

Research Article



A Preliminary Study To Assess Consumer Conception On Online Vs Offline Purchase Of Medicines

ANSHIKA GARG

Sanskar College Of Pharmacy & Research, Ghaziabad, 201302, Uttar Pradesh

Corresponding Author :

Anshika Garg

anshikacreations03@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

Background: The use of the Internet for buying and selling of medicines has increased over several years. Purchase of medicines from E-pharmacies has also grown exponentially with the increase in the usage of the internet for buying products. Online purchase of medicines comes with several advantages such as time-saving, variety of offers and quick home delivery but there are several disadvantages associated with it. Hence, to study the pros and cons of purchasing medicines online, this study was conducted.

Methods: The main objective of this study is to assess the behaviour of consumers on online and offline purchase of medicines and what are the several factors that motivate them to purchase medicines online or vice-versa. For collecting responses, a questionnaire was prepared and distributed to the study participants through google forms. The questionnaire was divided into two sections including age and gender.

Results: A total of 100 responses were obtained, out of which 50% of respondents opted for offline purchase of medicines from nearby pharmacies. In conclusion, it was observed that the majority of the population prefers the offline mode of purchase when it comes to the purchase of medicines and other healthcare products, though there are various major advancements in technology and variety of internet services and easy availability of e-medicines.

Conclusion: It reflects a more health-conscious and traditional mindset and outlook of the people particularly while deciding about the mode of purchasing medicines-online or offline because people lack trust when it comes to online purchase of medicines.

Keywords: *Conception; E-pharmacy; Health-conscious; Technology*

INTRODUCTION

Online purchase of medicines is the process whereby consumers directly buy goods or services from a seller in real time, without an intermediary service, over the internet. Ex- Netmeds, 1MG, Pharm Easy etc. It has several pros including convenience, variety of products for easy selection and advanced information. With all these advantages, several disadvantages are also encountered such as fraud, privacy concerns and shipping problem and delays. In contrast to online purchase of medicines, offline purchase of medicines is the process whereby consumers purchase product for fulfil their needs and satisfy their wants in stores. Retail involves sales of goods directly to the consumer in small quantities for his use. Ex- Reliance mart, Big bazaar etc. Product physical touch is the biggest advantage in offline purchase of medicines (1-3).

India is one of the largest generic drugs manufacturers in the world and is recognized to be the core exporter of medicines across the world. With the advancement in technology, online mode of purchase has come in demand. To fulfil the domestic as well global demand of medicine supply, the manufacturers need to upgrade their supply chain management (4).

COVID-19 Pandemic has invited to new way of thinking to maintain the physical distancing and to minimizing the movement, which has pushed the people towards digitalized path. Buying of medicines through the digitalized platform is also not exemption for it. Consumer perspective toward E-buying of medicines have changed during COVID-19 pandemic. As lockdown

started people shifted towards online buying of medicines and the demand to purchase medicines through the various e-pharmacies increased exponentially during the lockdown mainly because of ease of access in one click with safety (5,6).

The consumers were benefitted from e-pharmacies during the lockdown by getting the supply of medicines, hand sanitizers, face mask, and the other health care products. It was safe shopping process for consumers in lockdown. consumers could able to order the medicines in any time during the restriction forced in lockdown. Patients who are were sick and unable to go outside to purchase the medicines, E-pharmacies were like lifeline for them in the pandemic situation. Online pharmacies have not only served the public during the pandemic but also supported to no. of old aged person with chronic disorders by delivery the medicines to their doorstep (7-9).

The main objectives of this study are to study the effect of online and offline shopping on consumer buying behaviour, to compare the effectiveness of online and offline shopping on consumer buying behaviour demographically (gender, occupation, age, education) and to identify the e-shopper segment on the basis of online shopping behaviour.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

Study design

A questionnaire was planned and prepared to assess consumer conception on online vs offline purchase of medicines. The questionnaire was divided into two sections including age and gender. A total of 100 responses were obtained. There were 12

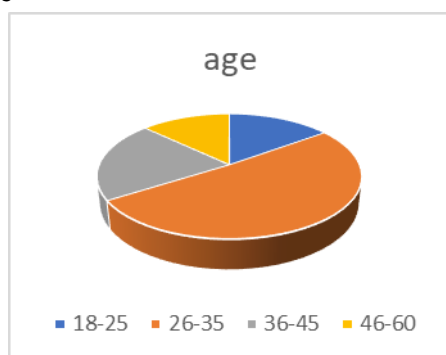
questions in all. The primary part of the research was developed via review of literature in English.

