



# The Review of Online Shopping Trend During and After the Covid-19 Pandemic

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**Abstract.** Covid-19 pandemic has strictly affected the real economy, with the strategy of lockdown. Most people turn to online shopping during the lockdown, which largely developed the digital economy. This essay reviews papers about consumers' online shopping behaviors during and after the pandemic in different countries. Since most people shopped online during the serious duration of the Covid-19 pandemic, they are still using this shopping method even after the lockdown because they were getting used to the convenience of online shopping. People are shopping online for several reasons, the main reasons are fear of being infected, necessities, and the willingness to purchase. Moreover, there are a few factors that can affect people's decisions about online shopping, the main factors are age or generations, lockdown strategies, and the awareness of Covid-19 pandemic. Thus, we can predict that the future trend of shopping method would be online shopping, not only for goods, but also groceries and essentials.

**Keywords:** Covid-19 Pandemic · Online Shopping Behaviors · Impact

## 1 Introduction

Starting in 2019 and has been first discovered in Wuhan, China, the Covid-19 virus spreads across the world, leading to a global pandemic and lasts until today. The global economy, the especially real economy, has been struck hard because people were not allowed to walk out since most countries have implemented the policy of lockdown to avoid the larger spreading of the virus. In other words, people were forced to stay home for months in the most serious time. Under this circumstance, shopping online became almost the only and safest way to get goods and essentials, leading to the rapid development of online shopping. However, as the vaccination has been explored and tested successfully, most people got vaccinated, and the infected and death cases declined a lot. Therefore, most countries opened recently, and people are gradually back to the normal track. The openness of the countries makes online shopping become the choice again instead of an essential way when people decide to purchase goods. However, it is observed that after the pandemic, people do change the method they purchase goods since people are purchasing online more compared to the shopping habits before the pandemic [3].

Most of the research articles focus on the changing shopping behaviors of people when they are getting groceries and essentials or investigate the determinants that affect

shopping behaviors. Also, most of the review articles only focus on online shopping behaviors but do not focus on the circumstances of Covid-19 pandemic. This essay is going to review the paper about online shopping during and after the pandemic in different countries, synthesis and investigate the reasons that people choose to shop online and observe the different factors that can affect the behaviors of online shopping. With the significant changes of shopping method of people, the advantages, disadvantages, and the future effect worth to be discussed.

## 2 Literature Review

Plenty of review articles have reviewed the consumers' online shopping behaviors, but few of them mention the effect of the Covid-19 pandemic. Putra, Widjaja, and Wahyono (2021) discuss online shopping behaviors by age [9]. Putra, Widjaja, and Wahyono (2021) review 22 articles about online shopping behaviors of the Millennial generation, showing that the Millennial generation is different as they are social consumers; they prefer to explore promotions; they do not commit to only a few brands [9]. In other words, the Millennial generation tends to buy goods through the recommendation of social media. Also, they tend to compare different offers online before purchasing. In addition, they value the services and products instead of committing to one brand. Le, Carrel, and Shah (2020) discuss the relationship between online shopping and traveling, since online shopping may reduce the frequency of traveling [5]. Le, Carrel, and Shah (2020) review 42 articles and observe that most research shows that people are using online shopping instead of traveling in recent years; only a few research give different consequences [5]. Le, Carrel, and Shah (2020) argue that the Covid-19 pandemic does increase the use of online shopping, but the long-term effect of the pandemic on online shopping still needs to be explored [5]. Niedermoser et al. (2021) review the articles about shopping addictions under the Covid-19 circumstances since shopping addictions can be combined with various mental diseases [8]. They depict and talk about different factors that can affect the form of shopping addictions in different states under Covid-19 pandemic [8]. However, there are no article reviews on consumers' online shopping behaviors during and after the pandemic. It is worth to be observed because the shopping method people are using now as well as the online shopping behaviors will show predictions of future shopping trends, also show the potential of the effect of Covid-19 pandemic on consumers' online shopping behaviors. This essay is going to review the articles about consumers' online shopping behaviors during the pandemic by first pictures the phenomenon of online shopping today during and after the lockdown. Then, this essay will give out the reasons for online shopping during and after the lockdown by consumers. Moreover, this essay will show the factors that can affect online shopping behaviors. Finally, this essay will discuss the results of online shopping after the lockdown and the predictions of the long-term effect of the Covid-19 pandemic on online shopping.

