

COMPARATIVE STUDY ON CUSTOMER'S PREFERENCES ON ONLINE OVER OFFLINE MODE OF SHOPPING

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ABSTRACT

The retail landscape has evolved significantly due to advancements in digital technology and shifting consumer behaviors. This study explores the key factors influencing consumer preferences for online and offline shopping modes, analyzing demographic variations, convenience, pricing, product variety, and psychological aspects like trust and social interaction. Primary data collected through surveys reveal that convenience (26.4%) and a wider product range (30.2%) are major reasons consumers favor online shopping, while offline shopping continues to attract those seeking immediate gratification and personalized experiences. Challenges in online shopping include concerns over product authenticity (26.4%) and delivery delays (24.5%). The study also highlights trends such as the growing impact of personalized promotions and innovative technologies like augmented reality in e-commerce. Key recommendations include enhancing user experience, improving product transparency, and integrating digital tools in offline stores. By understanding these preferences, retailers can develop strategies to provide a seamless shopping experience across both platforms, ensuring customer satisfaction and business growth.

Keywords: Consumer preferences, online shopping, offline shopping, retail trends, e-commerce strategies.

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, the retail industry has undergone a significant transformation, largely driven by technological advancements and shifts in consumer behavior. The growth of e-commerce has revolutionized the way people shop, offering unmatched convenience, a broader selection of products, and easy accessibility. As a result, the differences between online and in-store shopping have become an important topic for marketers, retailers, and researchers. This project aims to examine consumer preferences for online versus traditional offline shopping, exploring the factors that shape these preferences and the broader impact on the retail sector.

Several factors have accelerated the move from brick-and-mortar stores to digital platforms,

including the widespread use of smartphones, the influence of social media, and global events like the COVID-19 pandemic. These changes have not only reshaped shopping habits but have also prompted retailers to rethink their strategies. Understanding what drives consumer preferences is essential for businesses seeking to remain competitive in a rapidly evolving market.

Online shopping offers a variety of benefits, such as the convenience of shopping at any time from any location, access to a broader array of products, and often lower prices due to reduced operational costs. In contrast, offline shopping provides tangible experiences, immediate gratification, and personalized customer service—features that many consumers continue to appreciate. This project will explore these preferences, considering factors such as age, income, and location to better understand the dynamics behind consumer choices in both online and offline retail settings.

SCOPE OF FIELD PROJECT

This field project will cover several essential aspects related to consumer preferences in shopping modes. The scope of the project includes:

1. **Literature Review:** A thorough review of existing research on consumer behavior in both online and offline shopping will be conducted. This review will help establish a theoretical foundation for understanding the factors influencing consumer choices and will guide the design of primary research.
2. **Research Objectives:** The project will focus on achieving specific objectives, including:
 - Identifying the primary factors that drive consumer preference for online versus offline shopping.
 - Exploring demographic variations in shopping preferences.
 - Investigating the influence of external factors (such as economic conditions and technological advancements) on consumer behavior.
 - Assessing the psychological elements that impact shopping preferences, including trust, convenience, and social interaction.
3. **Data Analysis:** The data collected will be analyzed using statistical methods to uncover patterns and correlations. Qualitative data will be analyzed thematically to identify recurring themes and insights that may not be evident through quantitative analysis alone.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

