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A study of grievance handling mechanism in online shopping with special reference to Haryana

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Abstract

The growth of online shopping in India has brought about a shift in consumer behavior, with more people turning to e-commerce platforms for their shopping needs. However, the rise in online transactions has also led to an increase in consumer grievances. This study focuses on understanding the grievance handling mechanisms in online shopping, with special reference to Haryana. The research aims to explore the types of grievances faced by consumers, assess the effectiveness of grievance redressal systems, and evaluate the level of consumer satisfaction with the grievance resolution process.

This study examines the grievance handling mechanisms in online shopping, focusing on Haryana. It identifies common consumer complaints, such as product-related issues (40%), delayed refunds (25%), and delivery problems (20%). Despite existing grievance redressal systems, 60% of consumers are dissatisfied with resolution efforts. Data was collected through surveys (300 respondents) and interviews with e-commerce representatives and consumer rights activists. Amazon was found to have the most effective grievance handling. The study recommends faster refund processes, stronger product quality control, enhanced customer support, and consumer awareness programs. It also calls for stricter enforcement of consumer protection laws to improve the e-commerce experience.

Keywords: Grievance handling, online shopping, consumer complaints, Haryana, e-commerce, consumer satisfaction, Amazon, refund process, quality control, consumer protection

Introduction

Background of the Study

The rapid growth of e-commerce in India has transformed the way consumers shop. The convenience of online shopping, competitive pricing, and diverse product availability have led to a significant increase in the number of online shoppers. However, this rise in online transactions has also resulted in an increase in consumer grievances. Issues such as defective or incorrect products, delayed deliveries, payment failures, refund delays, and poor customer service have become common concerns.

In Haryana, where digital adoption is increasing rapidly, consumers are actively engaging in online shopping. However, despite the availability of grievance redressal mechanisms, many shoppers experience dissatisfaction with the resolution process. The lack of transparency, delays, and inadequate responses from customer support teams make it challenging for consumers to get their grievances addressed effectively.

Research Problem

Consumer grievances in online shopping have been on the rise in Haryana, and there is limited research on the effectiveness of grievance-handling mechanisms. The study aims to investigate:

- The common grievances faced by consumers.
- The efficiency of existing redressal mechanisms.
- The level of consumer satisfaction with the grievance-handling process.
- Possible improvements to enhance the grievance redressal system.

Objectives of the Study

1. To identify the common grievances faced by online shoppers in Haryana.
2. To analyze the effectiveness of grievance-handling mechanisms used by major e-commerce platforms.

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3. To assess consumer satisfaction levels regarding grievance resolution.
4. To suggest measures to improve grievance-handling mechanisms in online shopping.

Review of Literature

Consumer Grievances in Online Shopping

Several studies have examined the types of grievances consumers face when shopping online. The table below summarizes key findings from past research.

Author (s)	Findings
Kumar & Gupta (2020) ^[1]	30% of consumers reported issues with refunds and return policies.
Sharma & Verma (2019) ^[2]	40% of complaints remained unresolved due to poor customer support.
Consumer Affairs Report (2021) ^[12]	Amazon and Flipkart had better mechanisms, but 50% of consumers were dissatisfied with resolution timelines.
Chopra (2022) ^[3]	Many consumers lacked awareness about consumer protection laws, leading to ineffective grievance resolution.
Sood & Mehta (2021) ^[4]	60% of online shoppers in India face delayed refunds, contributing to lower consumer trust.
Jha & Pandey (2020) ^[5]	Efficient grievance handling significantly boosts customer retention and brand loyalty.
Nair & Kumar (2018) ^[6]	Timely resolution of complaints leads to 80% customer satisfaction, emphasizing the importance of speed.
Verma & Saini (2022) ^[7]	55% of consumers do not know how to file complaints, pointing to the need for better consumer education.
Bhatia & Mehra (2019) ^[8]	Amazon outperforms other platforms in grievance resolution times and customers satisfaction.
Tripathi & Yadav (2020) ^[9]	Consumers in smaller cities like Haryana face more delays due to less efficient local grievance systems.
Sharma & Kaur (2021) ^[10]	Self-service tools like FAQs and chatbots improve grievance resolution by 25% but personal support remains vital.
Bansal & Sood (2021) ^[11]	50% of consumers express dissatisfaction with the lack of transparency in grievance handling processes.

Gaps in Literature

- Most studies focus on consumer complaints at a national level, while region-specific issues remain underexplored.
- Limited research exists on the effectiveness of grievance redressal mechanisms specific to Haryana.
- There is a lack of comparative analysis of different e-commerce platforms in handling grievances.

Research Methodology

Research Design: This study follows a descriptive research design, which helps in analyzing grievance-handling mechanisms and their effectiveness based on consumer experiences.

Data Collection

Types of Data	Sources
Primary Data	Survey of 300 online shoppers in Haryana, interviews with consumer rights activists, discussions with e-commerce representatives.
Secondary Data	Reports from the Department of Consumer Affairs, Consumer Protection Laws, Case Studies from consumer forums, company policies from Amazon, Flipkart and other platforms.

