

Judicious Study For Online Medicine Shopping

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ABSTRACT

In today's digital age, the internet and technology have completely transformed the way we shop. Online shopping has gained popularity due to its convenience and the ability to have products delivered directly to our homes. This trend extends to the purchase of medicines as well, with online platforms offering a wide range of medical products and medications available for order. These websites often provide attractive discounts and coupons, which further incentivize consumers to make their purchases online. To buy medicines online, customers can place an order via a mobile application or website. Once the order is received, the seller processes it and delivers the medicines or medical products to the customer's doorstep as quickly as possible. Flexible payment options are available, including cash on delivery, card payments, UPI (Unified Payments Interface), and online payment methods such as net banking and card payments. This shift towards online shopping for medicines has become a common practice in today's era of the web.

Keywords: Medicines, Medical Products, Health Care Products, OTC, Prescription-Based medicine.

1. Introduction:

In the past, consumers would typically visit medical shops or stores to seek advice from pharmacists before purchasing medicines. However, with the rise of online shopping, people are increasingly turning to the internet to buy their medications. Online platforms now offer a convenient and accessible way to purchase medicines and healthcare products around the clock. With just a few clicks, customers can buy medications from anywhere, as long as they have a stable internet connection.

2. Literature Review:

The emergence of online medicine shopping has transformed the healthcare industry, providing convenience, accessibility, and cost savings to customers. The rising popularity of this business model has attracted the attention of researchers who explore various aspects of its implementation, impact, and potential improvements. This literature review aims to summarize existing research on online medicine shopping and identify areas that require further investigation for the continued enhancement and success of this business model.

1. Miller et al. (2018) report a significant increase in online medication sales, with estimates suggesting that the market value could reach billions of dollars within a few years. The convenience, discreetness, and competitive pricing offered by online pharmacies contribute to this promising trend. [10] However, more research is needed to understand the factors driving this growth and its implications for both customers and the healthcare system.

2. Abdelmoniem M. Abdfatah, Mohamed A. Altorky, and Manal Ahmed Elgharably (2021) investigates the factors influencing consumer behavior towards online pharmacy shopping in developing countries. [2] It analyzes the impact of various factors such as trust, perceived risk, convenience, and affordability on consumers' decision-

making process while shopping for medicines online. The study provides insights into the motivations and concerns of online medicine shoppers in developing countries.

3. Charu Verma, Neha Chauhan, and Sonali Garg(2021) focuses on consumer behavior towards online purchasing of medicines in India. It examines the factors that influence Indian consumers to buy medicines online, including convenience, price, trust, and quality assurance.

4. Phung-Anh Nguyen, Marja Airaksinen, Anne Jämsen, and Tiina Laatikainen (2020) study aims to assess the prevalence and factors associated with the use of online pharmacies among the Finnish population. It examines the motives, perceived benefits, and concerns related to online medicine shopping in Finland.

3. Problem Statements

Purchasing medicines from physical stores can be time-consuming, prompting the growing demand for online platforms. This research examines different facets of online pharmaceutical shopping applications.[7]

4. Objectives

1. To study the benefits of online medicine shopping over conventional medicine shopping
2. To study limitations of online medicine shopping.
3. To study the process for implementing online pharmacy model.[2]
4. To study and analyze user's perspective on online medicine shopping.

5. Overview

1. Generally, when we consider buying medicines we can categorize them from the consumer point of view as OTC and Prescription Based.
2. OTC i.e., Over-The-Counter medicines are those that anyone can take without proper medical advice.
3. Whereas certain medicines or drugs require proper medical guidance and their consumption without proper advice could lead to various minor or major side effects or long-term effects on the health and for such medicines it is mandatory to have a valid prescription from a medical practitioner.
4. The websites selling medicines online consider these two medicine categories and make OTC medicines available to customers without any prescription whereas uploading a valid prescription is mandatory for prescription-based medicines. So, if the customer wants to purchase prescription-based medicines he has to provide a valid prescription while purchasing the medicine and this prescription is verified by the pharmacist at the backend and if he approves the prescription as valid then the only customer can proceed with the purchase. This ensures that there is no drug misuse.