1. **Anggoro (2022)** Online shopping or commonly referred to as e-commerce is a shopping activity carried out by consumers through media or intermediaries, namely social networks that have been provided by sellers, both products in the form of goods and services. Meanwhile, offline shopping is a shopping activity carried out by consumers directly without the presence of media or intermediaries and sellers can offer their products directly to consumers. Basically, consumer decisions in choosing online and offline shopping have no difference because they both have balanced advantages and disadvantages. This certainly comes back to consumer preferences in choosing online shopping or offline shopping. The results of our study also state that the level of consumer satisfaction in doing offline shopping is higher compared to online shopping. This is also based on the results of previous research as a literature review for our research.
2. **Divyendu & Yadav (2019)**. The paper talks about various factors of online and offline shopping based on a plurality of factors. What we conclude from our study and survey is discussed below:
 1. In types of countries, divided into developed, developing and underdeveloped, countries which are developed and have a decent sized market are most effectively operating online, some developing countries with a decent sized market are quantitatively operating at best and underdeveloped countries with decent sized market are an interesting place for ecommerce companies to invest in the future. They currently mostly prefer offline mode of shopping.
 2. Shopping behavior of an individual based on their mode of operation is much more inclined towards app based operation as compared to webpage. The use of smartphones by an individual has drastically increased from a decade which has an immense impact on the mode of shopping. The survey also concluded that a large section of the potential consumer of any product is more incline towards shopping a product based on the app rather than the website.
 3. The shopping behavior and more importantly the trust of a consumer highly depends on the need of a product and the delivery time of that particular product. It is shown that an individual want to buy a product from a place from where his or her product is delivered with minimum time. Therefore, the delivery system of any product highly influence consumers and it is clear that any potential consumer of online product is more inclined toward a company which provides a lesser time in delivering their product.
 4. Based on the results obtained from the questionnaire, there was no clear trend indicating the preference for online/offline shopping behavior based on

geography. However, it was observed that regions with better infrastructure and connectivity had a rise in preference for online shopping in most cases.

3. **Gupta (2015).** The study shows that males tend to shop online less than females. Females are more engaged in online shopping, likely because they enjoy the shopping experience, whether it's traditional or digital. The younger generation is more inclined to shop online, driven by the technological advancements they are more familiar with, which they leverage to enhance their lives. Among younger shoppers, Flipkart is the most preferred online shopping platform. The growing demand for online shopping is fueled by the wide range of options available to consumers at competitive prices, often lower than those found in physical stores. While electronic products are less popular for online purchases, clothing is in high demand among consumers. However, some products are not available for delivery in certain areas. Despite this, the increasing availability of online shopping options is making it a preferred choice, especially with the ongoing technological advancements. On the other hand, individuals who are less familiar with online shopping platforms or not as technologically savvy continue to favor traditional shopping methods.
4. **Hude (2021)** The factors convenience, variety, Fewer expenses, Comparison-of-prices, buying of old/unused stuff at low-prices influence more in online-shopping than offline-shopping. And better-prices influence more in offline shopping, i.e. customers are getting better prices in offline shopping. The study has been done considering all products and all categories in general. Further study can be extended to a particular category of products like groceries, electronic goods, apparels, etc. as the factors affecting the buying behaviour may change as per the category of products. For example, irrespective of new-arrivals and discounts individuals have a habit of buying groceries at the beginning of the month or a particular day/week of month.
5. **Jyoti, Manisha, & Deepakshi (2023)** In the brief period it has been around, online shopping has had a significant impact on customers' lives and is a novel experience. Online shopping has increased customer effectiveness and efficiency and pushed businesses to new heights, requiring them to make the required alterations and modifications in order to cater to the new, educated consumer market. The survey's findings highlight how important it is for companies to consider the internet market. Even customers who still prefer traditional businesses had positive attitudes and behaviors toward internet purchasing, according to the report. The majority of these customers are between the ages of low and high. These customers enjoy offline

shopping for social reasons, including getting together with friends, and have the leisure to visit conventional retailers and malls. Because they research products online and buy them from physical stores, these customers seem to be better informed. The worldwide retail infrastructure is undergoing an E-transformation as a result of the rapid rise of e-commerce. The internet has become a more affordable way to conduct business. Even with all of the obstacles in the way, we are grateful for the growing internet, better salaries, and more astute populace. Safe online payments, improved electronic store policies, return guidelines, and attractive discounts may all contribute to consumers' perceptions of the advantages of shopping. Given the demographics of internet users, in the current Indian context, web shopping is significantly correlated with age, gender, and education. In general, the findings indicate that respondents had a favorable perception of internet purchasing. This amply supports the country's projected expansion in e-commerce. But the regularity of internet In comparison, there is less shopping in the nation. The study's discovered elements and factors can be utilized by online shopping companies to develop their strategies and plans within the nation. The companies are able to Give the needs of the customer, both explicit and implicit, top priority when purchasing online. Numerous businesses might utilize the information to determine which consumer categories are their target market. Practitioners might review or redesign their online buying strategy based on the study's findings. Online retailers ought to focus more on the female market, since data indicates that women make up the majority of online shoppers compared to men.

