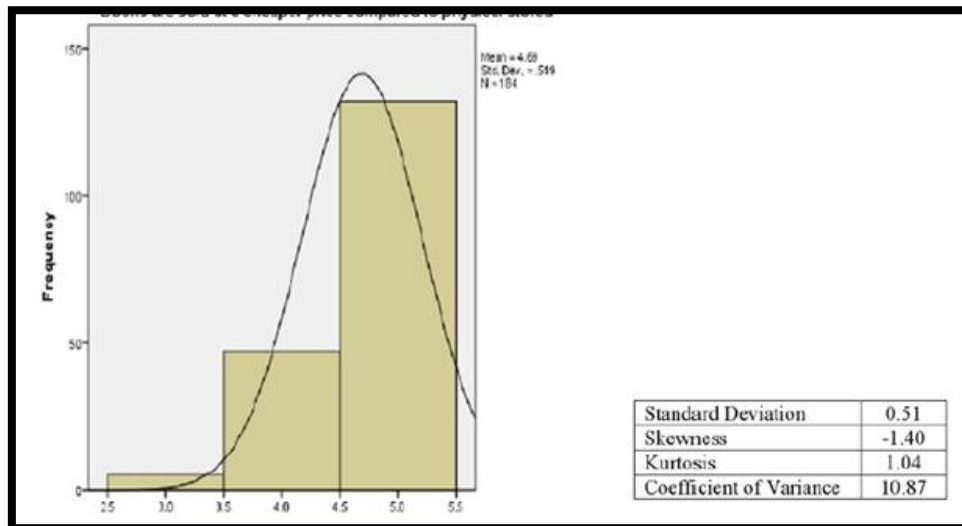
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Disagree	11	6.0	6.0	6.0
	Neutral	21	11.4	11.4	17.4
	Agree	100	54.3	54.3	71.7
	Strongly agree	52	28.3	28.3	100.0
Total		184	100.0	100.0	

(Table No. 1.d - Frequency Distribution Table for Preference online shopping for variety)  
 Since coefficient of variance is less than 33% mean is meaningful value. Skewness = -0.80. Since Skewness is negative value the curve is left skewed curve and data are piled up on the right. Kurtosis = 0.59. Since Kurtosis is positive value the curve is tall and narrow. Skewness and Kurtosis values further reaffirm the meaningfulness of mean.

Hence it is concluded that, most of the customers prefer to go through websites as they get variety of books.

**e) Offline v/s online price preferences:**

Respondents were asked to tell, online books are sold at a cheaper price compared to physical stores as a part of consumer behavior using five response options. (5 = strongly agree, 4 = agree, 3 = neutral, 2 = disagree and 1 = strongly disagree)



(Histogram 1.e - Offline v/s Online price preferences)

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Neutral	5	2.7	2.7	2.7
	Agree	47	25.5	25.5	28.3
	Strongly agree	132	71.7	71.7	100.0
Total		184	100.0	100.0	

(Table No. 1.e - Frequency Distribution Table for Offline v/s Online price preferences)

Since coefficient of variance is less than 33% mean is meaningful value. Skewness = -1.40. Since Skewness is negative value the curve is left skewed curve and data are piled up on the right. Kurtosis = 1.04. Since Kurtosis is positive value the curve is tall and narrow. Skewness and Kurtosis values further reaffirm the meaningfulness of mean.

Hence it is concluded that, most of the customers strongly agree that online books are sold at a cheaper price as compared to physical stores.

**CONCLUSION**

Indian Book publishers are very innovative and creative for adopting world class information technology in this business. Publishers are also keen interested to find out emerging trends of consumer behavior practices. Publishers’ strategically implementing online marketing strategies to not only satisfies the interest of customers but also delight the customers. Those publishers are positively implementing online marketing activities depending on their target customers will only sustain in the book market. Therefore the importance of digital marketing is highlighted once again.

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