Sampling Technique

Sampling Method	Random Sampling
Sample Size	300 Respondents
Location Covered	Gurgaon, Faridabad, Panipat, Hisar and other major cities in Haryana

Data Analysis Tools

- Descriptive statistics to analyze grievance trends.
- Chi-square tests to study the relationship between grievance type and resolution time.
- Regression analysis to assess the impact of grievance resolution on consumer satisfaction.

Analysis and Interpretation

To Identify the Common Grievances Faced by Online Shoppers in Haryana

The survey results revealed several types of complaints among online shoppers in Haryana. The table below outlines the most common grievances faced by consumers.

Type of Grievance	Number of Complaints	Percentage (%)
Product-related issues (damaged, incorrect, low quality)	120	40%
Payment issues (failed transactions, delayed refunds)	75	25%
Delivery Problems (late or lost shipments)	60	20%
Customer Service Inefficiency (lack of response, unresolved complaints)	45	15%
Total	300	100%

Interpretation

- 40% of complaints relate to product issues, indicating a need for better quality control and seller verification.
- 25% of complaints are linked to payment issues, especially refund delays. This highlights the importance

of improving payment processing systems and ensuring quicker resolution for consumers.

- 20% of grievances are associated with delivery problems, which could be due to logistical inefficiencies.

- 15% of consumers complain about customer service inefficiency, signaling that many platforms need to enhance their support systems.

The data suggests that product-related grievances are the most prevalent, and improving the product quality assurance process could significantly reduce consumer dissatisfaction.

To Analyze the Effectiveness of Grievance Handling Mechanisms

The survey also sought to assess how well grievance handling mechanisms are functioning across various e-commerce platforms. The satisfaction levels of consumers with the grievance redressal process were measured and are presented in the table below.

Satisfaction Level	Number of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Highly Satisfied	15	5%
Moderately Satisfied	105	35%
Dissatisfied	180	60%
Total	300	100%

Interpretation

- 5% of respondents are highly satisfied with the grievance handling process, which is a very low percentage.
- 35% are moderately satisfied, suggesting that while some consumers are content with resolution efforts, there is significant room for improvement.
- 60% of respondents are dissatisfied, pointing to deficiencies in the effectiveness of current grievance redressal mechanisms. This highlights that platforms are not effectively addressing consumer complaints, leading to lower customer retention and satisfaction.

The findings indicate a significant gap in consumer expectations versus the actual grievance resolution, with a need for platforms to expedite and improve their handling systems.

To Assess Consumer Satisfaction with the Grievance Resolution Process: The next step in the analysis is to

Area for Improvement	Suggested Solution
Refund Process	Automate refunds and set strict timelines for processing.
Product Quality	Implement better quality checks and seller verification processes.
Customer Support	Improve response times and increase customer support staff availability.
Consumer Awareness	Launch educational campaigns about consumer rights and complaint filing procedures.
Regulatory Oversight	Enforce stricter laws and regulations to ensure grievance handling transparency and efficiency.

Interpretation

Automating refunds could significantly reduce delays and improve customer satisfaction by ensuring that transactions are handled quickly and efficiently.

Better product quality checks would help prevent a significant number of product-related complaints, improving customer trust in online shopping.

Improved customer support by increasing staff or using AI-driven solutions such as chatbots can reduce the burden on support teams while providing faster resolutions.

Consumer awareness programs would empower consumers to file complaints effectively, reducing confusion and frustration.

Stricter regulatory oversight would ensure that all e-commerce platforms are compliant with laws and regulations governing grievance redressal, leading to greater transparency.

assess how consumer satisfaction correlates with the effectiveness of grievance handling. Satisfaction levels were compared across various e-commerce platforms to identify patterns in grievance resolution efficiency.

E-Commerce Platform	Average Resolution Time	Customer Satisfaction (%)
Amazon	5-7 days	75%
Flipkart	7-10 days	65%
Myntra	10-12 days	55%
Others (Snapdeal, Meesho etc.)	12-15 days	45%

Interpretation

- Amazon has the highest satisfaction rate (75%) due to faster resolution times (5-7 days). This suggests that consumers value quick responses and expect e-commerce platforms to resolve issues promptly.
- Flipkart, with a resolution time of 7-10 days, has a satisfaction rate of 65%, indicating that slightly longer resolution periods still result in relatively high satisfaction.
- Myntra and other platforms, which take longer (10-12 days and 12-15 days respectively), have lower satisfaction rates (55% and 45%). This suggests that delayed responses contribute to higher dissatisfaction, emphasizing the need for quicker complaint resolution systems.

The analysis shows a strong correlation between resolution time and customer satisfaction. Platforms with faster grievance handling see higher satisfaction levels, highlighting the importance of timely responses in customer service.

To Suggest Measures to Improve the Grievance-Handling Mechanism

Based on the analysis of consumer complaints and satisfaction levels, several key suggestions were made to improve grievance-handling systems. The suggestions are shown in the table below.

Key Findings and Suggestions

Based on the analysis and interpretation of data collected, several key findings have emerged regarding the grievance-handling mechanisms in online shopping with special reference to Haryana. This section summarizes these findings and provides practical suggestions for improving the grievance redressal system.