6. **Lokhande (2022).** Online shopping has rapidly transformed consumers' lives, becoming an impactful experience in a short time. Many believe that online shopping will continue to evolve, improving consumer shopping behavior by making it more efficient and effective, driving businesses to new heights and helping them tap into markets of tech-savvy consumers. According to a study, key reasons for choosing offline shopping include saving valuable time (56%), organizing finances (12%), shipping gifts directly (26%), and finding items that may not be available in stores (6%). The findings from this study highlight the importance for companies to take their online marketplaces seriously. The survey revealed that even among consumers who prefer shopping in physical stores, there is a positive attitude toward online shopping. These consumers, particularly from both younger and older age groups, often enjoy the time they spend in traditional stores and malls, valuing the social aspects of offline shopping,

such as meeting friends. These consumers tend to gather information online and are more informed when making in-store purchases. The rapid growth of e-commerce has prompted a global transformation in retail infrastructure. The Internet has become a cost-effective platform for business, and despite challenges like limited internet access and other barriers, factors like secure online payments, improved e-shops, flexible return policies, and attractive discounts have boosted the perception of online shopping's advantages. When considering the demographic profile of online users in India, factors such as gender, age, and education play a significant role in shaping web shopping behaviors. Overall, the results indicate a positive perception of online shopping among respondents.

7. **Pal (2023)** E-commerce has transformed the retail industry in many ways, affecting the online and offline shopping behaviour of consumers, as well as the sales, employment, competition, innovation, and customer satisfaction of retailers. E-commerce has also created new challenges and opportunities for retailers in the post-pandemic future, requiring them to integrate their online and offline channels, build customer loyalty, and address sustainability issues. E-commerce is not a threat but an opportunity for retailers who can adapt to the changing market conditions and customer needs..
8. **Reddy & Jayalaxmi (2014):** Online shopping has empowered consumers worldwide by allowing them to purchase any type of item, regardless of location. The convenience of shopping from home eliminates the need to leave one's location to buy desired products. This convenience has made online shopping a valuable asset for all types of consumers. It is particularly advantageous due to its time-saving nature and potential cost savings, as there's no need to visit physical stores. However, the major concerns that need addressing are limited internet access and security issues. Focus must be placed on overcoming these challenges for online shopping to be truly beneficial across India, and only then can it succeed on a larger scale. Otherwise, it risks becoming a niche activity for those seeking to avoid crowded spaces, losing its broader applicability. Traditional shopping, meanwhile, still offers the advantage of being able to physically examine and even try out products before purchasing.
9. **Sarkar & Das (2017):** Existing literature highlights significant differences between consumer purchase behaviors in online and offline shopping, influenced by various factors. Despite the rapid growth of online shopping in India and its projected future expansion, traditional brick-and-mortar stores still face challenges. Studies show that it

is primarily younger consumers who are driving the remarkable growth of online shopping in India. The rise of online shopping has certainly put pressure on physical stores, particularly due to large discounts offered by e-tailers, which have affected the profitability of these traditional outlets. Additionally, the skyrocketing costs of real estate in India have cast doubts on the future viability of brick-and-mortar businesses. On the other hand, despite the growing customer base of online retailers, none have yet reached profitability. Offering significant discounts on products has proven to be a challenge for these companies. Moreover, the large venture capital investments that previously supported these online businesses have recently diminished. As a result, the omni-channel strategy, which involves maintaining both online and offline presences to capture a wider customer base, has become a key focus for retailers.

10. **Schulze (2020):** It is clear that online shopping has become an essential and heavily relied-upon method for purchasing products. However, consumer purchasing behavior ultimately depends on the shopper's goals, and many still prefer the in-store experience. While the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated the shift toward online shopping, this trend is expected to continue driving innovation in retail, particularly in e-commerce. Brands are focusing on improving the e-commerce customer experience by enhancing shipping times, product descriptions, and leveraging customer reviews across product lines and social media. It will be interesting to observe whether these recent trends in online shopping persist once the pandemic subsides, especially since a significant portion of Indian consumers still prefer the "real" in-store shopping experience.