## 3 The Phenomenon of Online Shopping

### 3.1 During the Lockdown

Most of the articles use survey as the methodology to collect data and compare the statistics of the dataset. Some articles conduct models and use regression analysis, random

utility theory, and probability theory to analyze the data. Also, the articles are using samples from different countries. There are articles based on the dataset collected in Wuhan, China, India, Italy, Korea, and the U.S. Most countries have adopted the strategies of lockdown in the most serious time during the pandemic. While in the lockdown, there is a significantly increasing trend of online shopping for groceries. Wuhan, China is the first place that has been discovered the Covid-19 virus, also the first city that was decided to lock down to avoid the larger spreading of the virus. During the lockdown, people in Wuhan had no choice but to stay at home. They have experienced the longest quarantine period, which was at the beginning of the pandemic, which lasted for about two and a half months. During this period, the retailers, as well as restaurants, were closed, and people must do their routines, like work, study, and all other activities at home [3]. Therefore, people need online shopping for groceries and essentials. Chen, Zhang, Zhu, and Liu (2021) identify that with the increasing trend of online shopping in recent years, access to online shopping is easy and convenient [3]. That is to say, people already have lots of experience with shopping online. However, though the products like beauty and essentials were bought a lot online before the pandemic, the online orders for fresh food were less developed in the perspectives of customers and retailers but became the only way that people get groceries during quarantines. Thus, the demand for online goods, especially the demand for groceries exploded and exceeded the supply, which caused the panic and stockpile [4]. Hao et al. and Chen, Zhang, Zhu, and Liu give firm evidence about the highly increasing trend of online shopping based on the very first lock-down city, Wuhan in China, especially for online groceries [3, 4]. Moreover, some people may prefer going to the nearest local stores to get groceries during the pandemic for convenience and their previous habits. Li, Hallsworth, and Coca-Stefaniak (2020) collected the data before and during the pandemic, showing that the different channels people got groceries before the pandemic can affect the way people got groceries during the pandemic [6]. However, despite the people who can get groceries fast and easily, most of the people turn to online during the pandemic [6].

Not only there is an increasing trend of online groceries during the lockdown, but also other goods are facing the increasing trend of shopping online. Healthcare goods increased a lot by online purchasing. According to Sharma and Jhamb (2020), as plenty of Indian people shifted their behavior of shopping from the traditional shopping methods to online shopping to adapt to the pandemic situation, there is an increasing amount of healthcare products online purchasing relative to fashion products, due to the protective cautions against Covid-19 virus, like sanitizing hands often [10]. It refers that people caring about their health during the pandemic. Moreover, different ages show similar preferences of online shopping during the pandemic, which was different before the pandemic. Awasthi and Mehta (2021) classify people into three different groups of different ages, display a significant change in the perceptions of the older generation toward online shopping [2]. The research shows that even older generation is using online shopping more often during the pandemic [2]. To sum up, people from all generations were using online shopping more like a toolkit in daily life, buying essentials, goods, and groceries during the lockdown.

**Table 1.** Changes in in-store and e-commerce sales during the pandemic, February and September 2020

Industry Subsector	February 2020	September 2020
	<i>E-Commerce</i>	<i>In-store</i>
<b>Retail trade</b>	<b>63%</b>	<b>3%</b>
Furniture and home furnishings stores	98%	3%
Building material and garden equipment and supplies dealers	140%	12%
Food and beverage stores	77%	-1%
Health and personal care stores	19%	6%
Clothing and clothing accessories stores	54%	-17%
Sporting goods, hobby, book and music stores	61%	-9%
General merchandise stores	42%	5%

a. Source: Statistics Canada, Monthly Retail Trade Survey. Adapted from “Online shopping during the COVID-19 pandemic,” by the Minister responsible for Statistics Canada, 2021, *Statistics Canada*, 11–627-M. “During the pandemic, e-commerce became essential to ‘non-essential’ businesses.”

For instance, as we can see in the Table 1 reported by Statistics Canada, there were an increasing amount of people buying not only essentials but also other goods like health-care products, clothes, and furnitures from the retailers online [11].

### 3.2 After the Lockdown

With the long-term quarantines, where people get goods and essentials by using online shopping only to maintain everyday life, people are getting used to it and continuing using it after the lockdown. Chen, Zhang, Zhu, and Liu (2021) use a random sample based on people in Wuhan, China [3]. By comparing the survey data collected, they observe that people are buying more products online after the pandemic [3]. In addition, they discover that with the frequencies of online shopping increasing after the lockdown, the probabilities of buying higher-price products also increase relative to the previous time of the pandemic. Namely, people are buying more kinds of goods online compared to the time before the pandemic. Zamboni et al. (2021) also conclude people use online shopping more and are even obsessed with it [12]. They found out that after the pandemic, though people do not be obsessed with the internet, people do have a loss of control over online shopping [12]. That is to say, during the lockdown, the use of online shopping increased and become the main part of people’s lives. After the lockdown, people are already familiar with this new and convenient method when shopping. Thus, people still using it and even obsessing with online shopping.

