

A STUDY ON NAVIGATING E-COMMERCE- THE IMPACT OF ONLINE SHOPPING ON COLLEGE STUDENTS

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Abstract

The study examines the e-commerce behaviors of university students, focusing on how social media influences their online purchasing decisions. With the rise of smartphones and internet access, online shopping has become increasingly popular among students. The study uses both primary and secondary research methods, including a literature review and a survey of 145 students. The survey explored their shopping habits, motivations, and the impact of social media on their choices. By analyzing current trends and behaviors, the research offers insights into how students interact with e-commerce platforms and what factors drive their purchasing decisions.

Keywords:

Online Shopping, Digital Addiction, Impulse Buying, Convenience, E-Commerce

1. INTRODUCTION

The digital age has ushered in significant changes across various industries, with retail being one of the most profoundly impacted. Online shopping, a direct result of this digital transformation, has become a crucial part of contemporary consumer culture. This shift has not only transformed business operations but, also reshaped the way consumers make purchasing decisions. Among the many demographic groups that engage in online shopping, college students are particularly notable for their unique characteristics and purchasing behaviours [1].

Students aged between 18 and 26 are at a pivotal stage in life, transitioning from adolescence to adulthood. Studying this demographic is crucial in understanding the effects of online shopping, as technology and the internet play an integral role in their daily lives. With nearly universal access to smartphones, tablets, and laptops, college students find online shopping to be a highly convenient option. Their tech-savvy nature and ability to quickly adapt to new technologies and trends, especially in the realm of e-commerce, make them a unique and important group to examine [2].

Internet literacy significantly impacts college students' online shopping behaviour. With skills like information seeking, source evaluation, and secure transactions, Students expert in internet usage are more likely to make purchases online. Their proficiency enables them to easily find products, compare prices, and make informed decisions, increasing their comfort with e-commerce [3].

Gender is a significant factor influencing college students' online shopping habits, revealing notable differences in their behaviours. Although both male and female students value the variety and convenience offered by online platforms, their preferences differ. Female students tend to favor online shopping for clothing, accessories, and cosmetics, driven by the ease of comparison shopping.

In contrast, male students often prioritize electronics, gadgets, and sporting goods, motivated by the broader selection available online compared to local stores and the convenience of home delivery. Grasping these gender-specific preferences is essential for retailers seeking to customize their online offerings to effectively cater to their target audience's needs [4].

While a student's educational background influences their life, it seems to have a minimal effect on their online shopping behaviors. College students, regardless of their academic level or field of study, tend to use online purchasing platforms in similar ways. This can be attributed to shared characteristics within this demographic, such as a high comfort level with technology and comparable financial constraints. However, this does not imply that education is unimportant; instead, it suggests that factors such as internet literacy and personal preferences have a greater impact on online shopping behaviors than the details of a student's academic background [5].

Website usability is a critical factor in online commerce, significantly influencing the user experience. For college students, who often juggle multiple responsibilities and time constraints, a user-friendly website can enhance their online shopping experience. Key features such as intuitive navigation, fast loading times, clear product descriptions, and secure payment options are essential for attracting and retaining young customers. However, the study's findings indicate no significant correlation between college students' overall online shopping behaviour and website usability. This may be due to students' high comfort level and familiarity with digital interfaces, allowing them to adapt easily to various website designs. Nonetheless, ensuring optimal website usability remains a challenge for online retailers aiming to provide seamless and satisfying shopping experiences [6].

Cost is a decisive factor influencing college students' shopping decisions, as they are highly price-sensitive due to limited budgets. Online shopping platforms attract students with competitive pricing, discounts, and the ability to easily compare costs across websites. Retailers can capture more of this market by addressing students' price sensitivity [7].

The rise of online shopping has significantly altered consumer attitudes and expectations, particularly among college students. The convenience of shopping anytime and anywhere is a major draw, allowing students to browse extensive product selections, read reviews, and make purchases from their dorm rooms without disrupting their study time.

This trend aligns seamlessly with the lifestyle of modern students, who are accustomed to quick access to services and information through digital devices. These changing purchasing patterns reflect broader shifts in consumer behaviour driven by the increasing prominence of digital experiences and advancements in technology [8].

