Study on Consumer Behaviour towards Offline and Online Shopping in Chennai

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Abstract
Consumer buying behaviour in the context of offline and online shopping has become a focal point of interest for businesses, marketers, and researchers alike. This study aims to investigate and compare consumer preferences, motivations, and behaviours towards offline and online shopping channels. Quantitative data collected through structured surveys distributed to a diverse sample of consumers to quantify the relationships between various factors and consumer behaviour. The findings indicated there is a significant difference between shopping frequency and shopping method preference. However, no significant difference in consumer buying behaviour across income groups and shopping method preference, across professions with respect to offline price comparison, across genders with respect to online shopping choice and between shopping frequency and offline shopping satisfaction.
 Keywords: Consumer Behaviour, Offline Shopping, Online Shopping, Shopping Preferences, Satisfaction Level

Introduction
In recent years, the retail sector has experienced profound changes driven by rapid technological progress and the widespread availability of the internet. The rise of online shopping platforms has provided consumers with unprecedented convenience and an extensive range of choices. At the same time, offline shopping, distinguished by its tangible product experience and opportunities for personal interaction continues to remain relevant and appealing to a broad base of consumers.

The coexistence of offline and online retail formats has raised important questions about consumer preferences, behavioural patterns, and the underlying factors that shape purchasing decisions. A clear understanding of these dynamics is crucial for businesses seeking to design effective marketing strategies and optimise their operations in an increasingly competitive

marketplace. This research seeks to examine consumer buying behaviour with a particular focus on the contrasts between offline and online shopping. By analysing consumer motivations, preferences, and levels of satisfaction, the study aims to provide insights into the factors influencing the choice of one shopping mode over the other.

Specifically, this study will explore the following dimensions:

1. Shopping frequency and patterns: analysing how frequently consumers engage in offline and online shopping, and identifying the factors that explain differences in shopping frequency.
2. Shopping method preference: examining the determinants of consumers' preference for offline versus online channels, and how these vary across demographic groups.
3. Product categories and purchase decisions: investigating the types of products more commonly purchased online or offline, and the decision-making processes associated with these choices.
4. Determinants of buying behaviour: identifying and evaluating the key factors that influence purchasing behaviour, including price sensitivity, convenience, product variety, and trust in retailers.
5. Satisfaction and future intentions: assessing consumer satisfaction with both shopping modes, and exploring their likelihood of maintaining, shifting, or combining these shopping practices in the future.

By addressing these aspects, this study aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of consumer behaviour in a retail environment increasingly shaped by the interplay between online and offline shopping.

Literature Review

The retail landscape has been significantly transformed by the coexistence of offline and online shopping, generating interest among scholars in examining consumer preferences, motivations, and behaviours. Research highlights that while online shopping offers convenience and variety, offline channels remain attractive due to the sensory and personal experiences they provide (Thakur, 2021; Dixit, Choudhary & Govil, 2022; Baharin, Abd Aziz & Mahmud, 2024; Bakly et al., 2024).

Shopping Frequency and Patterns

Consumer engagement with offline and online shopping often varies by product type and personal lifestyle. Duān et al.,(2022) investigates why and when consumers switch from online to offline an this research was carried out based on Gupta et al., (2004) who demonstrated that 52% of consumers switched from offline to online purchasing across product categories such as books and flight tickets, attributing this to reduced search costs and improved efficiency. In contrast, Schoenherr and Mabert (2011) found that in B2B procurement, offline channels are preferred for highly important purchases, while online methods, particularly auctions, are utilised when supplier participation increases. This further supported by latest studies SAPIO Research (2024) and Hokodo that 73 % of B2B buyers prefer to purchase online and Greenwood Consulting (2025) which also indicated 73 % prefered web-stores or online marketplaces are preferred as sales channels in 2025. These studies underscore that frequency and channel choice are closely linked to purchase importance and context.