Validation of questionnaire

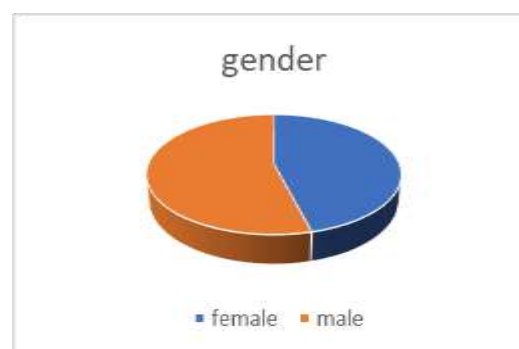
The content of the questionnaire was screened for correctness and appropriateness. Pretesting of the questionnaire was done using 20 participants. The questionnaire was finalized after modification in the incompatible questions found during pretesting.

Primary data source-

Age-



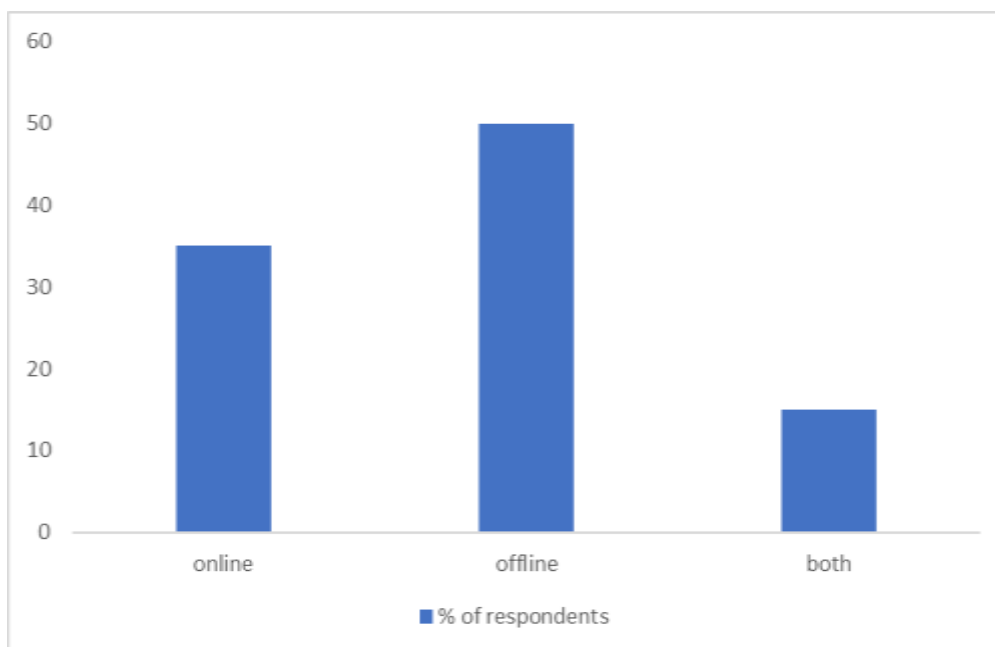
Gender-



RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1- Preferable shopping method

Preferable shopping method	No. of respondents	% of respondents	Rank
Online	35	35	2
Offline	50	50	1
Both	15	15	3



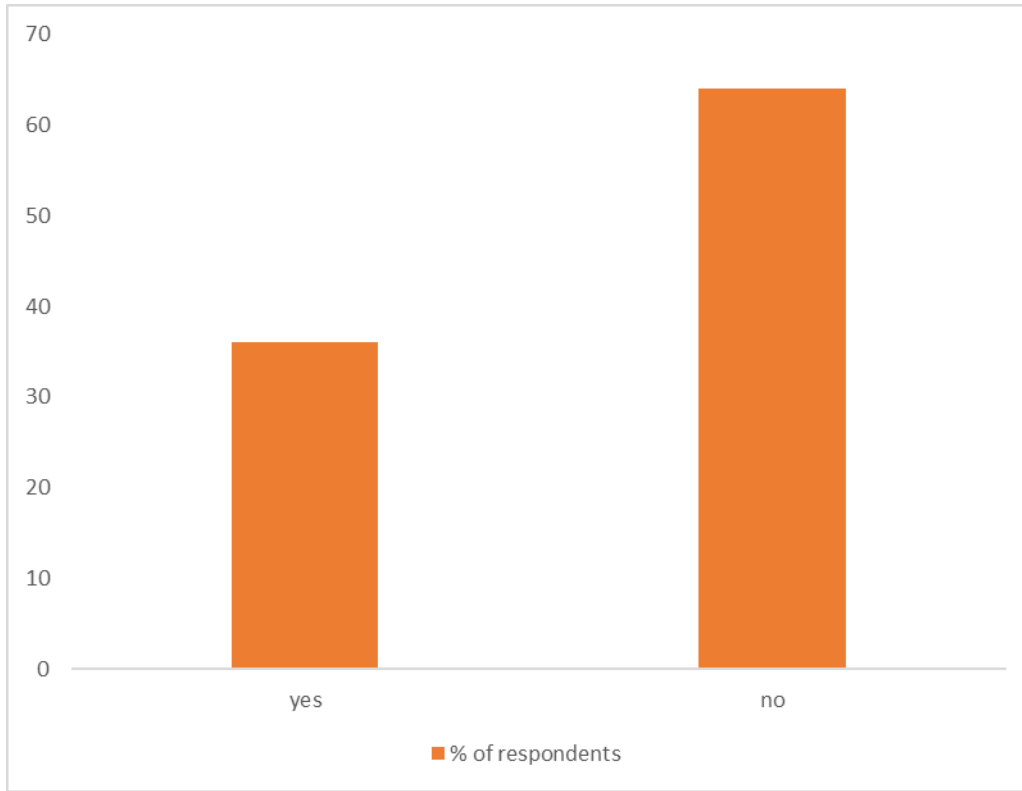
Graph 1 : percentage respondents of preferable shopping method