2. OBJECTIVESS

1. To explore how social media influences students' shopping habits.
2. To explore how online shopping affects students' academic performance.
3. To analyse the influence of students' online shopping behaviors.
4. To identify the factors that drive students to prefer online shopping

3. LITERATURE REVIEW

Table.1. Related Research on the Impact of Online Shopping on College Students

Area of Focus	Contribution	Ref.
Generation Y	South African Generation Y students are accustomed to daily internet use; however, they do not prioritize online shopping primarily for its convenience.	[9]
Technology	Retail businesses should embrace technology, enhance customer experiences, integrate with online platforms, engage with the community, and simplify processes if they want.	[10]
Convenience	Although gender, internet literacy, and online product pricing significantly impact young people's perceptions of online shopping, education and website usability do not.	[11]
Spending habits	Compared to women, who see greater risks while purchasing online, men are more at ease and knowledgeable about it. More favourable opinions and attitudes toward online.	[12]
Positive attitude	The majority of undergraduate students have positive thoughts about online shopping; these views are especially prevalent among men, higher-earning households, and online.	[13]
Gender difference	Gender differences in attitudes about online shopping reveal that women often place less emphasis on its utility than men do. This discrepancy may arise from a variety of factors.	[14]
Shopping behaviour	Perceived security is important for online retailers because it influences online buying behaviour, especially for students in Generation Y.	[15]

4. METHODOLOGY

This research utilizes primary data collected through a structured survey from 145 university students in the Udupi and Mangalore regions of Dakshina Kannada District. The study

adopts a cross-sectional design to capture a snapshot of the students' online shopping behaviors. To interpret the data effectively, graphical representations such as charts and graphs are used, providing clear visual insights into the factors influencing online purchasing habits among students. These visual tools help to enhance understanding and present trends, preferences, and behaviors in a more accessible format for analysis.

5. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

5.1 INFLUENCE OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON STUDENT SHOPPING BEHAVIOUR

The emergence of social media has fundamentally altered how consumers interact with brands and make purchasing decisions. The complex interactions between social media and students' purchasing habits, examine how platforms, content creators, and influencers shape consumer preferences, brand loyalty, and decision-making processes [16].

5.2 ROLE OF INFLUENCERS

Social media influencers are very crucial for influencing customer behaviour because they build trust, show realistic lives, and shape consumer behaviour. This is especially true for younger audiences, such as students [17]. When influencers have the same values and lifestyle as their target audience, they become more believable and compelling. At this point, their effect is at its strongest. Genuineness and relatability are crucial factors, and compared to their more established counterparts, micro-influencers those with smaller but more active followings tend to have a bigger impact on purchasing decisions. Influencers who lead aspirational lifestyles and inspire students to emulate their consumption habits create a strong aspirational appeal. Through product placements and endorsements, influencers progressively introduce new businesses and products to their audience, thereby raising awareness and interest among consumers. User-generated content (UGC), which provides authentic and trustworthy product evaluations, unboxing videos, and social media posts a platform, amplifies this effect even further [18]. Improved visual appeal, as demonstrated by high-quality images and videos, strengthens the emotional connection with a product, increasing the likelihood that it will be purchased [19]. Additionally, user-generated content (UGC) strengthens brand loyalty by creating a feeling of community among users and motivating them to share recommendations and experiences. Creating successful marketing tactics requires an understanding of the psychological and sociological elements that underlie social media's influence on students' purchase decisions. Students who compare themselves to their friends on social media may experience emotions of inadequacy or feel compelled to buy particular goods to fit in [20]. The fear of missing out, or FOMO, is a powerful additional motivator. Pupils may experience pressure to purchase desirable things and lifestyles at first to avoid missing out. By creating social media reference groups and connecting with individuals who share their interests and spending habits, students can get even more control over the things they buy [21]. Students may be prone to impulsive buying as a result of the hedonistic culture and instant gratification promoted by social media, driven by a desire for pleasure and immediate satisfaction. [22]. When combined,

influencer marketing, user-generated content, and the psychological and sociological dynamics found on social media form a potent ecosystem that has a significant impact on students' purchasing decisions [23].