Shopping Method Preferences

Consumer preference for offline or online shopping is influenced by multiple factors, including convenience, trust, and demographics. Rastogi (2010, 2011) revealed that Indian consumers increasingly adopt online shopping due to time-saving benefits, though demographic variations persist. This is further supported by Dahiya (2012), in a study of five Indian cities, confirmed that factors such as age, gender, family size, and income significantly affect shopping preferences. Recent study by Selvakumar et al., (2025) demonstrating that demographic profiles significantly affect customer engagement and purchasing behaviour in e-commerce arena especially for mobile applications. Faldu (2013) further noted that although many Tamil Nadu consumers were aware of online platforms, they continued to rely heavily on offline shopping, illustrating the role of cultural and regional influences in shaping preferences. Moreover, Saini, Elangovan, & Sharma (2025) highlighted factors such as social class, family influence consumers shopping experience. While there is increasing awareness of online shopping, many consumers still stick to more traditional modes.

Product Categories and Purchase Decisions

Certain product categories are more likely to be purchased online than others. Gupta et al. (2004) and Faldu (2013) identified books, travel tickets, and electronics as the most common online purchases, while Rastogi (2011) expanded this to include apparel, jewelry, and health products. Today, apparel and fashion accessories (71 percent), consumer electronic items (53 percent, Beauty & personal care products (44 percent) are most commonly bought online by Indian consumers (India Brand Equity Foundation (IBEF), 2025). Mathan, Verma, & Kumar (2025) emphasised that India's economic reforms and growing e-commerce infrastructure have broadened product categories accessible online, though infrastructural challenges continue to restrict full adoption. These findings indicate that product characteristics, such as tangibility and risk, strongly affect whether consumers purchase online or offline.

i. **Factors Influencing Buying Behaviour**

Trust, security, and pricing are consistently highlighted as key determinants of consumer decisions in the digital marketplace. Constantinides (2004) argued that the quality of the web experience, including usability and interactivity, significantly shapes consumer perceptions and conversion rates. While, Lodorfos, Trosterud, and Whitworth (2006) found that past positive experiences build consumer trust and increase repurchase intentions. Handoyo, (2024) identified security and commercial credibility as primary drivers of online behaviour. The author also mentioned perceived risk and perceived security are significant influences on e-commerce purchasing behaviour.Together, these studies suggest that consumer confidence in the online environment is central to sustained adoption.

ii. **Satisfaction and Future Intentions**

Satisfaction with online and offline experiences influences consumers' future intentions to continue or switch shopping methods. Wolfinbarger and Gilly (2000) highlighted goal-oriented motivations as particularly important for online satisfaction, while Cheung et al. (2003) proposed a framework linking intention, adoption, and continuance as key stages of consumer behaviour. Velayutham (2011) reinforced the importance of understanding these behavioural dynamics to predict long-term shifts in consumer shopping modes. Liu et al., (2024).implied that that the shift is not only mode replacing the conventional shopping; instead, consumers engage both modes and evolve their behaviour over time.

Their argument in support of Wolfinbarger, Cheung, Velayutham the notion that consumer continuously shifting their preferences to form satisfaction.

A review of the existing literature also reveals that research on consumer buying behaviour in the context of both offline and online shopping remains limited. While several studies have examined online shopping trends, many have been conducted in international settings or at a relatively small scale, leaving a lack of comprehensive analysis in the Indian context. In particular, there is a notable absence of comparative studies that explore consumer behaviour across offline and online shopping modes with specific reference to the Chennai region.

Most of the available research focuses either exclusively on online shopping or on isolated aspects of consumer decision-making, without accounting for the interplay between traditional retail experiences and emerging e-commerce platforms. Moreover, previous studies within India have largely concentrated on metropolitan centres at a broad level, offering limited insight into regional variations in consumer preferences and behaviours. This highlights the need for more nuanced research that captures the realities of consumers in specific urban markets such as Chennai, where both offline and online shopping channels coexist and continue to evolve.

The justification for the present study lies in its potential to address these gaps. By investigating and comparing consumer behaviour across both shopping modes, this research aims to provide a deeper understanding of the changing habits, motivations, and patterns that drive purchase decisions. Such insights are crucial for businesses seeking to design effective marketing strategies and align retail operations with the dynamic expectations of Indian consumers.

Research Methodology
This study uses quantitative research design, whereby a 5 point Likert scale questionnaire is distributed in major towns. Total questionnaire distributed through google form is 200 and a response rate of 55% achieved.