Interpretation-

From the above graph it can be inferred that 50% of the respondents prefer offline shopping method when compared to online and both method of shopping. 35% of the respondents chose online shopping method and 15% respondents chose both as preferable shopping method. So, it can be concluded that people prefer offline method for shopping.

Table 2- online purchase of medicine

Online purchase of medicine	No. of respondents	% of respondents	Rank
yes	35	35	2
no	65	65	1



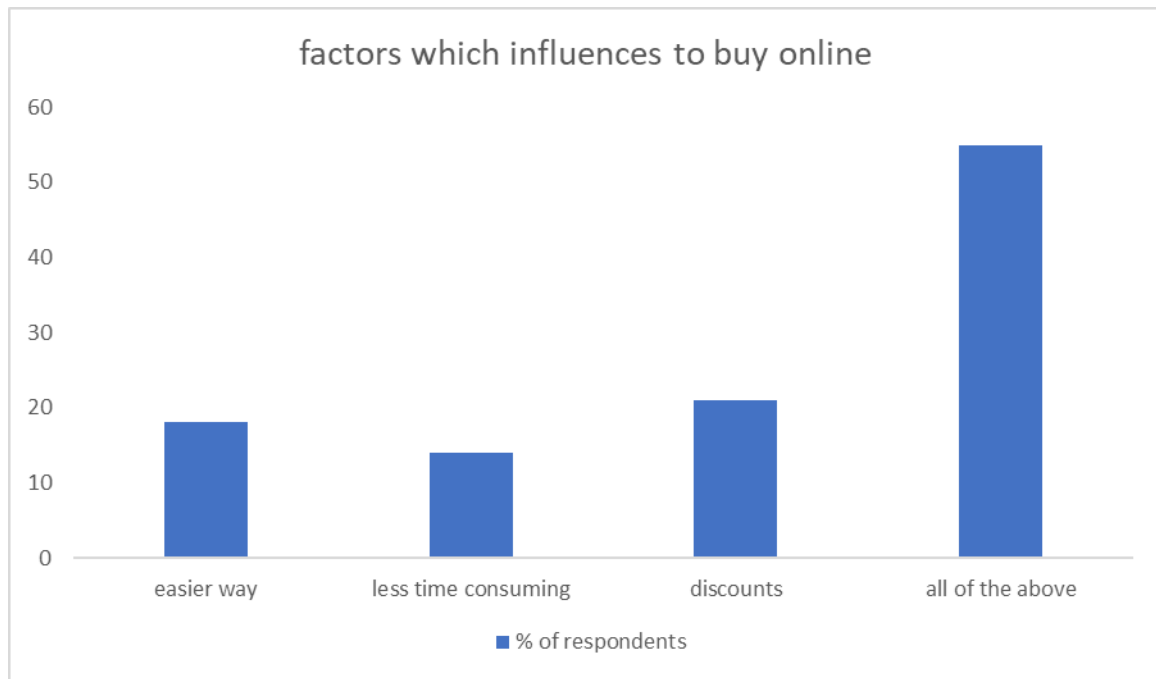
Graph 2: percentage of respondents for online purchase of medicine

Interpretation-

From the above graph it can be inferred that 35% respondents purchase medicine online while 65% respondents do not purchase medicines online. Therefore, it can be concluded from the data that most people do not prefer to purchase medicines online.

Table 3 – factors influencing to buy online

factors influencing to buy online	No. of respondents	% of respondents	Rank
Easier way	18	18	3
Less time consuming	14	14	4
discounts	21	21	2
All of the above	55	55	1