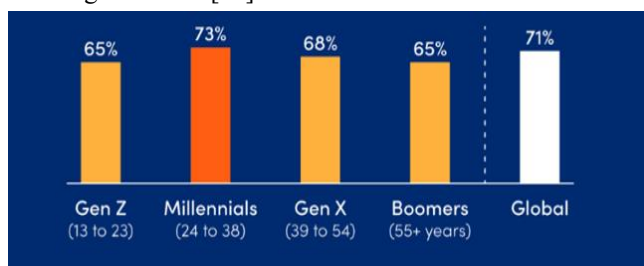


Fig.1. Percentage of Respondents that shop online daily by generation (source: <https://www.helpcenterapp.com>)

5.3 FACTORS INFLUENCING ONLINE SHOPPING

Three key characteristics significantly influence students' online shopping behaviour. First, product availability plays a crucial role; consumers tend to respond positively to items that are readily accessible, while unavailability can lead to negative perceptions and dissatisfaction. [24]. Cost is another vital indicator to take into account. As students are drawn to online merchants offering competitive prices, affordability is a key factor in their decision-making. Furthermore, discounts, coupons, cash-back offers, and free samples are examples of promotions that significantly influence consumer behaviour by providing additional value and incentives. The primary factors influencing students' online purchasing decisions are accessibility, cost, and marketing resources. In addition to the three primary elements that influence online shopping product availability, pricing, and promotions several other factors are also important. Customers evaluate products provided by different online retailers based on their features, benefits, and costs to make well-informed decisions. The ease with which consumers may browse and purchase goods from the comfort of their homes is a major draw for online shoppers, who often employ store or category searches. Customer service guidelines should address credit, refunds, and payment procedures in addition to responding to frequently asked questions. The ease of use of an online system is directly related to how comfortable a user feels dealing with it. Consumer opinions on online shopping, whether favorable or unfavourable, affect their behaviour as well. Time consciousness implies that online customers expect faster issue responses than their offline counterparts. Trust is essential because customers must have faith that the online seller will fulfil their commitments and act honourably. [25].

5.4 IMPACTS OF ONLINE SHOPPING ON COLLEGE STUDENTS

Cost savings are a major advantage of online shopping for students, who usually have limited resources. With internet platforms, students can quickly compare prices, find deals, and access promotions, empowering them to make more economical choices. Many websites provide student-specific discounts or loyalty schemes to help students save even more money. Because there are no travel charges associated with visiting physical establishments, online purchases also result in lower overall

prices. It's essential to have this kind of financial flexibility to pay for normal needs like housing and education. [26].

Access to a diverse range of products is a significant advantage of online shopping for students. They can explore items that may not be available locally, discovering new brands and trends that align with their preferences. This exposure enhances their shopping experience and broadens their cultural perspectives by introducing international products. Additionally, students can find unique pieces that reflect their individuality and interests. Online shopping also opens entrepreneurial avenues, such as dropshipping, affiliate marketing, and platforms for handmade goods, allowing students to launch low-cost businesses. These ventures provide valuable skills in marketing, customer service, and inventory management while offering flexible income opportunities [27].

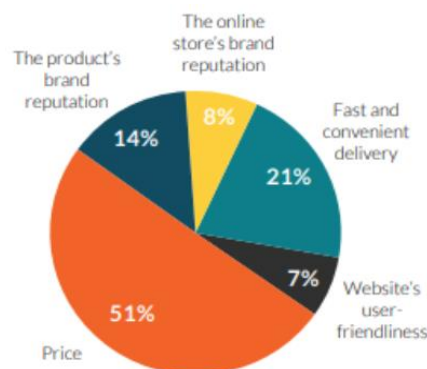


Fig.2. Source: <https://www.digitalmarketingcommunity.com>

Shopping online significantly enhances the accessibility of educational resources for students. They can easily find academic materials such as e-books, journals, and specialized study aids that may not be readily available in local bookstores, promoting their academic success. Furthermore, online platforms offer digital products like software and online courses, enriching the educational experience. The wide variety of options allows students to tailor resources to their specific needs, fostering a more personalized and efficient learning process. Overall, online shopping saves college student time and money while expanding their product choices and entrepreneurial opportunities, thereby greatly supporting their academic and personal development [28].

Although it is easily accessible and convenient, online shopping presents some challenges for students. Students usually make rash, impulsive purchases due to flash discounts and targeted advertising, which puts a strain on their limited funds and increases the risk of debt. Impulsive spending is a major issue for students. The ease of "one-click" purchasing and saved payment details exacerbates this issue. Additionally, children who purchase online run the risk of encountering security and privacy breaches because they may not be aware of secure measures. Phishing schemes and fraudulent websites carry serious risks, including the potential for identity theft and financial loss. To reduce these concerns, it is crucial to teach kids safe internet shopping habits [29].