OBJECTIVES

1. To examine the various factors that drive consumers to prefer online shopping over offline shopping and vice versa. This includes convenience, pricing, product variety, and social influences.
2. To investigate how demographic variables such as age, gender, income level, and geographical location affect consumer preferences for online versus offline shopping.
3. To assess levels of satisfaction among consumers who shop online compared to those who shop offline, focusing on aspects like product quality, customer service, and return policies.
4. To predict future trends in consumer shopping behavior by analyzing current data and identifying emerging patterns in online and offline shopping preferences.

FINDINGS AND ANALYSES

The findings and analysis presented herein are based on primary research conducted through surveys.

TABLE 3.1 AGE GROUP OF THE RESPONDENTS

AGE	NO. OF RESPONDENTS	PERCENTAGE
18-24	39	73.6
24-30	13	24.5
30-36	1	1.9
36-40	0	0
TOTAL	53	100

Interpretation:

The data shows that 73.6% of respondents are aged 18-24, indicating a strong preference for online shopping among younger consumers. Only 24.5% are aged 24-30, with minimal representation from older groups. This suggests businesses should target younger demographics in their online marketing strategies for better engagement.

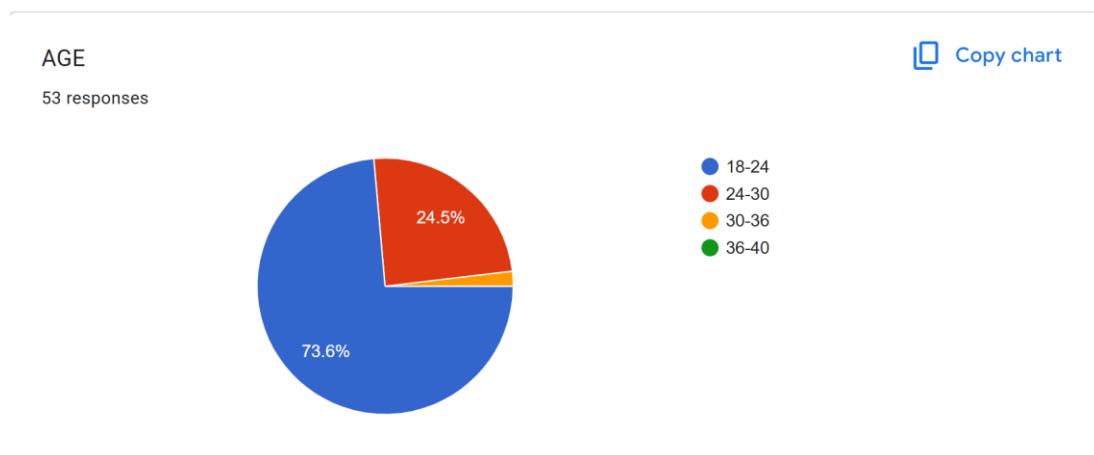


FIGURE 3.1 AGE GROUP OF RESPONDENTS

TABLE 3.2 PRIMARY REASON FOR INCREASING THE POPULARITY OF ONLINE SHOPPING

ATTRIBUTES	NO. OF RESPONDENTS	PERCENTAGE
WIDER RANGE OF PRODUCTS	16	30.2
COVINIENT AND TIME SAVING	14	26.4
LOWER PRICES	3	5.7
ALL OF THE ABOVE	20	37.7
TOTAL	53	100

Interpretation:

The survey reveals that consumers prioritize a wider range of products (30.2%) and convenience (26.4%) when choosing online shopping over offline options. Although lower prices are less influential (5.7%), a significant 37.7% value all factors collectively, highlighting a multifaceted approach to consumer preferences in shopping.

What is the primary reason for the increasing popularity of online shopping?