5.1 How to set up Online Medical Shopping Business

1. For setting online medicine shopping business first you need to have a physical store. This is necessary as drug authorities can visit and inspect the quality of medicines and standards of online medicine stores. For physical stores license will be issued by State Drug Control Authority.
2. You can register and get license either offline or online. You also need GST number if your business has an annual turn-over of 40 lacks or above.
3. After that you can create your online presence.
4. Online presence for medicine shopping started done in two ways:
 1. By registering with existing e pharmacy portals.
 2. By developing own website or app
5. Online medicine stores need to register under Central Licensing Authority.
6. Not anyone with interest can start and run this business.
7. According to the laws of India, the following points are mandatory:
 1. There must be a registered pharmacist on board.
 2. Authentic and valid prescriptions are mandatory for accepting orders.

3. All bills should be monitored and signed by a registered pharmacist only.
4. A registered pharmacist must monitor all the orders before shipping them.
5. Finally, the medicines should be sent from a chemist shop that has a retail license.

6. Benefits and Limitations

Every sector encounters specific constraints and possesses numerous benefits. The adoption of the online medicine shopping model similarly presents particular drawbacks and advantages. These constraints and advantages, alongside the discoveries and recommendations, are examined in the subsequent sections.

6.1 Benefits

1. Benefits for the Customers

- 1 Cost-Benefit - As the websites selling medicines offer huge discounts and sales customers can purchase the medicines and other medical products at a decent price than what they used to pay at retail stores. This benefits a lot to the customers.
- 2 Convenience - Online shopping has increased the convenience of customers. They can conveniently purchase medicine from their laptops or computers or even from their mobile phones. There is no need to visit stores anywhere. Just order medicines from anywhere and anytime.[6]
- 3 Ease of medicine purchase - Today's modern websites or applications are focused more on user experience. Hence these websites and apps are user-friendly and very easy to use.
- 4 Choices for drugs- With just a few clicks customers can browse the catalog and make an order of medicines through a payment mode that is more suitable for them.

2. Benefits for the Owner

- 1 Data Tracking and Maintenance – All the orders and their status and related transactions can be tracked automatically by using a database and programs. Order status can be changed easily. There is no need for manual data maintenance.[6]
- 2 Stock management - Medicine details and their stocks can also be maintained at the backend by using the database.
- 3 Upgrade of Medical Stores - Pharmacist can upgrade their retail stores into online businesses. This is an additional business opportunity for the pharmacist.

6.2 Limitation

This includes the risk of buying medicines online.

- 1 Illegal online pharmacies - The internet is bombarded with a large number of websites selling medicines online. Most of the websites are fake or unregistered. There is a high risk in purchasing medicines from such websites. As such websites may provide expired, diluted or low-quality medicines.[10]
- 2 Risk of self-medication: There is a high risk of self-medication even for OTC medicines as a patient might have an existing disease or some allergy to certain medicines or certain components of medicine that he/she may be unaware of. Taking medicines without proper medical guidance is always not a good choice and can lead to major long-term health effects.
- 3 Selling medicines without prescription: Most popular websites demand a prescription for certain medications. However, there is a risk that some websites may deliver the medicines without prescription and put a patient's health at risk.
- 4 Medicine delivery to certain locations -Most websites claim the delivery of medicines 24x7 but they fail to deliver at certain locations mainly rural parts or after a particular time interval as the delivery system is still not evolved and needs more improvements so that more and more locations are covered.

7. Methods

A survey was conducted to examine and assess customers' perspectives on purchasing medicines online. A total of 258 individuals participated in the survey, consisting of 172 students, 66 working professionals, and 20 individuals who did not fall into either category.

8. Data analysis

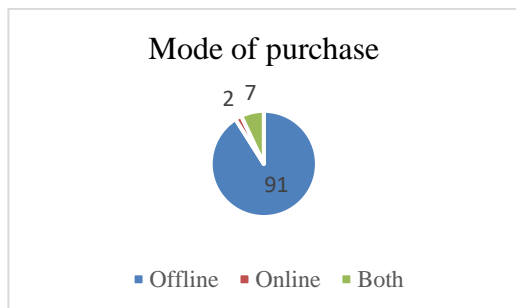


Fig. 1: Mode of purchase

Sr No	Mode of Purchase	Frequency
1	Offline	235
2	Online	5
3	Both	18

Table 1: Mode of Purchase

91% of the participants still choose to purchase medicines from medical stores rather than using online platforms or medical products. 18% of the respondents expressed their comfort with both offline and online platforms, while only 5% exclusively relied on online platforms.