Due to the ease of online shopping, there are fewer options for in-person social gatherings with friends. Since it's difficult to recreate the social camaraderie of group shopping excursions online, this shift could lead to feelings of social disconnection and

a decline in social skills. While social media and online reviews offer several channels for exchanging experiences, they cannot entirely replace face-to-face interactions [30].

Online shopping poses environmental challenges, including increased packaging waste and carbon emissions from shipping. Students who prioritize sustainability may opt for eco-friendly retailers or slower shipping methods. Additionally, constant access to shopping apps can distract students from their academic responsibilities, requiring them to develop strong time management and self-discipline skills [31].

5.5 DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

The data for the study was collected from a sample of 145 college students residing in and around the Dakshina Kannada district. These respondents were selected to provide insights into the online shopping behaviour in this region. The data aims to explore trends, preferences, and frequency of online shopping activities within this demographic. By focusing on students, the study seeks to understand how this tech-savvy and education-oriented group interacts with e-commerce platforms, potentially reflecting broader trends among younger populations. The analysis of this data will help identify key factors influencing their shopping behaviours.

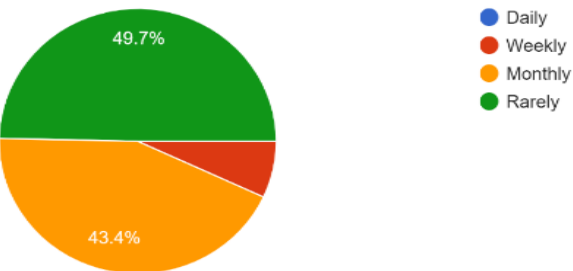


Fig.3. Data on how often students shop online

The data indicates that most respondents do not engage in frequent online shopping. Nearly half (49.7%) shop online rarely, while 43.4% do so monthly, suggesting moderate engagement with e-commerce. A small percentage shop weekly, and there are no substantial daily shoppers, indicating that online shopping is primarily for occasional or planned purchases rather than everyday needs. To increase engagement, businesses may consider strategies like offering incentives to encourage more regular or impulse purchases among this demographic.

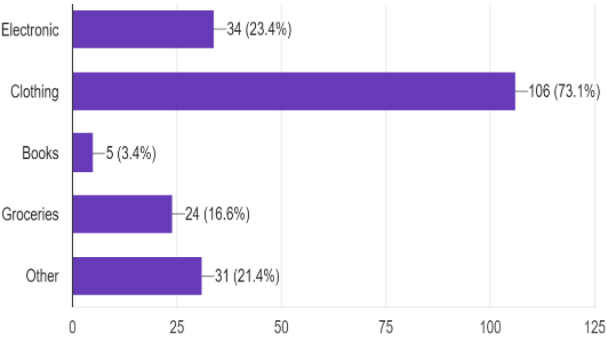


Fig.4. Type of products student prefer buying online (multiple choice were allowed)

Clothing is the most commonly purchased item online, chosen by 106 respondents (73.1%), indicating a strong preference for fashion shopping. Electronics rank second, with 34 respondents (23.4%), followed by groceries, which were chosen by 24 respondents (16.6%), indicating a moderate level of online usage for essential items. Books are the least purchased category, with 5 respondents (3.4%), suggesting low demand or a preference for physical stores. The “Other” category, selected by 31 respondents (21.4%), reflects a variety of miscellaneous purchases. Overall, clothing drives online shopping among students, with electronics and groceries also of interest.

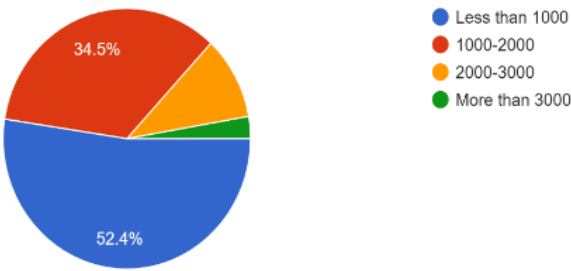


Fig.5. Average monthly spending on online shopping by the student.

The majority (52.4%) of respondents spend less than 1000 rupees per month on online shopping, indicating a conservative budget. A moderate portion (34.5%) spends between 1000-2000 rupees, while 9.7% spend 2000-3000 rupees, showing some students make higher-value purchases. Only 3.4% of respondents spend over 3,000 rupees monthly, indicating that high spenders represent a minority. Overall, most students keep their online shopping expenses low, likely due to limited disposable income or budget-conscious habits.