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53 responses

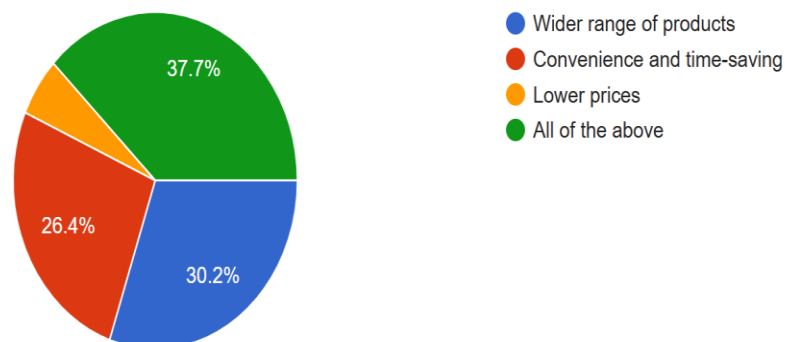
**FIGURE 3.2 PRIMARY REASON FOR THE INCREASING POPULARITY OF ONLINE SHOPPING**

TABLE 3.3 FACTOR THAT CONTRIBUTE MOST TO THE CONVENIENCE OF ONLINE SHOPPING

REASON	NO. OF RESPONDENTS	PERCENTAGE
24/7 ACCESS TO STORES	16	30.2
HOME DELIEVERY	12	22.6
EASY COMPARISION OF PRODUCTS	7	13.2
ALL OF THE ABOVE	18	34
TOTAL	53	100

Interpretation:

The survey reveals that 30.2% of respondents value 24/7 access to stores as the primary reason for choosing online shopping. Home delivery (22.6%) and easy product comparison (13.2%) also play roles, but 34% appreciate the combination of all factors, highlighting a preference for convenience and flexibility.

Which factor contributes most to the convenience of online shopping ?

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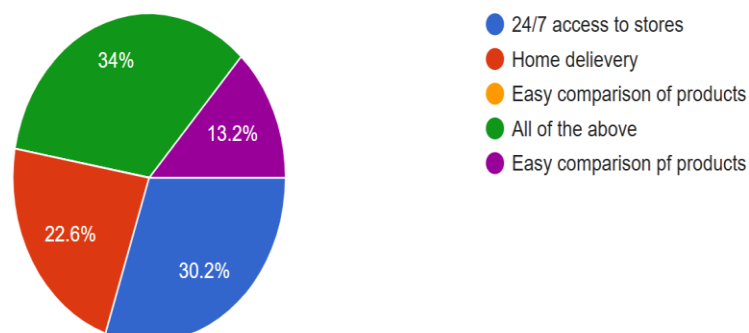


FIGURE 3.3 FACTOR THAT CONTRIBUTES MOST TO THE CONVENIENCE OF ONLINE SHOPPING

TABLE 3.4 WAYS IN WHICH ONLINE RETAILERS CAN IMPROVE CUSTOMER SATISFACTION

POINTS	NO. OF RESPONDENTS	PERCENTAGE
OFFERING EXCELLENT CUSTOMER SERVICE	12	22.6
PROVIDING FAST AND FREE SHIPPING	14	26.4
EASY RETURN AND EXCHANGE POLICIES	9	17
ALL OF THE ABOVE	18	34
TOTAL	53	100

Interpretation:

The survey indicates that 26.4% of respondents prioritize fast and free shipping as a key factor in online shopping. Excellent customer service (22.6%) and easy return policies (17%) are also important, with 34% valuing all aspects collectively, emphasizing the significance of a positive overall shopping experience.

How can online retailers improve customer satisfaction?