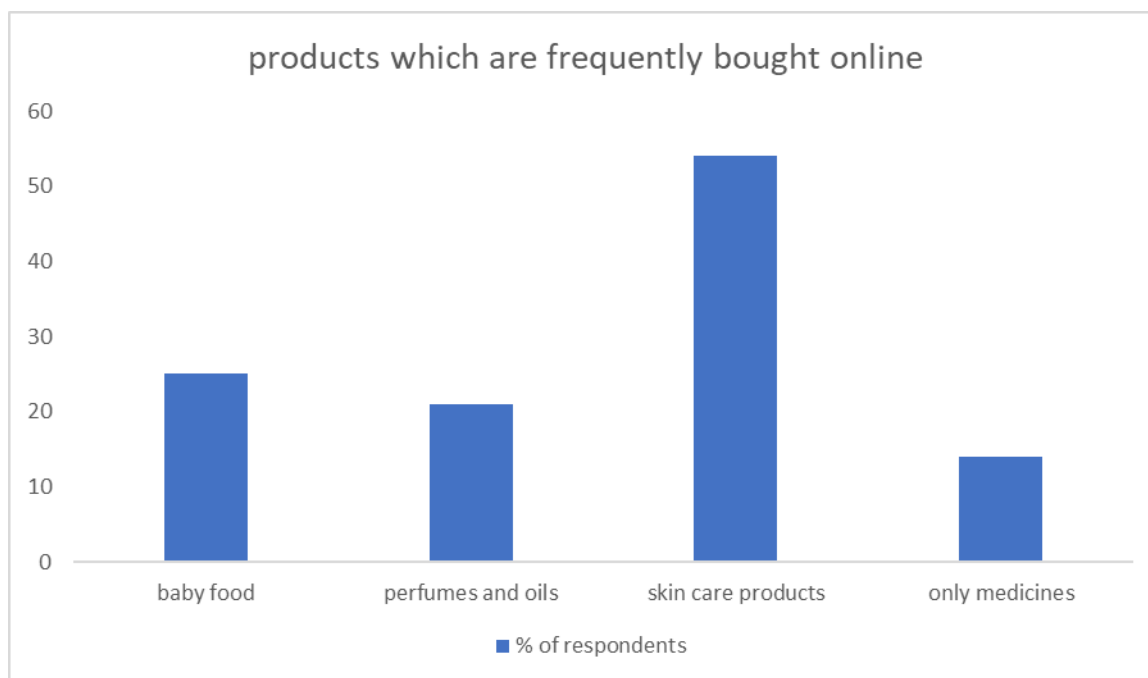
Graph 3- percentage of respondents for factors which influences to buy online

Interpretation-

From the above graph it can be inferred that 18% of respondents found online shopping an easier way which influence them to do online shopping, 14% of respondents found online shopping less time consuming and hence prefers it. 21% respondents do online shopping because of discounts and 55% respondents found all these factors as major reason why they prefer online shopping. Hence, it can be concluded that easier way, discounts and less time-consuming process are the major factors which influences consumers to buy online.

Table 4- products which are frequently bought online

products which are frequently bought online	No. of respondents	% of respondents	Rank
Baby food	25	25	2
Perfumes and oils	21	21	3
Skin care products	54	54	1
Online medicines	14	14	4

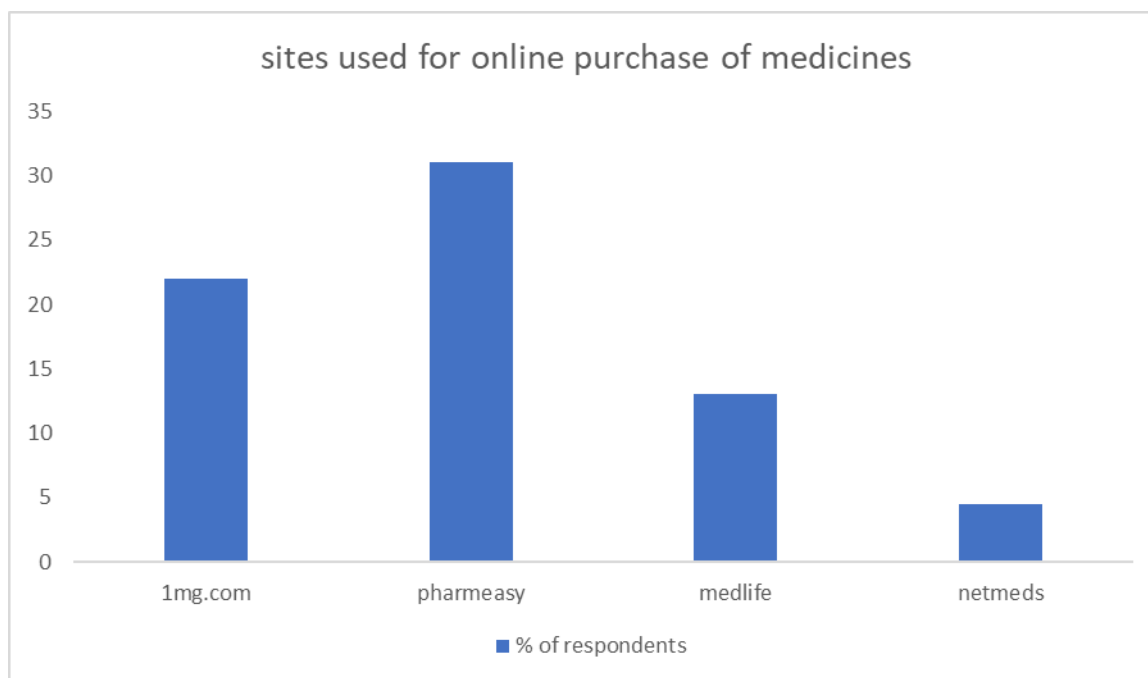


Graph 4: percentage of respondents for products which are frequently purchased online
Interpretation-

From the graph it can be inferred that 25% respondents buy baby food online, 21% respondents buy perfumes and oils, 54% respondents buy skin care products and 14% respondents buy medicines online. Thus, it can be concluded that majority of respondents buy skin care products online.