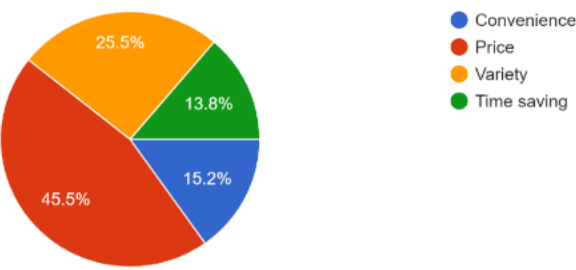


Fig.6. Reasons for shopping online

Variety is the primary reason for online shopping, which 45.5% of respondents chose, indicating a strong preference for the wide range of available options. Time-saving is the second most important factor at 25.5%, highlighting its role in making online shopping appealing. Convenience ranks third at 15.2%, showing its significance but not as strongly as variety and time-saving. Price is the least influential factor at 13.8%, suggesting that while important, it is not a primary motivator. Overall, consumers prioritize variety and efficiency over price and convenience when shopping online.

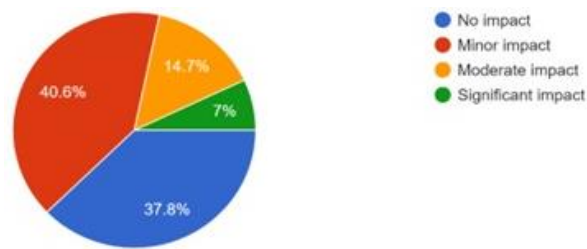


Fig.7. Impact of online shopping on monthly budgeting

According to the data, 78.4% of students feel that internet shopping has no or little impact on their monthly budget, with 37.8% reporting no effect and 40.6% reporting a slight effect. Just 7% report a substantial influence, while a lower percentage, 14.7%, shows a moderate impact. With only roughly one-fifth reporting a discernible impact, this indicates that the majority of students (more than three-quarters) do not believe that internet shopping significantly affects their budget. Overall, the data shows that online buying has little impact on most students’ finances.

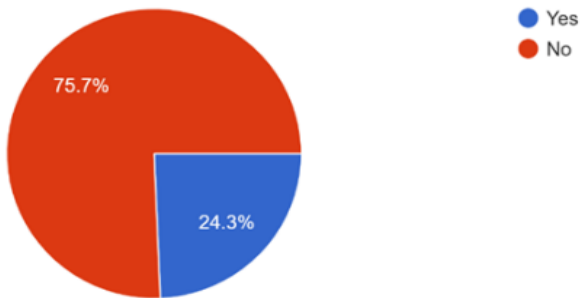


Fig.8. Impact of online shopping on financial stress

The data reveals that 75.7% of students do not experience financial stress due to online shopping, while 24.3% do. This suggests that the majority of students manage their spending without significant stress from online purchases. However, nearly a quarter of students feel financially strained, possibly due to overspending or impulse buying. The convenience and ease of online shopping, along with targeted marketing and frequent sales, could lead some students to exceed their budget. For those experiencing stress, the lack of self-control or poor budgeting skills might contribute to their financial difficulties related to online shopping.

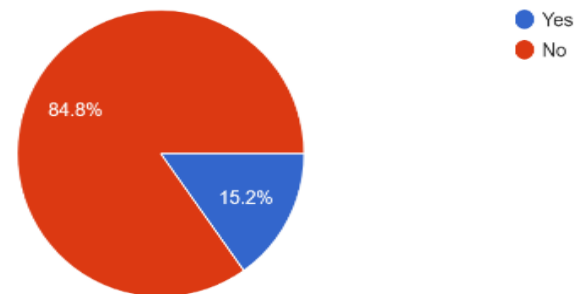


Fig.9. Impact of online shopping on the studies of the student

The data shows that 84.8% of students do not believe online shopping affects their studies, while 15.2% think it does. Most respondents believe that their academic performance is not

impacted by online shopping, likely due to effective time management or limited excessive browsing. However, 15.2% of respondents feel, it impacts their studies and might be distracted by frequent online browsing, shopping apps, or notifications, leading to procrastination or reduced study time. The convenience and allure of online deals may divert their attention, causing some to prioritize shopping over academic responsibilities.