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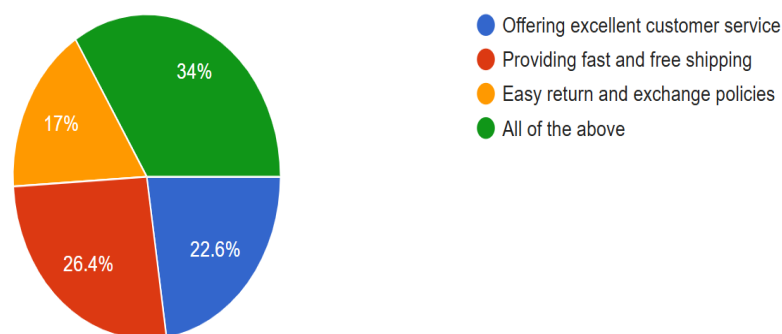
**FIGURE 3.4 WAYS IN WHICH ONLINE RETAILERS CAN IMPROVE CUSTOMER SATISFACTION**

TABLE 3.5 WAYS IN WHICH ONLINE RATAILERS PERSONALIZE SHOPPING EXPERIENCE

POINTS	NO. OF RESPONDENTS	PERCENTAGE
Recommending products based on browsing history	13	24.5
Offering targeted discounts and promotions	17	32.1
Providing personalized product recommendations	5	9.4
All of the above	18	34
Total	53	100

Interpretation:

The data highlights that 34% of respondents prefer all personalized marketing strategies, indicating a strong demand for tailored shopping experiences. Targeted discounts and promotions (32.1%) are also favoured, suggesting that consumers value incentives. This trend emphasizes the importance of leveraging personalized approaches in online shopping to enhance consumer engagement.

* How do online retailers personalize the shopping experience?

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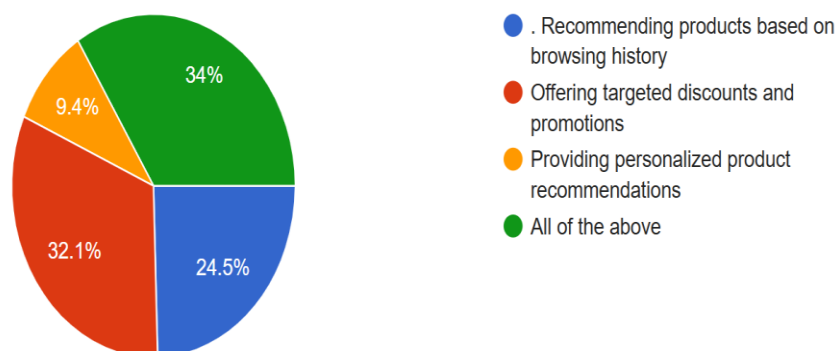


FIGURE 3.5 WAYS IN WHICH ONLINE RETAILERS PERSONALIZE SHOPPING EXPERIENCE

TABLE 3.6 WAYS IN WHICH ONLINE SHOPPING SAVE TIME AS COMPARED TO TRADITIONAL SHOPPING

POINTS	NO. OF RESPONDENTS	PERCENTAGE
No need to travel to physical stores	21	39.6
Faster checkout process	10	18.9
Less time spent searching for products	5	9.4
All of the above	17	32.1
Total	53	100

Interpretation:

The graph indicates that 39.6% of respondents appreciate the convenience of not traveling to physical stores, while 32.1% prefer a combination of benefits. Faster checkout (18.9%) and reduced search time (9.4%) also play roles, highlighting convenience as a key factor driving consumer preference for online shopping.

How does online shopping save time compared to traditional shopping?

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53 responses

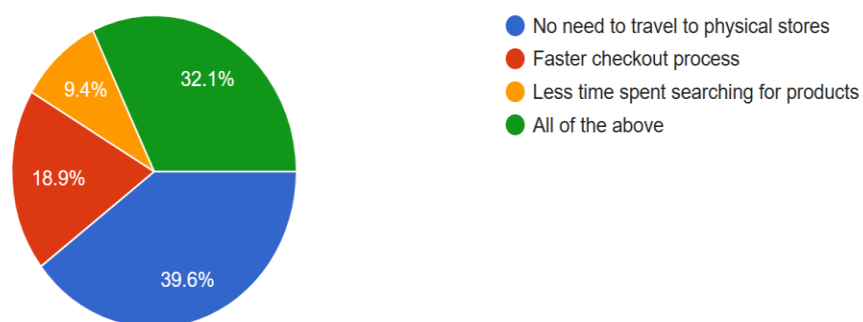
**FIGURE 3.6 WAYS IN WHICH ONLINE SHOPPING SAVE TIME COMPARED TO TRADITIONAL SHOPPING**