Table 5- sites used for online purchase of medicine

sites used for online purchase of medicine	No. of respondents	% of respondents	Rank
1 mg.com	22	22	3
pharmeasy	31	31	2
medlife	13	13	4
netmeds	34	34	1



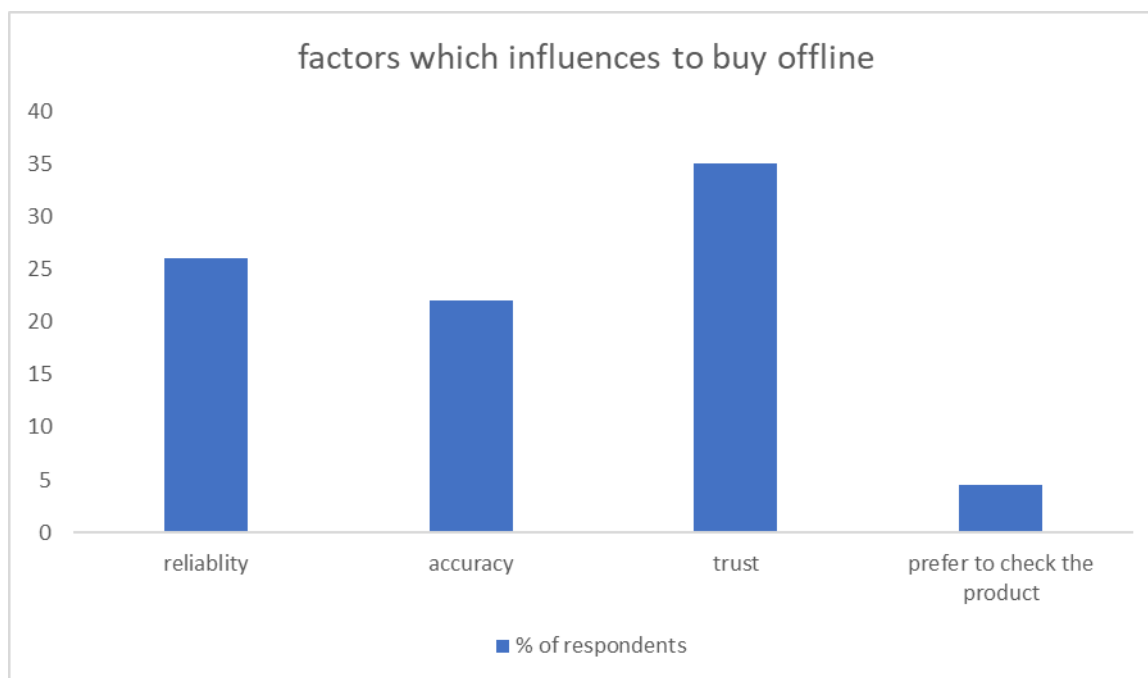
Graph 5- percentage of respondents for sites used for online purchase of medicines

Interpretation-

From the above graph it can be inferred that 22% respondents purchase medicine from 1mg.com, 31% respondents purchase medicines online from pharomeasy, 13% respondents purchase medicines from medlife and remaining 4% respondents purchase medicines from netmeds. Therefore, it can be concluded from the data that most people prefer to purchase medicines online from netmeds.

Table 6- factors which influences to buy offline

factors which influences to buy offline	No. of respondents	% of respondents	Rank
reliabilty	26	26	3
accuracy	22	22	4
trust	35	35	2
Prefer to check the product	63	63	1