Therefore, it is evident that the majority of the respondents are still dependent on medical stores.

Table 2: Used online platforms

Sr No	Consideration	Frequency
1	Used online platforms for shopping	18
2	Not used	240

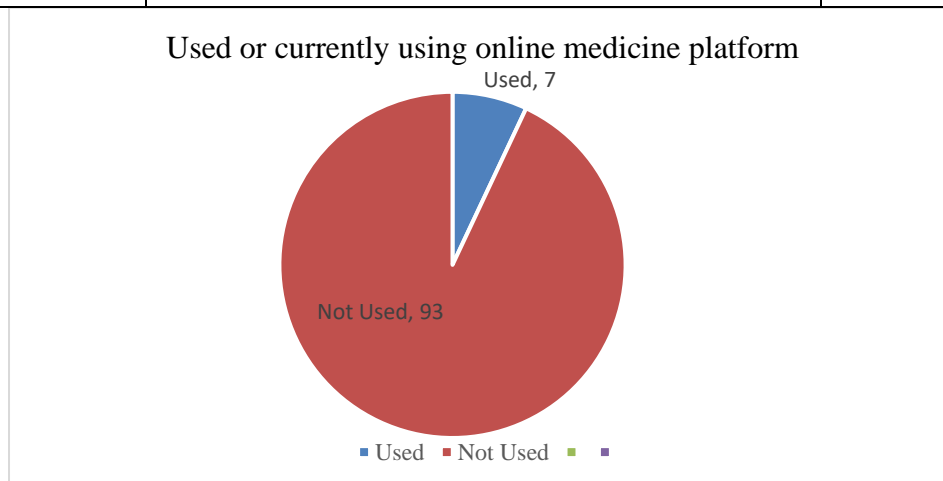
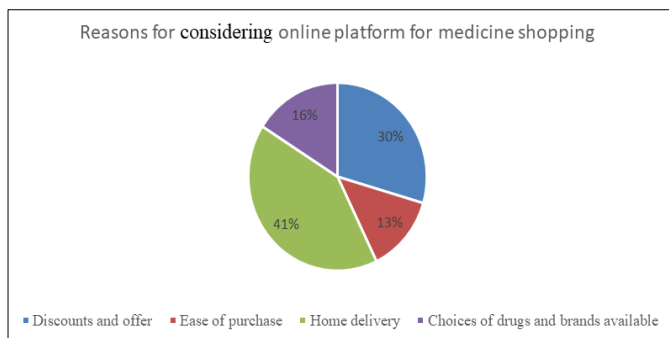


Fig. 2: Used or currently using online medicine platform

93% of the respondents said that they have not used online platforms whereas 7% of the respondents said that they have used the online platforms.

We can interpret from the above figure that 93% of people have still not used online platform and only 7% have used it.



Sr No	Reasons	Frequency
1	Discounts and offers	109
2	Ease of purchase	49
3	Home delivery	152
4	Choices of drugs and brands available	59

Fig. 3: Reasons for considering online platform for medicine shopping

Table 3: Reasons for considering online platform medicine shopping

The primary appeal of online platforms for purchasing medical products lies in the convenience of home delivery. According to the survey, 41% of respondents cited this as their main reason for utilizing online platforms. Additionally, 30% of respondents stated that they appreciate the lower prices, discounts, and offers available on these platforms compared to the maximum retail price. 16% of respondents prioritized the wide variety of brands and drugs available on online platforms. Lastly, 13% of respondents highlighted the user-friendly nature of these platforms, allowing even those with limited technical knowledge to easily select products, make payments, and track their orders.

Based on the data, it is evident that the ease of home delivery is the primary driver for online medical product purchases, while the convenience of the purchasing process itself is the least influential factor.

