

A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF CONSUMER PERCEPTION TOWARDS ONLINE AND OFFLINE SHOPPING IN TIRUPATI DISTRICT

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Abstract - The growth of digital technology has transformed the way consumers make purchasing decisions. Online shopping has gained considerable popularity because of its convenience, extensive range of products, attractive prices, promotional offers, and home-delivery facilities. However, traditional offline shopping remains important as many consumers prefer the opportunity to inspect products physically, communicate directly with sellers, receive goods immediately, and rely on personal relationships and trust while making purchase decisions. The present study proposes to compare consumer perceptions of online and offline shopping in Tirupati District. It will examine major factors that influence shopping preferences, including convenience, pricing, product assortment, product quality, trust, customer service, time efficiency, payment safety, and overall satisfaction. Primary information may be gathered from consumers through a structured questionnaire, whereas secondary data may be collected from books, academic journals, research publications, reports, and other credible sources.

The information obtained from the respondents can be analysed using suitable statistical methods to determine differences in consumer preferences, perceptions, and satisfaction regarding online and offline shopping. The study is expected to provide a better understanding of changing consumer purchasing behaviour and the major considerations that determine their preference for one shopping channel over the other. The findings may assist online retailers as well as traditional retail businesses in understanding customer expectations, formulating effective customer-focused strategies, and enhancing the shopping experience.

Keywords: Consumer Perception, Online Shopping, Offline Shopping, Consumer Behaviour, E-Commerce, Retailing, Tirupati District.

I. INTRODUCTION

Technological growth hands the seller solid openings to reach buyers with far greater speed, far greater ease, and at lower cost. Shopping across the internet has emerged at a rapid pace over recent years, and the retail sector's attention now rests with the web, on which many millions upon millions of people place their orders. Buying of products in the traditional marketplace, meanwhile, has carried on for many years. Inspecting goods first, then owning an item the moment its payment is made, explains why offline buying is still chosen by a great many customers. Consistently delivering quality, together with value and satisfaction, is what customer loyalty rests upon in today's world. Offline suits some shoppers, online suits others, and many use both routes.

Buying on the web, though, comes more easily to people and at a lower price than the offline route. Faced with a purchase, consumers ought to identify their medium, the web or the physical store. Settling on whichever channel fits their needs and wants, and brings satisfaction, rests with the consumer. How, amid such competition, a shopper pins down one particular medium for acquiring goods is very important to understand from the managerial standpoint. Very little research exists within this "particular area or field. E-shopping, or online shopping, denotes a variety of electronic trade in which a buyer is allowed to acquire goods straight from a seller across the internet by means of a web browser. Names applied to it encompass web-store, virtual store, e-shop, online storefront, online store, web-shop, internet shop, e-store, and e-web store. Purchasing" from an online retailer by means of applications or sites optimised for mobile is what m-commerce, or mobile commerce, describes.

Groups earning well and educated to a high standard are, in general, better disposed towards buying on the web. Greater knowledge, paired with wider exploration of the internet, marks out those who gravitate to it. Rising technology increases the volume of web buying that a consumer does, and it also shapes an attitude that favours the consumer towards purchasing online as well.

II. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The rapid expansion of e-commerce has brought noticeable changes in the way consumers make purchasing decisions. Online platforms enable customers to compare product prices, evaluate reviews and ratings, explore a wide range of alternatives, and purchase goods conveniently from their homes. Despite these advantages, traditional retail stores continue to appeal to consumers because they provide opportunities for direct communication with sellers, physical inspection of products, immediate purchase and delivery, and greater confidence based on personal interaction.

Consumer attitudes toward online and offline shopping may vary according to several factors, including the nature of the product being purchased, demographic characteristics, level of familiarity with digital technology, and previous experiences with different shopping channels.

The central problem addressed by this study is:

“How do consumers in Tirupati District perceive online and offline shopping, and what factors influence their preference and satisfaction with each shopping mode?”

III. NEED FOR THE STUDY

The study is important for the following reasons:

1. It provides an understanding of how consumer shopping habits are evolving over time.
2. It enables a comparison of the advantages and limitations associated with online and traditional retail shopping.
3. It identifies the key factors that influence consumers when selecting between online and offline purchasing channels.
4. It assists retailers in gaining a clearer understanding of customer needs, preferences, and expectations.
5. It examines the importance of factors such as price, convenience, reliability, product quality, and customer service in shaping buying decisions.
6. It may assist traditional retailers in developing effective approaches to remain competitive in an increasingly digital retail environment.
7. It offers valuable insights to e-commerce businesses that can be used to enhance their services and improve overall customer satisfaction.