Sample
The study was conducted in selected cities and towns of Tamil Nadu, with a particular focus on the Chennai region. Major towns such as Erode, Coimbatore, Tuticorin, Kovilpatti, Tirunelveli, and Madurai were included to ensure a broader representation of consumer perspectives.

A multistage sampling approach was applied in this research, combining both multistage and convenience sampling techniques. A non-probability convenient random sampling method was adopted, whereby respondents were selected based on the researcher's judgement and accessibility. This approach was deemed suitable given the exploratory nature of the study and the challenges of accessing a fully randomised sample.

The sample consisted of 110 respondents drawn from different locations across the selected cities of Tamil Nadu, with a special focus on the Chennai region. The sample size was determined after consultation with subject experts to ensure adequacy for statistical analysis.

The sampling units included qualified respondents such as professionals, youth, students, women, and middle-aged as well as adult consumers who engage in shopping either through offline or online modes. Data collection was carried out using a structured questionnaire.

Data Collection and Analysis
Primary data were collected through a structured questionnaire designed to capture both quantitative and qualitative information. The questionnaire consisted mainly of closed-ended questions to allow for statistical analysis, while observational notes provided supplementary qualitative insights. A pre-test of the questionnaire was conducted to ensure reliability and clarity before final administration. Secondary data were gathered from academic journals, books, websites, magazines, and other published sources to support the study's conceptual framework.

The collected questionnaires were checked for completeness during the preliminary stage of data preparation. The responses were then edited, coded, tabulated, grouped, and systematically organised for analysis. The data were entered into the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) for further statistical processing. Where necessary, relevant marketing models and computer-aided programs were also employed to interpret the findings. This ensured that the analysis was both robust and aligned with the study's objectives.

Hypotheses Development
To achieve the study's objectives, the following hypotheses were developed for empirical testing:

$H0_1$: There is no significant difference in consumer buying behaviour across income groups and shopping method preference.

$H1_1$: There is a significant difference in consumer buying behaviour across income groups and shopping method preference.

$H0_2$: There is no significant difference in consumer buying behaviour across professions with respect to offline price comparison.

$H1_2$: There is a significant difference in consumer buying behaviour across professions with respect to offline price comparison.

$H0_3$: There is no significant difference in consumer buying behaviour across genders with respect to online shopping choice.

$H1_3$: There is a significant difference in consumer buying behaviour across genders with respect to online shopping choice.

$H0_4$: There is no significant difference between shopping frequency and shopping method preference.

$H1_4$: There is a significant difference between shopping frequency and shopping method preference.

$H0_5$: There is no significant relationship between shopping frequency and offline shopping satisfaction.

$H1_5$: There is a significant relationship between shopping frequency and offline shopping satisfaction.

Results and Discussion

No.	Hypothesis	p-value	Remark
$H1_1$	There is a significant difference in consumer buying behaviour across income groups and shopping method preferences.	0.818	Not supported
$H1_2$	There is a significant difference in consumer buying behaviour across professions with respect to offline price comparison.	0.641	Not supported
$H1_3$	There is a significant difference in consumer buying behaviour across genders with respect to online shopping choices.	0.584	Not supported
$H1_4$	There is a significant difference between shopping frequency and shopping method preference.	<0.001	Supported
$H1_5$	There is a significant relationship between shopping frequency and offline shopping satisfaction.	0.728	Not supported

The research study reveals several important findings regarding consumer behaviour in online and offline shopping. In terms of age, it was found that individuals aged 46 and above show a stronger preference for offline shopping compared to younger age groups. Conversely, younger consumers between 15 and 45 years old are more inclined toward online shopping, reflecting their comfort with digital platforms and technology. When analysed by educational qualification, it was observed that professionals demonstrate a distinct shopping behaviour that differs from that of other qualification groups, both in online and offline contexts. Similarly, under the profession criterion, businessmen and professionals exhibit higher engagement in both modes of shopping, while other occupational categories show comparatively lesser influence.

With reference to income levels, consumers earning ₹250,000 and above emerge as more active and effective buyers in both online and offline shopping segments. The study also highlights that technological advancements have contributed significantly to the rising popularity of online shopping. Furthermore, the researcher notes that the post-demonetization shift toward a cashless economy has accelerated the growth of online shopping compared to traditional retail.