## 4 The Reasons for Shopping Online

### 4.1 Fear

With the rapid spreading of the Covid-19 virus and the gradually worse situations during the pandemic last year, people cared about their health and hygiene. To avoid being infected by the Covid-19 diseases to the largest extent, people tend to purchase more health-care products, like masks and disinfection to protect themselves [1]. Sharma and Jhamb (2020) also identify that people from India were buying more healthcare products during the pandemic [10]. Moreover, going outside was an unbrilliant choice as it is much easier to be infected when being exploded outside, even with the masks. Thus, people are purchasing online due to the fear of being infected.

### 4.2 Necessity

During the lock-down period, people have no choice but to order groceries online, which largely developed the online grocery industry. Fresh food is certainly important to daily life and people are purchasing them online during the pandemic [3]. Hao, Wang, and Zhou (2020) mention that some private sectors established platforms to let people purchase their groceries online during the lockdown [4]. It is also a way for the retailers to make livings. Thus, during the lockdown, people depend on online groceries and online shopping to maintain their daily life at home in quarantine.

### 4.3 Convenience

Nevertheless, after lockdown, people are still using online orders for groceries. Chen, Zhang, Zhu, and Liu (2021) indicate that the reason for it is because people found out that by ordering groceries online, they can save their time and also the oil prices since they do not need to drive to get groceries [3]. In other words, online groceries developed during the pandemic changed people's consuming behaviors, and people are getting used to the convenience embedded inside online shopping.

## 5 The Factors that Affect Online Shopping

### 5.1 Age

People of different ages tend to have different preferences toward online shopping. Older people are less possible to shop online compared to young people before the pandemic. According to Awasthi and Mehta (2021), people who were born in older generations, which were people born before 1984, prefer offline shopping due to the technology use and the insecurity of online shopping [2]. However, during the pandemic, people from older generations change their preferences and begin to learn and use online shopping [2]. However, even older people, stick to offline shopping. Moon Choe, and Song (2021) show that people from their 20s to 30s tend to use offline shopping, even during the Covid-19 pandemic [7].

## 5.2 Knowledge Toward the Pandemic

People tend to use online shopping if they have enough knowledge about the Covid-19 pandemic. In other words, those people equipped with the knowledge of the Covid-19 pandemic understand the huge negative effect of the spreading of the Covid-19 virus, so they will choose not to be exposed outside to avoid being infected. However, the people who have less knowledge about the Covid-19 pandemic, believing that they can deal with the situations of the Covid-19 pandemic will choose to shop offline [7].

## 5.3 Lock-Down Strategy

With the lock-down strategy, people have no choice but to shop online to maintain their routines and daily life. For example, based on the research of Chen, Zhang, Zhu, and Liu (2021), people in Wuhan during the two-month quarantines must use online groceries or they are unable to live at home [3]. The lock-down strategy certainly will increase the demand for online groceries and essentials.

## 6 Discussion

First, people are getting used to online shopping. According to Chen, Zhang, Zhu, and Liu (2021), more people are shopping online for groceries after the lockdown, which shows the trend that after the pandemic, people will do more shopping online [3]. Second, some people lost control of online shopping, based on the arguments of Zamboni et al. People feel obsessed with online shopping after the lockdown [11]. Moreover, the industries of online shopping and online groceries are rapidly developing. For instance, some private sectors built a platform for people to order groceries during lockdown [4]. The behaviors of those private sectors show that in the future, more retailers will participate in online stores with the increased demand for online shopping and online groceries. Therefore, according to the researchers above, we believe that in the future, online shopping will become the main channel people get groceries and essentials, fewer people will choose to buy goods offline, especially for the new generations.

## 7 Limitation

This essay only looks at the articles do research about purchasing essentials and groceries during and after the lockdown in the Covid-19 pandemic, shows the factors and reasons that can affect the behaviours of people in general. However, the essay does not look at other goods and products like fashion products during the pandemic. Also, this essay only sees some of the states with the strategy of lockdown. The effect of Covid-19 pandemic on online shopping in the states without the strategy of lockdown or the places with not those serious circumstances worth to be observed. The future study may focus more on other goods people shop online to see whether people are shopping more of other goods online with different situations in different states.

## 8 Conclusion

This essay reviews the articles about online shopping during and after the Covid-19 pandemic, showing that people use online shopping more during the Covid-19 pandemic, and after the lockdown because they were getting used to this kind of shopping method, which is convenient and easy. Also, people are shopping online for several reasons. They fear being infected when being exploding outside, they need to purchase goods and groceries during the lockdown, and some would be they are willing to purchase goods online. Moreover, there are a few factors that can affect people's decisions about online shopping. Older generations tend to use less online shopping before the pandemic but change during the pandemic. The knowledge toward the pandemic matter because people who do not believe in the negative effect of being infected are more likely to go outside. Finally, the lockdown strategy tends to change people's behavior of online shopping since, during the lockdown, people have no other choice but to shop everything online. The review of the research articles on online shopping and Covid-19 pandemic shows the trend of online shopping and shopping behaviors of consumers, also shows the potential long-term effect of Covid-19 pandemic on consuming.

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