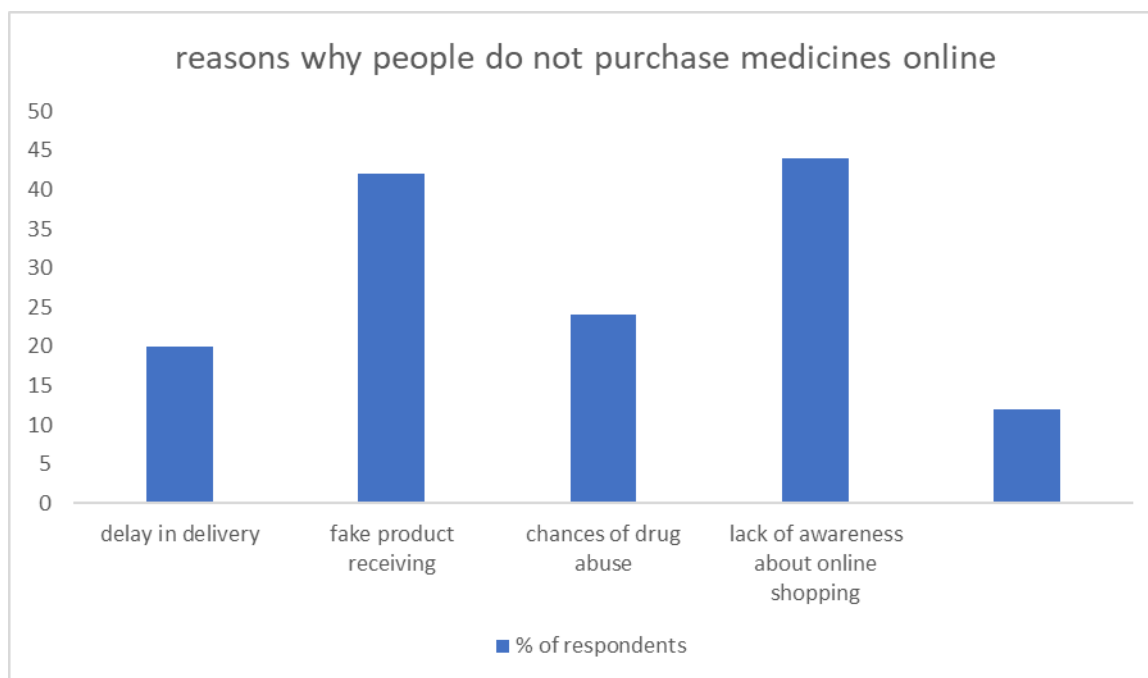
Graph 6: percentage of respondents for factors which influences to buy offline

Interpretation-

From the above graph it can be inferred that 26% respondents found reliability as the major factor which influences them to buy offline, 22% respondents found accuracy as the major factor which influences them to buy offline, 35% respondents found trust as the major factor which influences them to buy offline, 63% respondents found preference to check the product as the major factor which influences them to buy offline. So, it can be concluded that preference to check the product is the major factor which influences to buy offline.

Table 7- reasons why people do not purchase medicines online

Reasons Why People Do Not Purchase Medicines Online	No. Of Respondents	% Of Respondents	Rank
Delay in delivery	20	20	4
Fake product receiving	42	42	2
Chances of drug abuse	24	24	3
Lack of awareness about online shopping	44	44	1
None of the above	12	12	5



Graph 7: percentage of respondents for reasons why people do not purchase medicines online

Interpretation-

From the above graph it can be inferred that 20% respondents do not purchase medicines online because of delay in delivery, 42% respondents do not purchase medicines online because of fake product receiving, 24% respondents do not purchase medicines online because of chances of drug abuse, 44% respondents do not purchase medicines online because of lack of awareness about online shopping, 12% respondents do not purchase medicines online because of none of the above specified reason. Hence, it can be concluded that majority of people do not purchase medicines online because of lack of awareness

Table 8-any problem while conducting online purchase

Any Problem While Conducting Online Purchase	No. Of Respondents	% Of Respondents	Rank
Yes	47	47	1
No	28	28	2
Maybe	25	25	3



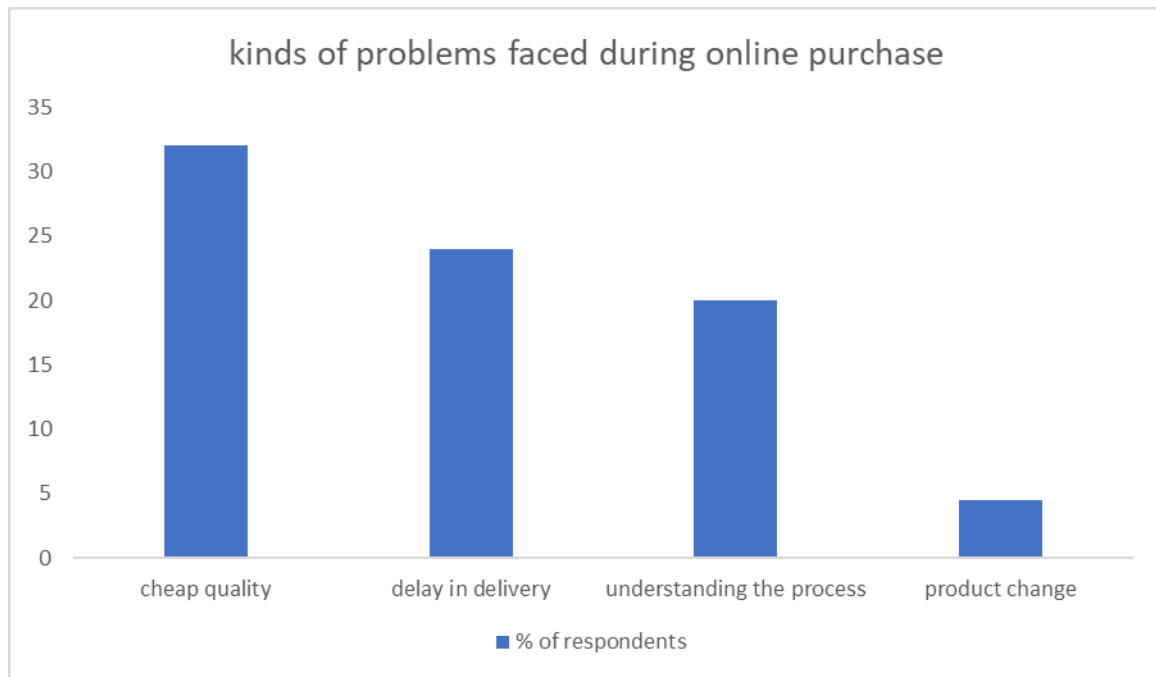
Graph 8 : percentage of respondents for any problem while conducting online purchase