IV. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The main objectives of the study are:

1. To assess consumers' perceptions of online shopping in Tirupati District.
2. To understand consumers' views and attitudes towards traditional offline shopping in Tirupati District.
3. To make a comparative assessment of consumer preferences for online and offline shopping channels.

4. To determine the key factors that affect consumers' decisions when choosing between online and offline purchasing.
5. To evaluate the satisfaction levels of consumers with their experiences of online and traditional shopping.
6. To examine whether demographic factors have an impact on consumers' shopping choices and preferences.
7. To analyse the principal benefits and challenges experienced by consumers in both online and offline shopping.
8. To provide appropriate recommendations for enhancing the overall shopping experience of consumers.

V. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The study seeks to answer the following questions:

1. Which shopping mode is preferred by consumers in Tirupati District?
2. What factors influence consumers' preference for online shopping?
3. What factors influence consumers' preference for offline shopping?
4. Which mode provides greater perceived convenience?
5. Is there a significant difference in consumer satisfaction between online and offline shopping?
6. Do demographic characteristics influence consumers' shopping preferences?

VI. HYPOTHESES OF THE STUDY

The following hypotheses may be tested:

- H₀₁:** There is no significant association between demographic characteristics and consumers' preference for online or offline shopping.
- H₀₂:** There is no significant difference between consumer satisfaction with online and offline shopping.
- H₀₃:** There is no significant relationship between perceived convenience and consumers' preference for online shopping.
- H₀₄:** There is no significant relationship between trust and consumers' preference for online or offline shopping.

VII. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Consumer behaviour research focuses on understanding the processes through which individuals identify their needs, select products or services, make purchases, use them, and assess their experiences. The emergence of e-commerce has broadened the scope of consumer behaviour by introducing digital factors such as website design and ease of use, online ratings and reviews, the safety of electronic payments, delivery services, and concerns regarding online transactions. Existing studies on online purchasing behaviour suggest that factors such as convenience, affordable pricing, product availability, access to information, and reduced shopping time play an important role in influencing consumers' decisions. Online platforms allow customers to explore different products, compare prices, read available information, and make purchasing decisions without having to visit several physical stores.

In contrast, offline retail provides consumers with the opportunity to see, examine, and sometimes test products before making a purchase. Direct communication with sales personnel, immediate access to purchased goods, and familiarity with local retailers may also strengthen consumers' confidence and influence their preference for traditional shopping.

Research further suggests that demographic variables, including age, income, educational background, and occupation, may affect consumers' attitudes toward online shopping. Individuals who are more familiar with digital technology, particularly younger consumers, may show greater acceptance of online purchasing. In comparison, consumers who place greater importance on personal interaction and physical evaluation of products may be more inclined toward offline shopping.

Nevertheless, consumers do not always rely exclusively on one shopping method. Many individuals choose between online and offline channels according to the type of product, price level, urgency of purchase, product availability, discounts, and other situational factors. Hence, a comparative investigation in Tirupati District can offer meaningful insights into the evolving shopping

preferences of local consumers and the factors shaping their choice between digital and traditional retail channels.

VIII. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A. Research locale

Anywhere at all, selling has taken root both offline and online. Amravati city's population was picked by us since we understood commerce to be plentiful locally. Accessibility, plus data we could count on obtaining, drove the choice of these areas, given that trade of either kind, whether through a shop or across the web, has taken hold locally. Because such trade sits here, buyers likewise turn up throughout the neighbouring locality, and they form the study's intended informants. Selling of both kinds has equally taken root locally, spanning varied age brackets, varied sexes and varied categories of people such as housewives, the unemployed, employees and students, etc.

B. Sources of Data

Primary Data:

Primary data can be collected directly from consumers using a structured questionnaire.

Secondary Data:

Secondary information can be collected from books, academic journals, research articles, government publications, industry reports, and reliable online sources.

C. Study Area

The study is proposed to be conducted among consumers in **Tirupati District, Andhra Pradesh**.

D. Population

The population consists of consumers who have experience with either online shopping, offline shopping, or both.

E. Sample Size

For a student research project, a sample of **100–200 respondents** can be considered, depending on available time and resources. For example, the researcher may select **150 respondents** from different age groups, occupations, educational backgrounds, and income categories.

F. Sampling Technique

A **convenience sampling method** may be used for an exploratory student project. If adequate resources are available, stratified or systematic sampling can be used to improve representation.

