

SHOPPING IN THE DIGITAL AGE: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF OFFLINE AND SHOPPING

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ABSTRACT:

The advent of internet purchasing has completely changed the retail landscape by providing customers with quicker, easier, and more economical options. Physical stores, however, continue to be successful because they provide distinctive value propositions that internet platforms are unable to match. The objective of this research is to examine how students groups' online and offline shopping experiences differ, with particular attention paid to accessibility, views, technology use, and demography. Online shopping is becoming more and more popular, especially among younger, tech-savvy consumers, because online shopping platforms provide a wider selection of goods at affordable costs. Physical stores, on the other hand, offer instant product availability, which is important for urgent purchases. In addition, attitudes toward online and offline shopping vary. Online shoppers frequently believe that it's quicker, more effective, and easier to compare prices and products. However, many customers still value the social part of shopping as well as the physical and visual delights of physical businesses. The goal of the research is to offer a thorough grasp of the factors influencing consumers' choices for online and physical purchasing. Retailers can create strategies that effectively address the varied needs of customers in the digital age and guarantee a seamless and pleasurable purchasing experience among all channels by looking at the interactions across availability of goods, views, technology use, and demography.

Keywords : E-commerce, Shopping Trends, Consumer Behavior, Physical Stores

INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, shopping is a necessary aspect of living, and there are plenty of traditional and online possibilities. Due to its widespread use, customers may access thousands of products that are on display as well as a greater variety of business options. Thanks to technological improvements, online shopping is now more convenient, quick, and economical. Nonetheless, traditional retail continues to be well-liked since buyers want to see and handle products before paying for them. A wide variety of shopping alternatives are available with both methods. In today's competitive market, delivering superior value and satisfaction is crucial for customer retention. While some customers prefer both online and in-store shopping, others have unique preferences. Online shopping offers affordability, convenience, and a wider product variety, making it the consumer's responsibility to choose the medium that best suits their needs and desires. In today's cutthroat economy, online shopping—a form of electronic commerce—is growing in popularity. It enables customers to buy products or services without physically visiting a vendor by utilizing a smartphone app or web browser. Other names for it include virtual stores, internet stores, web shops, e-web stores, e-shops, and e-stores. Customers may quickly look for goods and pay with a variety of options. Logistics firms work together to guarantee global delivery. Online shopping is starting to take the place of traditional retail because of its benefits, which include ease and flexibility. When shopping conventionally, customers physically scrutinize stuff at a shop or shopping center to determine the suitability and quality of goods like groceries, gadgets, and apparel. Because of the physical experience and the opportunity to engage socially with salespeople, who can offer prompt assistance and individualized care, some students choose this type of purchasing over internet shopping. The absence of face-to-face encounters in e-commerce results in a loss of product understanding, confidence, touch, and security issues. Reluctance is exacerbated by concerns about data privacy, the possibility of defective or counterfeit items, and impersonal transactions. Customers are further discouraged from shopping online by shipment delays and the hassle of returning merchandise. All together, these elements play a part in the hesitation to shop online. Technological developments, changing customer preferences, and rising internet and mobile technology usage all have an impact on the expanding trend of online shopping. Online and physical stores alike must recognize and respond to

the wants and needs of their customers in order to be relevant and competitive. Younger, tech-savvy consumers favor online shopping because it provides a greater selection of goods at affordable costs. But physical retailers are the best option for last-minute purchases because they have instant access to merchandise. Online and offline purchasing experiences are viewed differently. Online shopping is thought to be more productive and time-efficient because it makes it simple to compare prices and read consumer feedback. Nonetheless, many customers still value the physical and visual experience of physical businesses in addition to their social component, as the chance to view, handle, and test items can have a big impact on purchasing decisions. Giving consumers a thorough grasp of the factors influencing their choices for online and offline purchasing is the aim of this study. This study attempts to provide merchants with useful insights by investigating the relationship among availability of goods, views, technology use, and demography. Retailers can use these data to create strategies that work well and meet the varied needs of customers in the age of technology, making buying across all channels easy and enjoyable.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

