

A Study On Risk Perception And Problems Faced In Online Shopping Among Consumers In Thoothukudi District

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The exponential growth of online shopping has significantly transformed consumer purchasing behaviour by providing enhanced convenience, wider product variety, and competitive pricing. Despite these advantages, consumers continue to encounter various risks and operational problems associated with online transactions. The present study aims to examine the level of risk perception and the problems faced by consumers while shopping online in Thoothukudi District. Primary data were collected from 450 respondents using a structured questionnaire. The data were analysed using percentage analysis, mean score, and standard deviation. The findings reveal that concerns related to payment security, delivery delays, receipt of incorrect or damaged products, and difficulties in return and refund procedures considerably influence consumer confidence in online shopping. The study underscores the necessity for e-commerce platforms to strengthen security mechanisms, logistics efficiency, and post-purchase support in order to enhance consumer trust and satisfaction.

Keywords: Online Shopping, Risk Perception, Consumer Problems, E-Commerce, Thoothukudi District.

1. Introduction

Online shopping has emerged as a dominant mode of purchasing goods and services due to rapid advancements in digital technology, increased internet penetration, and the widespread use of smartphones. Consumers increasingly depend on e-commerce platforms for their convenience, time efficiency, and access to a diverse range of products and brands. The integration of digital payment systems and improved logistics infrastructure has further accelerated the growth of online shopping in India.

However, alongside its rapid expansion, online shopping involves several perceived risks that influence consumer attitudes and behaviour. These risks include insecurity of online payments, privacy concerns, delivery delays, receipt of defective or mismatched products, and complexities involved in return and refund processes. Unlike traditional retail shopping, the

inability to physically inspect products prior to purchase further intensifies consumer uncertainty.

Risk perception plays a crucial role in determining consumers' willingness to engage in online transactions. Higher levels of perceived risk may reduce purchase intention and negatively affect repeat buying behaviour. Thoothukudi District, comprising urban, semi-urban, and rural consumers with varying levels of digital exposure, provides a suitable context to examine these issues. Hence, the present study focuses on analysing risk perception and problems faced by online shoppers in Thoothukudi District.

2. Statement of the Problem

Although online shopping offers numerous benefits, consumers frequently experience various risks and operational problems that adversely affect their overall shopping experience. Issues such as lack of physical product inspection, security of online payments, privacy concerns, delayed delivery, and inefficient return and refund mechanisms create uncertainty and dissatisfaction among consumers. These problems may discourage repeat purchases and weaken long-term trust in e-commerce platforms.

Despite the growing popularity of online shopping, empirical studies examining consumer risk perception and problems at the district level remain limited, particularly in Thoothukudi District. Therefore, there is a need to systematically analyse the nature and extent of risks and problems faced by online shoppers in this region. The present study attempts to address this research gap.

3. Objectives of the Study

1. To examine the level of risk perception among online shoppers in Thoothukudi District.
2. To identify and analyse the major problems faced by consumers in online shopping.
3. To offer suitable suggestions to reduce perceived risk and enhance the online shopping experience.

4. Review of Literature

Previous studies on online shopping behaviour consistently indicate that perceived risk acts as a significant barrier influencing online purchase decisions. Researchers have identified payment security risk, privacy risk, product quality risk, and delivery reliability as major factors affecting consumer behaviour. Studies further reveal that inadequate customer support services and complex return procedures significantly increase consumer dissatisfaction.

While extensive research has been conducted at national and metropolitan levels, limited studies focus on consumer perceptions at the district level. In particular, empirical evidence from districts like Thoothukudi remains scarce. This study attempts to bridge this gap by examining local consumer perceptions and problems related to online shopping.

5. Research Methodology

5.1 Research Design

The study adopts a descriptive and empirical research design.

5.2 Sources of Data

- **Primary Data:** Collected through a structured questionnaire administered to online shoppers.
- **Secondary Data:** Collected from journals, books, reports, and online sources related to e-commerce and consumer behaviour.

5.3 Sample Size and Sampling Technique

The study is based on a sample of 450 respondents selected from Thoothukudi District using the convenient sampling method.