Sr No	Reasons	Frequency
1	Do not trust the quality	62
2	Not aware of existence	11
3	Happy with current arrangement	82
4	Internet accessibility issue	3
5	Absence of prescription	56
6	Lack of consultation	32
7	Location constraints-delivery not possible	12

Table 4: Reasons for not considering online platform for medicine shopping

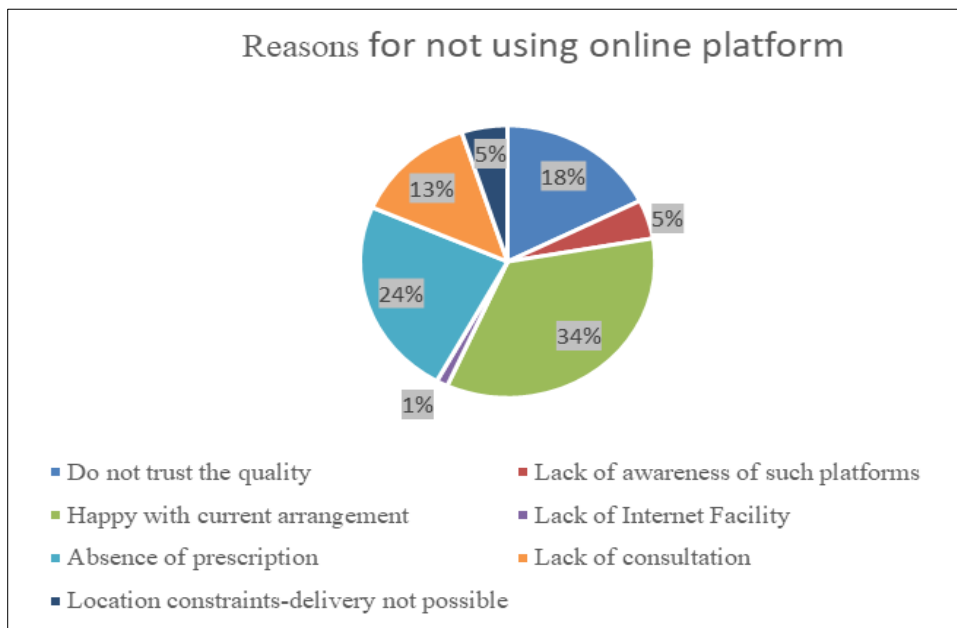


Fig. 4: Reasons for not considering online platform for medicine shopping

34% of the respondents stated that they prefer offline stores over online platforms.

24% of the respondents mentioned that they have concerns about the quality of medical products on online platforms.

18% of the respondents expressed difficulties in uploading prescriptions for certain medications, leading to their inability to place orders.

13% of the respondents mentioned the lack of consultation as a reason for not considering online platforms.

5% of the respondents were not fully aware of the availability of such platforms.

Another 5% of the respondents wanted to use online platforms but faced issues with the delivery of medicines to their location or experienced longer-than-expected delivery times.

Based on the data above, it is evident that a significant factor for not using online platforms is the lack of trust in the quality of the medicines being delivered.

9. Findings

It is evident from the above mentioned data that a significant portion of customers continues to favor offline or traditional methods of purchasing medical products. The primary reasons behind this preference include doubts about the quality of medicines sold on online platforms and the need for a prescription for certain medications. The majority of customers, accounting for 34%, express satisfaction with the traditional approach to buying medicine.

10. Suggestions

1. Ecommerce businesses for medicines or medical products demand adequate expertise, and individuals interested in this industry ought to prioritize acquiring relevant knowledge.
2. Enhancing the order delivery system is essential for businesses to boost profitability.
3. Considering online medical shopping as a lucrative business option merits people's attention.

11. Conclusion

In conclusion, the Online Medicine Shopping website serves as a valuable tool for customers to conveniently purchase their medicines and medical products. Not only does it provide a user-friendly platform, but it also offers benefits for pharmacists in managing their stocks and sales. With its easy search and order process, customers can save time and have their purchases delivered right to their doorstep. Moreover, the inclusion of a prescription verification mechanism ensures the responsible use of medications and prevents drug misuse. As technology continues to evolve, further improvements and enhancements can be expected, making online shopping platforms an even more efficient and enjoyable experience for customers.

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