Key Findings

Common Consumer Grievances in Online Shopping

- Product-related issues (40%) are the most frequent grievances, including receiving defective, incorrect, or low-quality products.
- Payment-related issues (25%), such as failed transactions, delayed refunds, and double payments, are a major concern for consumers.
- Delivery issues (20%) include delayed shipments, lost

packages, and incorrect delivery.

- Customer service inefficiency (15%)-Many consumers complain about poor responses, delayed solutions, and ineffective complaint redressal by e-commerce platforms.

Effectiveness of Grievance Handling Mechanisms

- 60% of consumers are dissatisfied with the grievance resolution process, indicating inefficiencies in addressing customer complaints.
- Amazon has the most effective grievance-handling system, with a resolution time of 5-7 days and a 75% satisfaction rate.
- Flipkart resolves complaints in 7-10 days, with a 65% satisfaction rate.
- Myntra and other platforms take longer (10-15 days), leading to lower customer satisfaction (45%-55%).
- Delayed refund processes are a significant issue, causing frustration among consumers.

Consumer Satisfaction with Grievance Redressal

- Only 5% of consumers are highly satisfied with the grievance resolution process, while 35% are moderately satisfied, and 60% are dissatisfied.
- Faster resolution times correlate with higher consumer satisfaction.
- Lack of awareness about complaint filing procedures prevents many consumers from resolving their issues effectively.

Gaps in Consumer Awareness and Regulatory Framework

- 55% of consumers do not know how to file complaints or escalate unresolved issues.
- Regulatory oversight is weak, and many e-commerce platforms do not follow strict guidelines for grievance redressal.
- There is no uniform complaint resolution system across platforms, leading to inconsistent consumer experiences.

Suggestions for Improving Grievance Handling Mechanisms

Enhancing the Refund Process

- Automate refunds to minimize delays; ensuring refunds are processed within 3-5 working days.
- Implement a compensation policy for delays beyond the promised refund period.
- Introduce a real-time tracking system for refund status updates.

Strengthening Product Quality Control

- E-commerce platforms should implement strict quality checks before listing products.
- Sellers with repeated complaints should be penalized or removed from platforms.
- Introduce a mandatory return and replacement policy for all sellers.

Improving Customer Support Systems

- Increase the availability of live customer support agents to handle complex complaints.
- Implement AI-powered chatbots to resolve minor issues

instantly.

- Provide multi-language support, especially in Hindi, for better communication with regional customers.
- Introduce a "Priority Complaint" option for urgent issues, ensuring faster resolutions.

Raising Consumer Awareness

- Conduct consumer education campaigns through social media, workshops, and advertisements about consumer rights and grievance redressal procedures.
- E-commerce platforms should provide a step-by-step guide on filing complaints and escalating unresolved cases.
- Introduce an online grievance portal where consumers can compare resolution efficiency across different platforms.

Strengthening Regulatory Oversight and Policies

- The government should enforce stricter e-commerce consumer protection laws, making it mandatory for platforms to resolve complaints within 7 working days.
- Introduce penalties for platforms that fail to resolve complaints within the specified time.
- Establish a centralized grievance monitoring authority to oversee consumer complaints in online shopping.
- Implement a uniform complaint redressal framework across all e-commerce platforms to ensure standardization in grievance handling.

Conclusion

The rapid expansion of e-commerce has transformed consumer shopping behavior, offering convenience and a wide range of products. However, it has also introduced challenges, particularly in grievance handling. This study highlights that product-related complaints, payment failures, refund delays, and inefficient customer support are the most common grievances among online shoppers in Haryana. Despite the availability of grievance redressal mechanisms, the majority of consumers remain dissatisfied with the resolution process, mainly due to slow response times, lack of transparency, and inadequate customer service.

The analysis indicates that Amazon performs the best in grievance resolution, with a shorter resolution time and higher customer satisfaction, followed by Flipkart. Other platforms, including Myntra and smaller e-commerce websites, struggle with longer resolution times and lower customer satisfaction. The correlation between faster response times and higher satisfaction suggests that consumers value efficiency and transparency in grievance handling.

Another significant issue is the lack of consumer awareness about complaint-filing procedures. More than 50% of consumers do not know how to escalate unresolved grievances, leading to frustration and loss of trust in online shopping platforms. Additionally, there is no uniform grievance redressal system across different e-commerce companies, causing inconsistencies in complaint resolution. The findings underscore the urgent need for improvement in grievance-handling mechanisms. Automating refunds, strengthening product quality control, enhancing customer service, raising consumer awareness, and enforcing stricter regulations are essential steps toward a more transparent and consumer-friendly online shopping experience.

For sustainable growth in e-commerce, companies must prioritize customer satisfaction by ensuring timely grievance

resolution. Additionally, government agencies should enforce stricter e-commerce policies to ensure consumer rights are protected. By implementing these measures, online shopping platforms can build greater trust and reliability among consumers, leading to increased engagement and long-term success in the digital marketplace.

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