5.4 Tools for Analysis

- Percentage Analysis
- Mean Score
- Standard Deviation

6. Data Analysis and Interpretation

Table 1: Risk Perception of Online Shoppers in Thoothukudi District

Risk Factors	Mean Score	Standard Deviation
Safety and security of online payments	3.36	0.74
Concern regarding late delivery	3.33	0.74
Difficulty in return and Replacement procedures	3.31	0.69
Receipt of damaged or incorrect products	3.26	0.72
Lack of confidence in customer support services	3.22	0.68

Source: Primary data

Sample size: 450 respondents

The results presented in Table 1 indicate that online shoppers in Thoothukudi District experience a moderate to high level of risk perception while engaging in online shopping. Among the various risk factors, safety and security of online payments recorded the highest mean score (3.36), revealing that concerns related to digital payment security are the most prominent among consumers. This is followed by concerns regarding late delivery (3.33) and difficulty in return and replacement procedures (3.31), highlighting logistical and post-purchase challenges associated with online shopping.

Further, the risks related to receipt of damaged or incorrect products (3.26) and lack of confidence in customer support services (3.22) also significantly contribute to overall risk perception. The standard deviation values, ranging from 0.68 to 0.74, indicate a moderate level of consistency in respondents' opinions, suggesting that these concerns are commonly shared among online shoppers. Overall, the findings imply that although consumers actively

participate in online shopping, persistent concerns regarding payment security, delivery reliability, and after-sales support continue to influence their confidence and purchasing decisions.

Table 2: Problems Faced in Online Shopping

Problems	Mean Score	Standard Deviation
Inability to physically verify the product before purchase	2.98	0.76
Difficulty in returning or exchanging products	2.88	0.73
Lack of privacy and security in online payments	2.75	0.70
Delay in delivery of ordered products	2.71	0.68
Receipt of damaged or incorrect goods	2.60	0.66

Source: Primary data

Sample size: 450 respondents

The mean score analysis presented in Table 2 reveals that online shoppers in Thoothukudi District face moderate levels of problems while purchasing products through e-commerce platforms. The most significant problem reported is the inability to physically verify the product before purchase, which recorded the highest mean score (2.98), indicating uncertainty regarding product quality and suitability. This is followed by difficulty in returning or exchanging products (2.88), reflecting procedural challenges in post-purchase services. Concerns related to privacy and security in online payments (2.75) and delay in delivery of ordered products (2.71) also contribute notably to consumer dissatisfaction. The issue of receipt of damaged or incorrect goods (2.60), though relatively lower, remains a concern among consumers. The standard deviation values, ranging from 0.66 to 0.76, indicate a moderate degree of agreement among respondents, suggesting that these problems are commonly experienced by online shoppers. Overall, the findings indicate that while online shopping is widely adopted, operational and post-purchase challenges continue to affect consumer satisfaction and confidence.

7. Findings of the Study

1. Consumers perceive a moderate to high level of risk in online shopping.
2. Payment security is the most significant risk perceived by online shoppers.
3. Delivery delays create considerable concern among consumers.
4. Difficulty in returning or replacing products affects consumer confidence.
5. Inability to physically verify products is the major problem faced by consumers.
6. Privacy concerns related to online payments persist among shoppers.
7. Customer support plays a crucial role in reducing perceived risk.

8. Suggestions

1. E-commerce platforms should strengthen payment security systems to enhance consumer confidence.
2. Clear and simple return and refund policies should be implemented.
3. Accurate product descriptions and images should be provided to reduce product mismatch.
4. Delivery mechanisms should be improved to avoid delays.
5. Effective customer support services should be made available to handle consumer grievances promptly.

9. Conclusion

The study concludes that risk perception and problems faced by consumers significantly influence online shopping behaviour in Thoothukudi District. Concerns related to payment security, delivery delays, and return difficulties continue to affect consumer trust. Addressing these issues is essential for e-commerce companies to enhance customer satisfaction and encourage sustained online shopping. The study offers valuable insights for online retailers and policymakers to improve the overall online shopping ecosystem.

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