A theoretical framework was created by **Broekhuizen and Jager (2003)** to comprehend the intent to buy and channel choice. The study determined the main determinants of channel preference as well as aspects that either encourage or dissuade customers from making online purchases. The primary factors influencing online purchasing are information, perceived value, fun, and security, according to **Bhatt (2014)** in a study on Indian consumers' attitudes about online shopping. Physical storefronts continue to be an essential part of the retail environment, even in the face of the expansion of internet retail. They offer a physical shopping experience that internet retailers are unable to match. **Verhoef et al. (2015)** assert that physical stores provide important value propositions for customers, including sensory engagement, quick availability of goods, and the social aspects associated with purchasing. According to a study conducted by **Lemon and Verhoef (2016)**, in-store shoppers place a higher importance on sensory experiences, quick gratification, and social interactions than online shoppers do on price comparisons, convenience, and product information. Customers that shop online and offline have diverse demographics. In Rourkela, Odisha, **Gupta (2016)** investigates both online and offline shopping, examining customer behavior, the impact of technology, challenges with trust, market competitiveness, price tactics, and omnichannel commerce. Sustainability is increasingly being taken into account by both online and brick-and-mortar stores. Customers are calling for more sustainable company practices and environmentally friendly products. In the future retail scene, retailers who implement sustainable practices are expected to have an advantage over their competitors (**White et al., 2019**). Younger consumers, particularly Millennials and Gen Z, have a strong preference for digital retail due to their familiarity with technology and demand for quick and easy purchase options (**Smith, 2020**). However, senior consumers are more inclined to select physical stores where they can speak with staff members face-to-face and examine products prior to making a purchase. In order to improve online purchasing experiences, **Chaffey (2021)** emphasizes the value of targeted marketing and AI-driven recommendations. Big data analytics is used by digital retailers to better understand consumer preferences, which increases customer satisfaction and conversion rates. According to **Statista (2022)**, digital retail—which includes e- and mobile-based sales—has grown significantly, with a projected value of \$4.9 trillion by 2021. Convenience in online shopping—comparing costs, accessing a greater variety of products without being limited by location, and buying around the clock—is the primary driver of this rise.

OBJECTIVES OF STUDY

- (a) to ascertain the products that students typically buy both offline and online, as well as their preferences for both.
- (b) to examine the elements influencing students' physical and online purchasing behaviors.
- (c) to comprehend student preferences for both offline and online purchases.
- (d) to determine the students' degree of satisfaction with online as well as offline purchasing.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design and Research Instrument

In order to ensure accuracy and relevance, the study design directs data gathering and analysis. This study employed a descriptive approach, utilizing a standardized questionnaire to conduct interviews and gather pertinent responses from participants. In order to guarantee precise data collection and save time, the questionnaire was created.

Sampling unit

The study report focuses on GPGC Bilaspur postgraduate students.

Sampling size

There are 151 students in the sample.

Sampling procedure

The sampling method used in the study is random sampling, in which there is an equal chance of selecting any given sample.

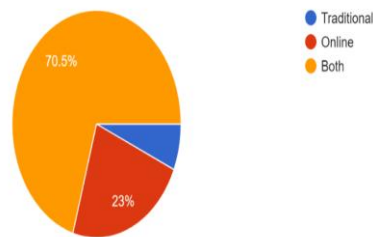
Data Collection Method

The sample students were approached directly to get the structured questionnaire that was used to collect primary data for the study. The data was thoroughly analyzed using this methodology.

DATA ANALYSIS & INTERPRETATION

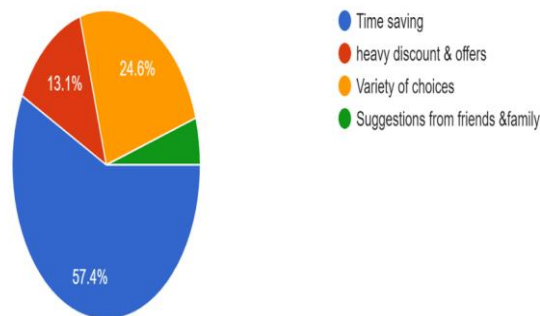
34.42% of respondents were men and 65.58% of respondents were women, according to the survey results. With almost two thirds of the responders being female, this demonstrates a notable gender gap. Based on Study, the age group of 21–22 years old accounts for 59.94% of the respondents, suggesting a higher level of shopping participation. 23–24 year olds make up 23.17% of the remaining respondents, and 19–20 year olds make up 13.24 percent. 4.63% of the population is over the age of 24. The bulk of responders are therefore between the ages of 21 and 22. The study reveals that a large proportion of responders are Mcom, with 52.5% being Mcom, 19.7% being Ma, and 27.9% being MSc.