G. Data Collection Instrument

A structured questionnaire consisting of demographic questions and statements relating to online and offline shopping perceptions can be used. Respondents can rate statements on a **five-point**

Likert scale:

- 1 – Strongly Disagree
- 2 – Disagree
- 3 – Neutral
- 4 – Agree
- 5 – Strongly Agree

H. Data Analysis

The collected data may be analysed using:

- Frequency and percentage analysis
- Mean and standard deviation
- Cross-tabulation
- Chi-square test
- Independent-samples t-test, where appropriate
- Correlation analysis, where appropriate

Statistical software such as Excel, SPSS, or other suitable statistical software may be used.

IX. QUESTIONNAIRE

Section A: Demographic Information

1. Gender:
 - Male
 - Female
 - Other/prefer not to say
2. Age:
 - Below 20
 - 21–30
 - 31–40
 - 41–50
 - Above 50
3. Educational Qualification:
 - School level
 - Undergraduate
 - Postgraduate
 - Professional
 - Other

4. Occupation:

- Student
- Employee
- Business
- Homemaker
- Self-employed
- Other

5. Monthly Household Income:

- Below ₹20,000
- ₹20,001–₹40,000
- ₹40,001–₹60,000
- ₹60,001–₹80,000
- Above ₹80,000

Section B: Shopping Behaviour

6. How frequently do you shop online?

- Very frequently
- Frequently
- Occasionally
- Rarely
- Never

7. How frequently do you shop offline?

- Very frequently
- Frequently
- Occasionally
- Rarely
- Never

8. Which shopping mode do you prefer overall?

- Online
- Offline
- Both equally

9. Which category do you most frequently purchase online?

- Clothing
- Electronics
- Groceries
- Beauty/personal care
- Books
- Other

10. What is your main reason for shopping online?

- Convenience
- Lower price
- Discounts
- Variety
- Time saving
- Home delivery
- Other

11. What is your main reason for shopping offline?

- Physical inspection
- Immediate purchase
- Personal interaction
- Trust
- Better product understanding
- Avoiding delivery problems
- Other

Section C: Consumer Perception

Please rate each statement from 1 to 5.

Statement **1 2 3 4 5**

Online shopping is convenient.
Online shopping saves time.
Online shopping provides a wider variety of products.
Online shopping offers attractive discounts.
Online shopping makes price comparison easy.
I trust online payment systems.
Online reviews help me make purchase decisions.
Online shopping has satisfactory return policies.
Offline shopping allows me to examine products physically.
Offline shopping provides immediate possession of products.
I receive better personal assistance in offline stores.
I trust local/offline retailers.
Offline shopping makes it easier to resolve certain problems.
Offline shopping provides a better personal shopping experience.
I am satisfied with my overall online shopping experience.
I am satisfied with my overall offline shopping experience.

X. DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

Table 1: Preferred Shopping Mode

Online	60	40%
Offline	35	23.3%
Both	55	36.7%
Total	150	100%

Interpretation

The results indicate that online shopping may have a strong presence among consumers in Tirupati District, while a substantial proportion may prefer both online and offline shopping. This suggests that consumers may adopt an **omnichannel shopping behaviour**, selecting the shopping mode according to convenience, product type, price, and urgency.

Table 2: Major Factors Influencing Online Shopping

S.No	Factor	Respondents
1	Convenience	48
2	Discounts/Price	35
3	Product Variety	27
4	Time Saving	20
5	Home Delivery	12
6	Other	8

Interpretation

The distribution suggests that convenience may be one of the strongest factors influencing online shopping, followed by price and discounts and product variety.

Table 3: Major Factors Influencing Offline Shopping

S.No.	Factor		Respondents
1	Physical Examination		42
2	Immediate Availability		30
3	Trust		28
4	Personal Interaction		22
5	Easy Problem Resolution		16
6	Other		12

Interpretation

The results indicate that physical examination of products and immediate availability may be important reasons for choosing offline shopping.