TABLE 3.7 THE BIGGEST CHALLENGE FACED BY ONLINE SHOPPERS

POINTS	NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS	PERCENTAGE
Inability to physically examine products	14	26.4
Longer delivery times	13	24.5
Risk of fraud	9	17
All of the above	17	32.1
Total	53	100

Interpretation:

The graph reveals that 32.1% of respondents recognize all mentioned concerns as barriers to online shopping. The inability to physically examine products (26.4%) and longer delivery times (24.5%) are significant worries, while 17% are concerned about fraud. These factors highlight critical challenges influencing consumer behavior in online retail.

What is the biggest challenge faced by online shoppers?

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53 responses

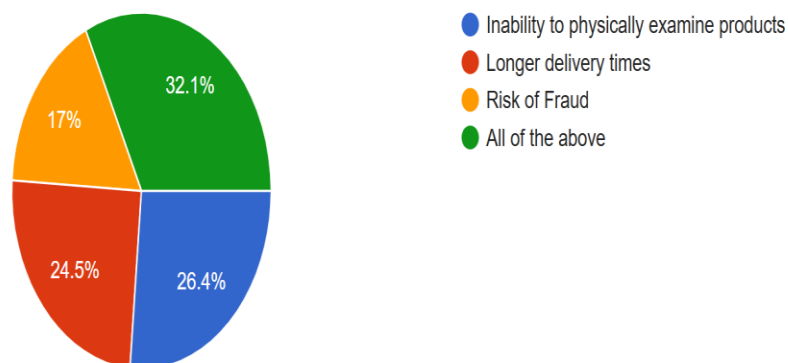


FIGURE 3.7 THE BIGGEST CHALLENGE FACED BY ONLINE SHOPPERS

TABLE 3.8 BIGGEST REASON FOR CONSUMERS TO SHOP ONLINE

POINTS	NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS	PERCENTAGE
Better Return Policy	14	26.4
Home delivery	14	26.4
More range of products	6	11.3
All of the above	19	35.8
Total	53	100

Interpretation:

The data shows that 35.8% of respondents value all aspects of online shopping benefits. Specifically, better return policies and home delivery (both 26.4%) are highly preferred, while a wider range of products (11.3%) is less emphasized. This indicates that convenience and customer-friendly policies are vital for online shoppers

What is the biggest reason for you to shop online?

53 responses

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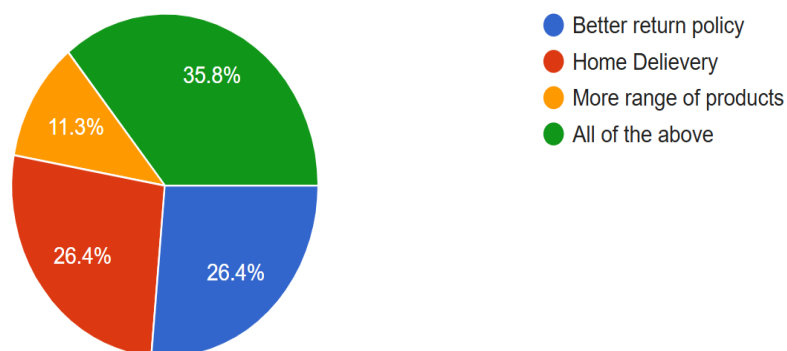
**FIGURE 3.8 BIGGEST REASON FOR CONSUMERS TO SHOP ONLINE**

TABLE 3.9 CONSUMERS'S RECOMMENDATION TO OTHERS AS MODE OF SHOPPING

POINTS	NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS	PERCENTAGE
More online less offline	23	43.4
Only online	10	18.9
Only offline	1	1.9
Both online and offline	19	35.8
TOTAL	53	100

Interpretation:

The graph reveals a strong preference for online shopping, with 43.4% of respondents favouring more online purchases. Additionally, 35.8% use both channels, while only 18.9% shop exclusively online and a mere 1.9% stick to offline. This highlights a clear shift towards online shopping in consumer behaviour.

What would you recommend others as mode of shopping?