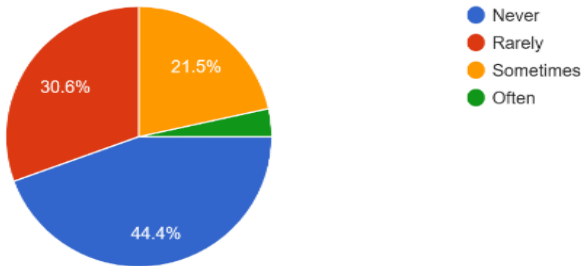


Fig.10. How often do students shop online during study hours

The data shows that 44.4% of students never shop online during study hours, and 30.6% rarely do, indicating that 75% of students generally avoid online shopping while studying. However, 21.5% sometimes shop during study time, and the remaining small percentage shop often. This suggests that while most students try to maintain focus during study hours, a notable portion gets distracted by online shopping. The convenience of shopping apps, combined with constant notifications and easy access to mobile devices, may tempt some students to browse or make purchases even during academic activities, reducing their concentration on studies.

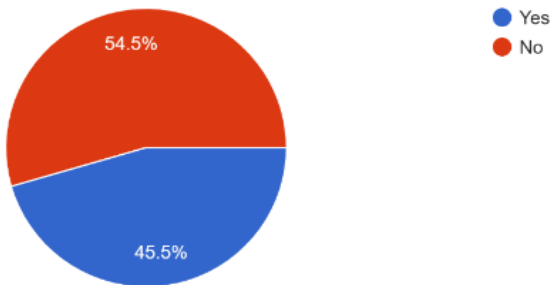


Fig.11. Student feeling regret or guilt after making online purchases

The data reveals that 54.5% of students do not feel regret or guilt after making online purchases, while 45.5% do. This suggests that a significant portion of students experience post-purchase regret, possibly due to impulse buying, overspending, or realizing the purchase was unnecessary. The convenience of online shopping, coupled with tempting deals and easy access, may lead some students to make hasty decisions, only to regret them later. Those who don’t feel regret may have better control over their spending or view their purchases as intentional and within budget, avoiding feelings of guilt associated with financial mismanagement.

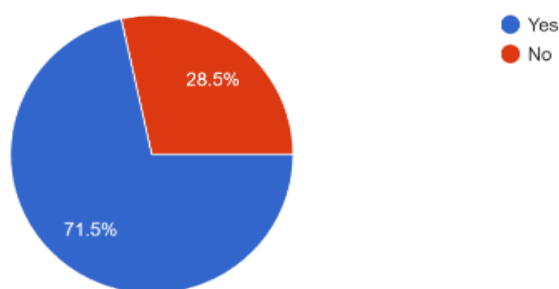


Fig.12. Satisfaction level with online shopping compared to in-store shopping

The data shows that 71.5% of students are more satisfied with online shopping compared to in-store shopping, while 28.5% are not. The majority's preference for online shopping likely stems from the convenience, variety, and ease of comparing prices, as well as the ability to shop anytime without the need to visit a physical store. Additionally, frequent online deals and discounts may enhance satisfaction. However, 28.5% of respondents who are not as satisfied might miss the in-person experience of physically inspecting products, and immediate purchases, or they may have faced issues like delayed deliveries or product mismatches, which can dampen satisfaction.

6. FINDINGS

The data shows that most students shop online infrequently, with 49.7% doing so rarely and 43.4% monthly. Clothing is the most purchased category, and students tend to spend less than 1000 rupees monthly. While most students prioritize variety and convenience, 24.3% face financial stress from online shopping. Satisfaction levels remain high, with 71.5% preferring online shopping over in-store options.

E-commerce platforms could enhance student engagement by offering personalized promotions, loyalty programs, and student-specific deals to mitigate financial stress. Introducing mindful shopping features could reduce distractions during study hours. Addressing product quality and delivery reliability may also lower dissatisfaction, promoting a more positive shopping experience for students.

7. CONCLUSION

The data indicates that while most students are satisfied with online shopping, they do so conservatively and mainly for specific categories like clothing and electronics. Financial stress and academic distraction are issues for a minority of students, suggesting that careful budgeting and time management are important factors in avoiding these negative impacts. In general, online shopping is viewed positively for its variety, convenience, and time-saving advantages. However, businesses could enhance this satisfaction by addressing the concerns of students who face regret, financial strain, or interruptions to their studies as a result of their online purchases.

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