Another notable finding is that the "Digital India" initiative, coupled with free internet services and better connectivity, is expected to enhance the adoption of online shopping even in rural areas. Interestingly, while many consumers still prefer offline shopping, they tend to compare product prices, features, and reviews online before making in-store purchases, a sign of growing digital awareness. The study also points out that risk perception remains a concern in online shopping, as consumers perceive it to be riskier than offline purchases.

In contrast, personalised interactions and hands-on product experiences continue to play a vital role in offline shopping decisions. During the study, it was also observed that online shoppers frequently compare products across multiple web portals to secure the best deals. Additionally, consumers are more likely to purchase consumer durables, electronics, and fashion items online. Overall, the research concludes that convenience, attractive offers, and

competitive pricing are the primary motivators driving consumers toward online shopping, marking a clear shift in shopping patterns in the digital era.

Conclusions

In earlier times, consumers had access only to offline shopping, which limited their choices and convenience. However, the emergence of online shopping has completely transformed the way people purchase goods and services. The integration of technology into retail has opened new avenues and created opportunities for a more convenient lifestyle. Products such as electronic goods, consumer durables, and other household items are now among the most popular categories purchased online.

Unlike offline shopping, online shopping provides a distinct experience where many traditional factors such as personal interaction, physical inspection, and in-store ambiance are absent. Initially, consumers may feel hesitant or uncertain about shopping online, but as they become more familiar with the process, these apprehensions tend to fade over time.
The findings of this research reveal that although a significant portion of consumers still prefer offline shopping without hesitation, there is a clear and gradual shift toward online shopping. The internet has become an essential tool in modern business, enhancing convenience and accessibility for both entrepreneurs and consumers. The study highlights an increasing trend and a promising future for online shopping in India, driven by improved internet connectivity, rapid technological development, and supportive government initiatives.

Online shopping offers consumers the flexibility to purchase products anytime, anywhere, with secure and convenient payment options. It also enables easy comparison between products and stores—something less feasible in traditional shopping environments. Nevertheless, online shopping is not a complete substitute for offline shopping. Many consumers still value the unique aspects of traditional shopping, such as personalised customer service, the ability to physically examine products, and the social experience of interacting with shopkeepers and other shoppers (Hansaram et al., 2022). The study also indicates that while most respondents are aware of online shopping, some continue to prefer offline experiences due to concerns about privacy and the enjoyment of physical shopping trips.

In conclusion, while the future of retail is undoubtedly leaning toward online shopping, it is equally important for consumers to learn how to shop online safely and responsibly. This research has provided meaningful insights into consumer buying behaviour, preferences, and perceptions of risk in both online and offline contexts. It serves as valuable evidence of the evolving shopping landscape (Nor & Raji, 2022) and the coexistence of traditional and digital retail in the modern economy.

Limitation and Recommendation of the Study

This study was conducted in the Chennai region. For future research, the scope can be expanded to include a wider geographical area to gain a more comprehensive understanding of consumer behaviour. The current study utilized a sample size of only 110 respondents, which limits the depth of information; therefore, increasing the sample size in future research would help achieve more accurate and generalizable results. Moreover, this study relied solely on primary data. With technological advancement and the growing trend of online

shopping, a significant amount of secondary data is now available in the Indian context, which can be effectively used in future studies to predict consumer buying behaviour more precisely. While this research was comparative in nature, future researchers could consider conducting empirical studies on both online and offline shopping to strengthen the findings. Additionally, as this study adopted a subjective approach, future studies could employ more objective methods to enhance validity. Lastly, with the rise in technological development comes an increase in online fraud, hacking, and other cybercrimes. This emerging challenge presents a valuable opportunity for researchers to explore risk factors and consumer protection measures in online shopping environments.

Contribution

By situating the consumer behaviour study in the urban Indian context, there is a theoretical contribution in terms how online shopping has completely transformed the way people purchase goods and services. The findings that explain cross-channel choice why consumers switch or remain loyal to online vs offline, thereby bridging two previously siloed streams of literature. This study provides concrete, evidence-based recommendations for both brick-and-mortar and e-commerce retailers in Chennai on omnichannel integration and digital marketing segmentation. Besides, also sheds light on how shifting retail patterns affect local commerce, and employment necessitates the need for targeted interventions.

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