

Differences in Online Shopping Habits between Metro and Non-Metro Consumers

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Abstract: *This study examines the differences in online shopping habits between metro and non-metro consumers in India. With the rapid expansion of e-commerce, consumer behaviour has evolved significantly across regions. The research aims to compare factors such as frequency of online purchases, product preferences, payment methods, and influencing factors among consumers from metro and non-metro areas. The study is based on both primary and secondary data. Primary data was collected through a structured questionnaire from 120 respondents, while secondary data was obtained from journals, reports, and online sources. The findings reveal that metro consumers prefer convenience and time-saving aspects, whereas non-metro consumers are more price-sensitive and value-driven. Non-metro regions contribute significantly to the growth of e-commerce, accounting for more than 60% of total online orders. The study concludes that although both segments actively participate in online shopping, their motivations and purchasing patterns differ significantly.*

Keywords: Online shopping habits, Metro consumers. Non-metro consumers. E-commerce behaviour, Digital literacy, Consumer preferences.

I. INTRODUCTION

The rapid expansion of e-commerce in India has transformed consumer purchasing patterns across both metropolitan and non-metropolitan regions. While increased internet penetration, affordable smartphones, and widespread digital payment adoption have accelerated online shopping, the nature and extent of this adoption vary significantly between urban and rural, as well as semi-urban, consumers. Metro consumers typically benefit from advanced digital infrastructure, faster delivery networks, diverse product availability, and higher digital literacy, which shape their online shopping habits and expectations. In contrast, non-metro consumers often face challenges such as limited delivery options, inconsistent internet connectivity, and greater reliance on cash-on-delivery due to trust and security concerns. These contextual differences influence not only purchasing frequency and product categories but also attitudes toward online platforms, brand loyalty, and post-purchase satisfaction. Understanding these disparities is essential for e-commerce companies aiming to optimise last-mile delivery, customise marketing strategies, and enhance inclusivity in the digital marketplace. This study explores the differences in online shopping behaviour between metro and non-metro consumers, providing insights into the socio-economic, technological, and psychological factors that shape their purchasing decisions.

II. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Statement of problem:

Despite the rapid growth of e-commerce, there exists a significant variation in online shopping habits between metro and non-metro consumers. Understanding these differences is crucial for businesses to design effective marketing strategies and improve customer satisfaction.

Scope of study:

This study concentrates on examining the differences in online shopping habits between metro and non-metro consumers in India. It includes consumers from major metropolitan cities as well as those from tier-2 and tier-3 towns



who have made at least one online purchase in the past six months. The scope covers key behavioural aspects such as shopping frequency, preferred product categories, payment choices, delivery expectations, and the influence of factors like trust, convenience, digital literacy, and local infrastructure. The study evaluates how variations in internet connectivity, smartphone access, and delivery logistics shape online buying behaviour across the two consumer groups. While the research emphasises consumer-level patterns and perceptions, it excludes business-to-business transactions, purely offline retail behaviours, and internal operational data from e-commerce companies. The analysis is limited to consumer experiences and practices observed over the last one to two years, reflecting the post-pandemic surge in digital adoption. Overall, the study aims to provide insights that can help e-commerce platforms develop region-specific strategies to better serve diverse consumer segments.

Objectives:

1. To compare the frequency, patterns, and product preferences of online shopping between metro and non-metro consumers.
2. To analyse the key factors influencing online purchase decisions—such as convenience, trust, delivery speed, digital literacy, and payment preferences—across metro and non-metro regions.
3. To assess the role of infrastructure and accessibility, including internet connectivity and delivery logistics, in shaping online shopping behaviour in metro and non-metro areas.

Hypothesis:

- H0₁**: There is no significant difference in online shopping frequency and product preferences between metro and non-metro consumers.
- H1₁**: There is a significant difference in online shopping frequency and product preferences between metro and non-metro consumers.
- H0₂**: Factors influencing online purchase decisions do not differ significantly between metro and non-metro consumers.
- H1₂**: Factors influencing online purchase decisions differ significantly between metro and non-metro consumers.
- H0₃**: Infrastructure and accessibility do not significantly impact online shopping behaviour across metro and non-metro consumers.
- H1₃**: Infrastructure and accessibility significantly impact online shopping behaviour across metro and non-metro consumers.

III. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Studies show that metro consumers prefer online shopping due to time constraints and busy lifestyles. Non-metro consumers rely on online platforms to access a wider variety of branded products not available locally. Reports indicate that tier-2 and tier-3 cities contribute over 60% of online orders, showing higher growth potential. Online shopping offers benefits such as convenience, variety, and discounts, influencing consumer behavior across regions.

Research Methodology

- **Research Type:** Descriptive Research
- **Data Collection:**
 - Primary Data: Questionnaire
 - Secondary Data: Journals, reports, websites
- **Sample Size:** 120 respondents
- **Sampling Method:** Convenience Sampling
- **Tools Used:** Percentage analysis, charts



IV. DATA ANALYSIS & INTERPRETATION

Factor	Metro consumers (%)	Non-Metro consumers (%)
Frequency	60	40
Price sensitivity	30	70
Preference for discounts	50	80
Use of COD	20	60
Brand consciousness	75	45

Interpretation

- Metro consumers shop more frequently due to convenience
- Non-metro consumers are more price-sensitive
- Cash on Delivery is more popular in non-metro areas
- Metro consumers show higher brand preference

Limitations:

- **Limited sample representation** may not capture the full diversity of metro and non-metro consumers across India.
- **Reliance on self-reported data** can introduce response bias or inaccurate recall of shopping behaviour.
- **Broad classification of regions** may overlook differences within semi-urban or fast-developing towns.
- **Exclusion of non-online shoppers** limits insights into barriers faced by complete non-adopters.

Remedies

- Need to improve cybersecurity measures
- Enhance logistics and delivery systems
- Promote digital literacy in non-metro regions
- Offer flexible payment options

V. CONCLUSION

The study concludes that there are significant differences in online shopping habits between metro and non-metro consumers. Metro consumers prioritise convenience and brand value, whereas non-metro consumers focus on affordability and accessibility. However, non-metro regions are emerging as major contributors to e-commerce growth. Businesses must adopt region-specific strategies to cater to diverse consumer needs.

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