53 responses

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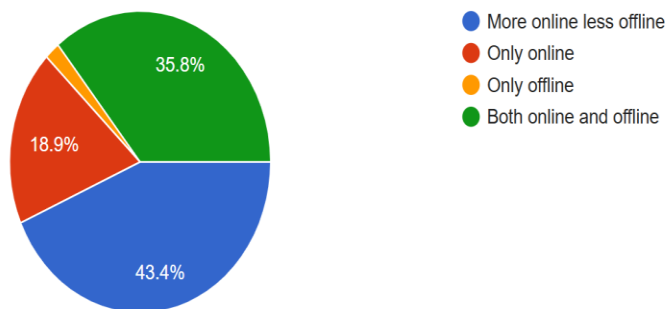


FIGURE 3.9 CONSUMER'S PREFERENCE TO OTHERS AS MODE OF SHOPPING

MAJOR FINDINGS FROM THE SURVEY

- A wide product range (30.2%) and convenience (26.4%) are the main drivers of online shopping's popularity, with 37.7% valuing all factors.
- Convenience features like 24/7 access (30.2%) and home delivery (22.6%) are key factors contributing to the appeal of online shopping.
- Fast and free shipping (26.4%) is the most valued factor for improving customer satisfaction, followed by excellent customer service (22.6%).
- Personalized shopping experiences, including targeted promotions (32.1%) and product recommendations (24.5%), are highly preferred by consumers.
- Online shopping saves time, especially by eliminating the need to travel (39.6%), with 32.1% valuing all time-saving benefits.
- The biggest challenges for online shoppers include the inability to physically examine products (26.4%) and longer delivery times (24.5%).
- Consumers primarily shop online due to better return policies (26.4%) and home delivery (26.4%), with 35.8% valuing all benefits.
- A strong shift towards online shopping is evident, with 43.4% recommending more online shopping and 35.8% using both online and offline options.

RECOMMENDATIONS BASED ON FINDINGS

- **Increase Education and Awareness:** Many consumers have misconceptions about online shopping, such as worries about product authenticity and delivery delays. Marketers should prioritize educating consumers through informative campaigns, clear product descriptions, and highlighting the benefits of online shopping to build trust and alleviate concerns.
- **Enhance User Experience:** Convenience is a key factor in both online and offline shopping. Retailers should focus on improving the online shopping experience by offering easy navigation, prompt customer support, and hassle-free return processes. Simultaneously, they should enhance the in-store experience with personalized services and interactive digital tools.
- **Address Product Experience Concerns:** Some consumers are skeptical about the reliability of online product reviews or worry about product quality discrepancies. Retailers should provide detailed product information, high-quality images, and virtual

try-on features for online shopping, while ensuring consistency in product quality across both channels to foster confidence.

- **Invest in Innovation:** Consumers are drawn to innovative shopping features, such as personalized recommendations, augmented reality (AR) for online shopping, and digital payment options for in-store purchases. Retailers should continue to embrace new technologies that improve both online and offline shopping experiences, making them more engaging and efficient.
- **Offer Transparent Pricing and Return Policies:** Providing clear and upfront information about pricing, shipping costs, and return policies can help ease concerns about online shopping. Offering competitive prices, simple return processes, and price-matching guarantees can encourage more consumers to shop online with confidence.

CONCLUSION

This study on "Customer Preferences in Online vs Offline Shopping" has provided valuable insights into how consumers perceive and evaluate both shopping modes, and their levels of satisfaction with each. The findings highlight the growing preference for online shopping due to its convenience, broader product selection, and ability to easily compare prices. However, concerns such as product authenticity, delivery times, and the inability to physically inspect items continue to influence consumer decisions and overall satisfaction. In conclusion, understanding customer preferences for both online and offline shopping is crucial for businesses seeking to enhance their retail strategies and drive customer satisfaction. By addressing the unique strengths and challenges of each shopping mode, retailers can create an integrated, seamless shopping experience that meets the diverse needs of modern consumers. This study provides valuable insights for businesses to better understand consumer behavior and develop strategies that bridge the gap between online and offline shopping experiences.

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