Interpretation-

From the above graph it can be inferred that 47% of the respondents have problem while conducting online purchase, 27% of the respondents do not have problem while conducting online purchase and the remaining 25% of the respondents responded in maybe. Thus, it concluded that majority of respondents faced problem while conducting online purchase.

Table 9- kind of problems faced during online purchase

Kind Of Problems Faced During Online Purchase	No. Of Respondents	% Of Respondents	Rank
Cheap quality	32	32	1
Delay in delivery	24	24	2
Understanding the process	20	20	3
Product change	24	24	2



Graph 9: percentage of respondents for kind of problems faced during online purchase

Interpretation-

From the above graph it can be inferred that 32% of the respondents faced the problem of cheap quality during online purchase, 24% of the respondents found faced the problem of delay in delivery, 20% of the respondents were unable to understand the process of online purchase and the remaining 24% respondents faced the problem of product change during online purchase. Therefore, it can be concluded that cheap quality was the major problem that people faced during online purchase.

Table 10- how many times do you go for online shopping

How Many Times Do You Go For Online Shopping	No. Of Respondents	% Of Respondents	Rank
everyday	32	32	1
regular	28	28	3
seldom	30	30	2
Once a week	10	10	4



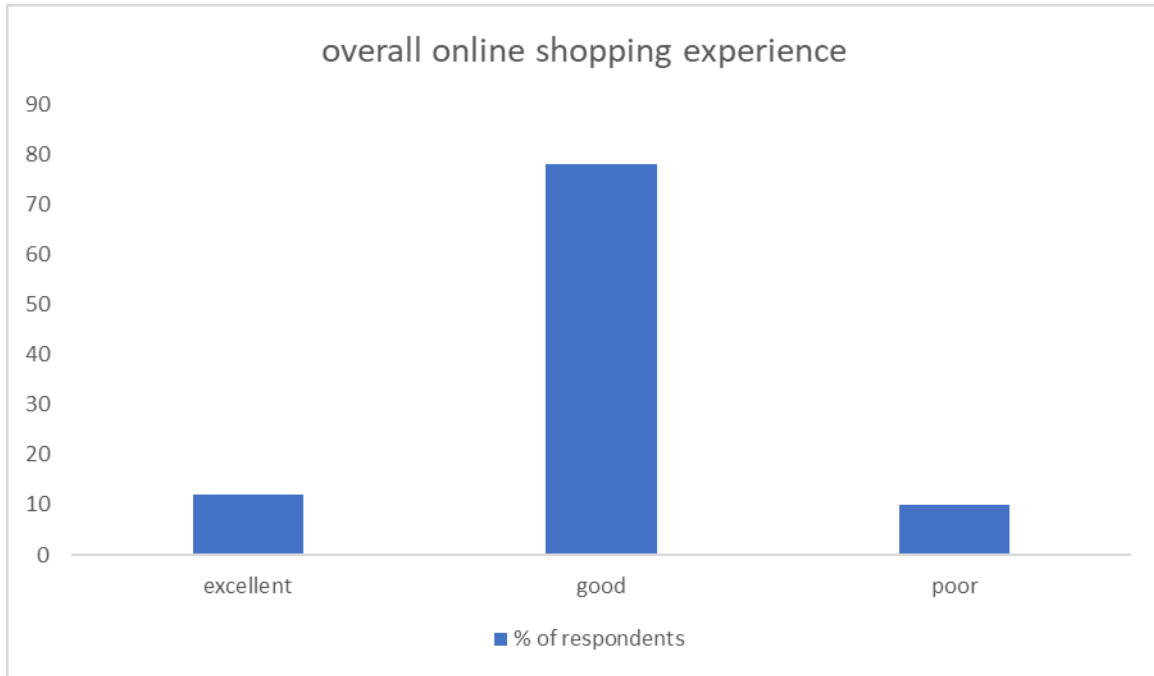
Graph 10 : percentage of respondents for how many times do you go for online shopping

Interpretation-

From the above graph it can be inferred that 32% of the respondents do online purchase everyday, 28% of the respondents do online purchase on a regular basis, 30% of the respondents do online shopping seldom and remaining 10% of the respondents do online shopping once a week. So, it can be concluded that most people do online shopping everyday.

