

Perception of associated risk deters many users of online pharmacies

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An empirical study of online pharmacy use in India published in the *International Journal of Business Innovation and Research* reveals that the perception of associated risk deters many users of such services. As such, there is a pressing need for online pharmacies to understand this

issue and to develop strategies to improve the outlook for their business by building customer trust.

Brinda Sampat of NMIMS—Global Access School for Continuing Education (NGA-SCE) at NMIMS University in Mumbai and Kali Charan Sabat of GD Goenka University in Gurugram, India, discuss the recent growth in [online pharmacies](#) and the website and mobile phone applications they utilize to market and sell medicinal and health care products to the public. It is, they suggest, quite common now for such retailers not to have a traditional physical presence but to exist wholly in the digital realm in terms of outlets.

There are many benefits to using an online [pharmacy](#) such as rapid home delivery for those who are housebound or those who live a considerable distance from a conventional bricks-and-mortar store. There are numerous online pharmacies in India, including Netmeds, PharmEasy, AppolloPharmacy, Healthsaverz, Buydrug, 1mg, Medplusmart, Merapharmacy, and CareOnGo, all of them offering a service to what is after all one of the biggest potential markets for the products they offer.

The team points out that the rise of e-commerce and, in this context, online pharmacies is driven by the rapid and recent development in India, the growing middle class, and rising income and concomitant standard of living for a proportion of the population. The market value in 2019 was equivalent to almost ten billion dollars. Forecasts suggest that this figure will double for 2023.

Of course, two-thirds of the population of India lives in rural areas. This could be a double-edged sword in the sense that those living remotely from the facilities offered by city life could best benefit from e-commerce, but the converse is that their very remoteness leaves many of those people disconnected from the requisite infrastructure including high-speed internet access and a network of couriers to fulfill orders.

In a developing nation, of course, improvements in such infrastructure are high on the agenda. However, technical improvements need to be accompanied by education so that those who might benefit learn about what is on offer and how to make use of it.

Other obstacles that are perhaps not present in the U.S. or northern Europe are the burden of somewhat opaque and complex rules and regulations that slow the emergence of online pharmacies that would in the U.S. and Europe be entirely legitimate but are restricted to some degree by red tape in India.

That is not to say that the U.S. and Europe have a lackadaisical stance on health and safety, security and privacy. Quite the opposite, but the more transparent and streamlined regulations in those regions have allowed online pharmacies to thrive.

More information: Brinda Sampat et al, Adoption of Online Pharmacies in India: An Empirical Study, *International Journal of Business Innovation and Research* (2021). [DOI: 10.1504/IJBIR.2020.10037079](https://doi.org/10.1504/IJBIR.2020.10037079)

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