Figure 4 Mostly preferred method of shopping



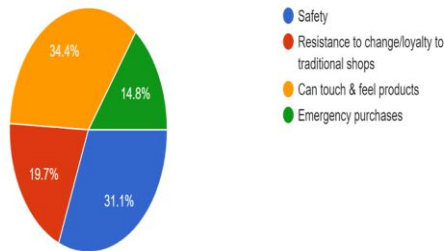
Based on Figure No.4, 70.49% of students like to shop both traditionally and online. Traditional shopping is preferred by 6.55% of students, while internet shopping is preferred by 22.96%. It can be concluded from the analysis above that the majority of respondents in the current study like both traditional and internet shopping.

Figure 5 Factors led students to purchase online



Based on Figure No. 4.5, the time-saving aspect is the reason why 57.38% of students choose online purchasing. Because there are more options when purchasing online, a quarter of the respondents (24.60%) prefer it. Due to the availability of numerous deals and discounts, 13.11% of respondents said they prefer to purchase online. Recommendations from friends and family influence a relatively small percentage of respondents (4.91%) to favor internet shopping. None of the respondents preferred to shop online because the products were not available in local retailers. Therefore, it can be inferred from the research above that most respondents to the current study preferred online shopping since it saves their time.

Figure 6 Factors led students to purchase offline



Based on Figure No. 4.6, 34.43% of students preferred offline shopping because they can touch and feel the items. In light of product safety, 31% of respondents said they preferred offline purchasing. Due to resistance to change, a few respondents (19.67%) prefer to shop offline. In an emergency, a small percentage of respondents (14.75%) choose to shop offline.

Figure 7 Product usually purchased by students through online and offline shopping

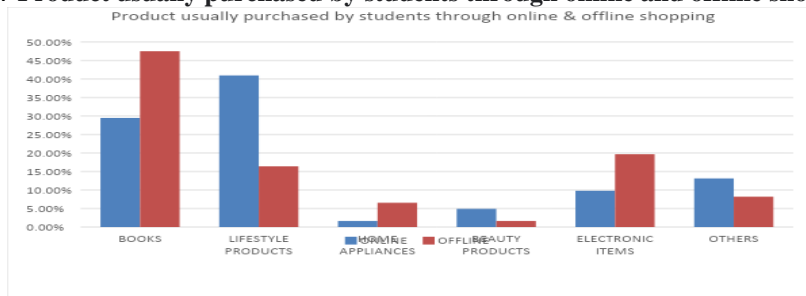
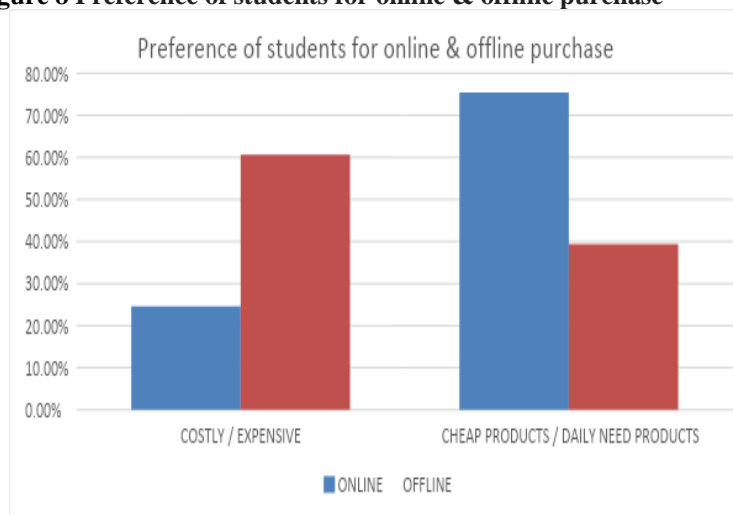


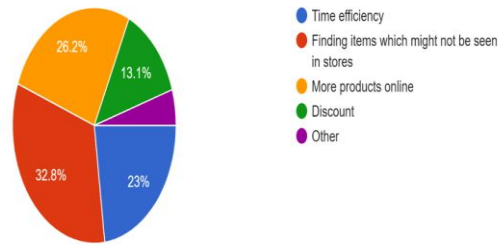
Figure No. 4.7 compares the product usually bought by respondents through online & offline shopping. (47.54%) of the respondents prefer buying books offline rather than buying them online (29.51%). (40.98%) of the respondents prefer to buy lifestyle products online rather than buying them offline (16.39%). Some of the respondents (19.67%) prefer buying electronic items in local stores instead of purchasing them online. Only few of the respondents (13.11%), (4.92%) buy other products and beauty products online instead of buying them in local markets (8.20%), (6.56%). Home appliances are bought by some respondents online (6.56%) as compared to buying offline (1.64%).