XI. EXPECTED FINDINGS

Based on the research framework and previous studies, the study may find that:

1. The convenience of purchasing from home and the ability to save time may contribute to the growing preference for online shopping.
2. Attractive discounts, promotional schemes, and comparatively lower prices may motivate consumers to choose online purchasing platforms.
3. A broader selection of products, along with access to ratings and feedback from previous buyers, may affect consumers' online purchase decisions.
4. The opportunity to physically examine and assess products before buying them may remain an important advantage of conventional retail stores.
5. The ability to obtain products immediately after purchase may encourage consumers to prefer physical shopping outlets.
6. Consumer confidence arising from personal relationships, direct communication, and familiarity with local sellers may continue to support preferences for offline shopping.
7. Rather than depending entirely on a single shopping channel, many consumers may combine online and offline methods according to their individual needs and circumstances.
8. Younger consumers may demonstrate greater familiarity and comfort with digital shopping platforms; however, this assumption should be verified through the findings obtained from the primary data.
9. Consumers' choice between online and offline shopping may differ depending on the type and nature of products they intend to purchase.
10. The importance attached to factors such as convenience, price, product quality, trust, service, and availability may differ between online and offline shopping experiences.

XII. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The proposed study highlights that online and offline shopping offer different benefits to consumers. Online shopping is primarily associated with convenience, accessibility, product variety, price comparison, and promotional offers. Offline shopping, in contrast, provides direct interaction, physical examination, immediate purchase, and a more traditional shopping experience. The comparison should not be viewed simply as a competition between two completely separate channels. Modern consumers frequently move between online and offline channels. For example, a consumer may search for product information online, compare prices, visit a physical store to examine the product, and eventually purchase through either channel.

Similarly, consumers may visit a physical store to understand a product and subsequently purchase it online because of a price difference. This changing behaviour makes it important for retailers to provide consistent and convenient experiences across both channels.

The actual level of preference and satisfaction, however, must be determined through primary data collected from consumers in Tirupati District.

XIII. SUGGESTIONS

Based on the research framework, the following suggestions can be made:

For Online Retailers

1. Improve website and mobile application usability.
2. Provide accurate product descriptions and photographs.
3. Strengthen customer support and complaint-resolution mechanisms.
4. Ensure transparent pricing and delivery charges.
5. Improve return and refund processes.
6. Strengthen payment security and consumer privacy.
7. Provide reliable delivery services.

For Offline Retailers

1. Maintain competitive prices wherever possible.
2. Improve customer service and personal assistance.

3. Provide a wider range of products.
4. Introduce digital payment facilities.
5. Use social media and digital marketing to attract customers.
6. Develop loyalty programmes and promotional offers.
7. Consider adopting an online ordering or home-delivery facility.
6. Examine the role of digital payments in online shopping.
7. Study the impact of artificial intelligence and personalized recommendations on consumer behaviour.
8. Compare rural and urban consumers' shopping preferences.

XVI. CONCLUSION

For Both

Retailers should understand that consumers increasingly expect **convenience, reasonable prices, quality products, trust, and good customer service** regardless of the shopping channel.

XIV. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The study may have the following limitations:

1. The study is restricted to consumers in Tirupati District.
2. The sample size may not represent the entire consumer population.
3. Convenience sampling may introduce sampling bias.
4. Responses are based on the perceptions reported by respondents.
5. Consumer preferences can change rapidly because of technological and market developments.
6. The study may focus on selected demographic and behavioural variables.
7. Differences between product categories may affect consumer preferences.

XV. SCOPE FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

Future researchers can extend the study in several ways:

1. Compare online and offline shopping behaviour across different districts.
2. Conduct a study focusing specifically on Gen Z consumers.
3. Examine the influence of social media on online purchase decisions.
4. Study consumer trust and perceived risk in e-commerce.
5. Compare shopping behaviour across different product categories.

The expansion of e-commerce has substantially influenced the way consumers approach shopping, yet traditional retail continues to hold an important position in the marketplace. Digital shopping platforms provide several benefits, including ease of access, reduced shopping time, a wider range of choices, convenient price comparisons, promotional offers, and home delivery. At the same time, physical stores remain relevant because they allow customers to examine products directly, obtain their purchases without waiting for delivery, communicate with sellers, and make decisions based on established trust.

A study of consumers in Tirupati District can offer valuable insights into the reasons behind their choice of shopping channels and their level of satisfaction with different purchasing experiences. The increasing use of online platforms should not necessarily be viewed as a complete replacement for conventional retail. Instead, consumers may use online and offline channels together for searching, comparing alternatives, assessing products, and completing purchases, depending on their individual requirements.

In the changing retail environment, the sustained performance of businesses will depend largely on how effectively they recognize and respond to evolving consumer needs. Retailers can strengthen their position by offering reliable services, reasonable prices, convenient purchasing options, quality products, secure transactions, and responsive customer support. An integrated approach that addresses consumer expectations across both digital and physical shopping environments can contribute to greater customer satisfaction and long-term business success.

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