Table 11- overall online shopping experience

Overall Online Shopping Experience	No. Of Respondents	% Of Respondents	Rank
excellent	12	12	2
good	78	78	1
poor	10	10	3



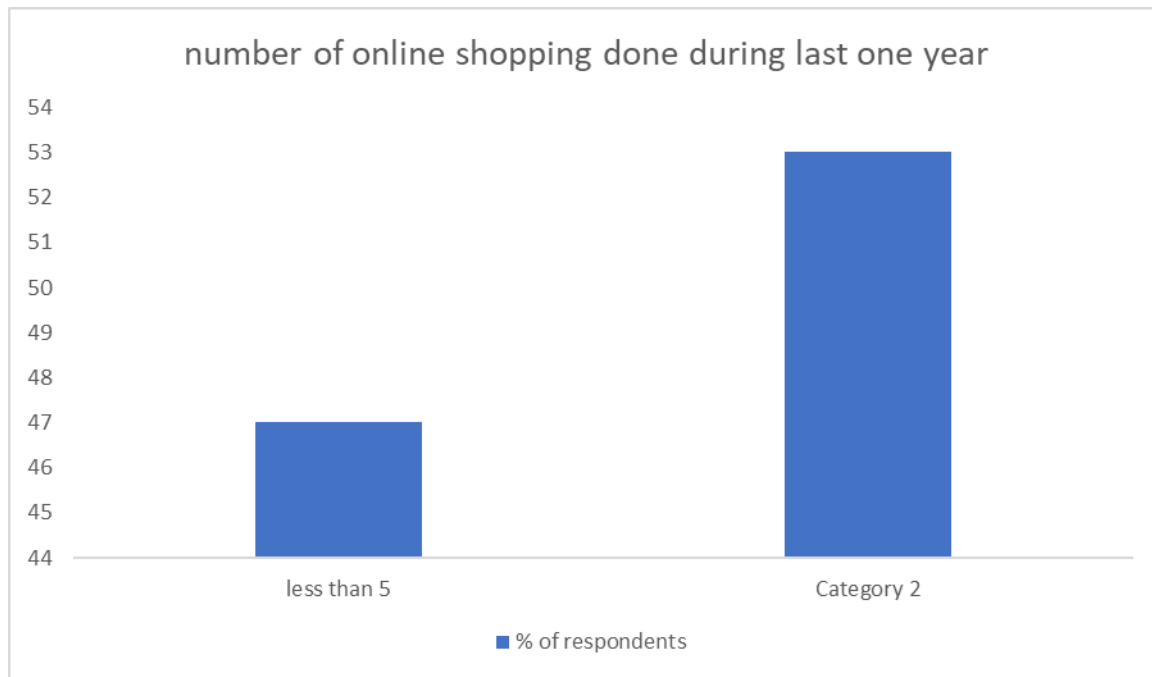
Graph 11 : percentage respondents of overall online shopping experience

Interpretation

From the above graph it can be inferred that 12% of the respondents have excellent shopping experience, 78% of the respondents have good overall online shopping experience and 10% of the respondents have poor overall online shopping experience. So, it can be concluded that most people have overall good online shopping experience.

Table 12- number of online shopping done during last one year

number of online shopping done during last one year	No. of respondents	% of respondents	Rank
Less than 5	47	47	2
More than 5	53	53	1



Graph 12- percentage respondents for number of online shopping done during last one year

Interpretation-

From the above graph it can be inferred that 47% of the respondents have done online shopping less than 5 times during one last year, 53% of the respondents have done online shopping more than 5 times during one last year So, it can be concluded that frequency of online purchase during one last year was more as per the data.

CONCLUSION

This project was conducted with the objective of finding out the consumer conception of online vs offline purchase of medicines. Based on the information obtained from the project there is a sincere effort to draw a meaningful conclusion. On the basis of information collected, it was observed that majority of the population prefers offline mode of purchase when it comes to the purchase of medicines and other healthcare products, though there are various major advancements in technology and variety of internet services and easy availability of e-medicines. It reflects more health conscious and traditional mindset and outlook of the people particularly while

deciding about the mode of purchasing medicines- online or offline because people lack trust when it comes to online purchase of medicines. People prefer offline over online because of various factors like convenience, trust, easy availability, reliability etc. people do not prefer online mode for purchase of medicines because of several reasons like delay in delivery, fake product receiving, lack of trust etc. Also, lack of education for online shopping is a major reason why people don't prefer to purchase medicines online. In some cases where the medicines are not available in retail pharmacies, only then people order them online otherwise they like to take advantage of offline mode only because they

have made their mindset in this way that we will get better product if purchase it from a store. Apart from this, even if low price medicine is available in the online mode, majority of people still prefer to purchase the same medicine from any retail store if it is available there because of trust issues. This reflects people have more careful attitude while buying medicines and don't trust these online pharmacies and therefore rely on traditional retail pharmacies.

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Nil

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

None

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