Figure 8 Preference of students for online & offline purchase



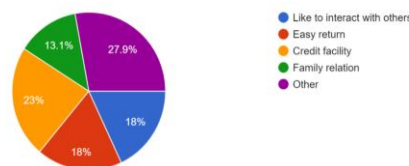
Based on Figure 4.8, the preferences of students for online and offline purchases are compared. More than half of the respondents (60.66%) said they would rather purchase pricey goods in local markets. A majority of the respondents (75.41%) said they would rather buy inexpensive everyday necessities online as opposed to in local marketplaces (39.34%).

Figure 9 Preference of students for online over offline shopping



Based on Figure No. 4.9, 32.78% of the respondents prefer online over offline shopping when they don't find items in local markets and they are easily accessible online. Another 26.22% prefer online shopping because they find more products available online. Additionally, 22.95% of respondents prefer online shopping because it saves them time. Only a few respondents (13.14% and 4.91%) buy products online due to discounts and recommendations from friends and family, respectively.

Figure 10 Preference of students for offline over online shopping



Based on Figure No. 4.10, (27.87%) of respondents preferred offline over internet buying for various reasons. Among them, 22.95% said they prefer to shop offline because they can use credit cards to make purchases. Another 18.03% of respondents prefer shopping offline because it's easier to return items and they can interact with other customers. A small percentage of respondents (13.12%) purchase goods offline due to familial ties to local market vendors.

Figure 11 Payment method preferred for online purchase

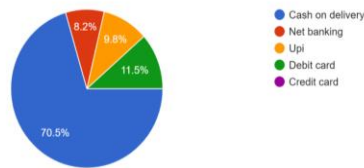
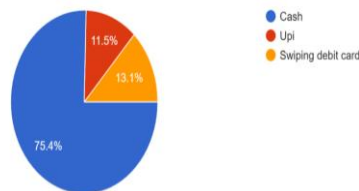


Figure 11 demonstrates that 11.47% of respondents utilize debit cards for online purchases, while 70% of respondents opt cash on delivery. While 8.20% utilize net banking, others use the Upi service. Credit cards are not used by any responders. When making purchases online, a majority of respondents preferred to pay with cash on delivery and not use credit cards. According to the data, internet shoppers prefer to pay with cash on delivery.

Figure 12 Payment method preferred for offline purchase



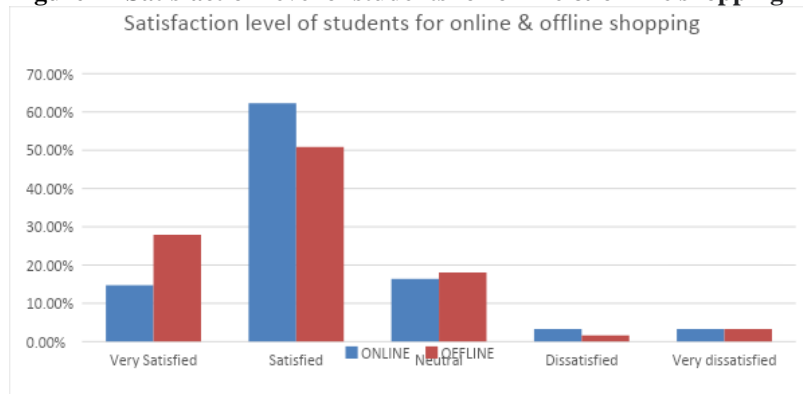
Based on Figure 12, while purchasing offline, 75.41% of respondents pay with cash, 13.12% use debit cards, and 11.47% use UPI (Unified Payments Interface). The majority of respondents prefer cash payments over other payment methods when purchasing goods in local markets.

Figure 13 Website preferred for online shopping



Based on Figure 13, 57.38% of respondents said they prefer Flipkart over Amazon for purchasing goods online, followed by Meesho (13.2%), Myntra (4.91%), Ajo (1.64%), and Amazon (21.31%). With 13.12% favoring Meesho and 4.91% choosing Myntra, more than half of the respondents chose Flipkart as their preferred online retailer. According to the analysis, Flipkart emerges as the top online retailer among students.

Figure 14 Satisfaction level of students for online & offline shopping



Based on Figure No. 4.6, online shoppers show a higher satisfaction rate at 62.30%, compared to 49.18% satisfaction among offline shoppers. Specifically, 14.75% of respondents are extremely satisfied with online buying, while 27.87% express extreme satisfaction with offline shopping. Neutrally, 16.39% of people are content with online purchasing, whereas 18.03% feel similarly about offline shopping. A small percentage (3.28%) are extremely dissatisfied with both online and offline purchases combined.

FINDINGS

1. According to the survey, 59.94% of the respondents are between the ages of 21 and 22, and young people who are not present shop more frequently. The remaining responders (4.63%) are between the ages of 23 and 24.
2. According to analysis, 22.96% of students favor online shopping, while 6.55% prefer traditional shopping, and 70% of students like both types of buying.
3. Analysis showed that while 24.60% of students preferred variety, the majority of students preferred internet purchasing for time-saving reasons. A significant portion (13.11%) choose steep discounts and deals, whereas 4.91% depend on recommendations from friends and family. Because local stores are not always available, none of the respondents preferred to purchase online.

4. According to analysis, the majority of students preferred offline shopping because of its tactile feel, security, adaptability, and ease of use. Additionally, most respondents said they preferred it for emergencies rather than regular shopping hours.
5. According to the survey, 47.54% of participants prefer to purchase books off-line, 40.98% prefer to purchase lifestyle goods via the internet, and 19.67% prefer to purchase electronics locally. The percentage of people who buy beauty goods and home appliances online is quite low.
6. According to the survey, the majority of participants prefer to purchase electronics at local stores, books in physical stores, and lifestyle products online. A smaller minority of respondents would rather purchase home appliances and cosmetics online.
7. According to the survey, the majority of participants prefer to purchase electronics at local stores, books in physical stores, and lifestyle products online. A smaller minority of respondents would rather purchase home appliances and cosmetics online.
8. Better pricing, diversity, home delivery (9.84%), ease of price comparison, and time savings are ranked as the top five factors for online shopping by a majority of respondents (14.75%).
9. According to the survey, 21.31 percent of participants place a higher value on material inspection, 16.39 percent on instant purchases, 8.20 percent on simple return policies, 1.64% on sales support, and security of items. On the other hand, 50.82 percent of respondents said that these factors matter when making offline purchases.
10. 57.38% of respondents said they preferred Flipkart, 21.31% said they preferred Amazon, 13.12% said they preferred Meesho, 4.91% said they preferred Myntra, and 1.64% said they preferred other online buying sites.
11. According to the survey, 62.30% of participants are happy when they shop online, 49.18% are happy when they shop offline, 27.87% are happy when they shop offline, 18.03% are neutral, 16.39% are happy when they shop online, and 3.28% are extremely unhappy with both.

CONCLUSIONS

According to the study, women are more involved in shopping than men, whether they shop online or offline. Students between the ages of 21 and 22 have more extravagant shopping habits. The study discovered that students' opinions toward shopping are unaffected by their level of education. The majority of respondents said they like shopping both offline and online, with offline shopping favored for the tactile experience and online shopping preferred for time savings. Online stores are becoming increasingly popular for lifestyle, cosmetic, and home appliance products. While local market vendors offer more expensive goods, students prefer to shop online for everyday necessities and less expensive items. Several factors influence online purchases, including time savings, home delivery, variety, easier price comparisons, and better prices. Offline shopping provides benefits such as instant purchasing, material inspection, sales support, easy returns, and increased security. Cash is commonly used for both types of purchases. Students' go-to website for shopping is Flipkart. The majority of respondents express satisfaction with both traditional and online shopping, and even those who still choose traditional stores have positive attitudes and behaviors toward online shopping.

SUGGESTIONS

Women are becoming more and more accustomed to buying online, so it is important to address problems with product delivery in their preferred locations. In places with a limited supply of internet products, traditional marketers could offer discounts and additional services, while maintaining trust concerns and product quality. Particularly for students, offline retailers should offer their products at reasonable prices, as they are not content with exorbitant costs. Students may be persuaded to convert to online purchasing by reducing delivery delays and easing return guidelines. Reducing delivery delays and encouraging lenient return policies can also facilitate the process of exchanging unwanted goods.

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