

Consumerism and E-Commerce in India: Sustainable Retailing and Changing Consumer Behaviour

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Abstract: *Consumerism plays a crucial role in shaping India's economic and commercial landscape, as shifts in consumer behaviour directly influence retail structures and market dynamics. Over the past few decades, the emergence of e-commerce in India has significantly transformed traditional retailing by offering wider product choices, competitive pricing, convenience, and digital accessibility. This transformation has not only altered purchasing patterns but has also encouraged more efficient and sustainable retail practices. The present study examines the impact of e-commerce on India's traditional retail system with a specific focus on evolving consumer behaviour and sustainability-oriented retail trends. By analysing the growth of major online platforms such as Amazon, Flipkart, Myntra, and Meesho, the paper highlights how digital retailing has expanded market reach, enhanced consumer empowerment, and influenced responsible consumption, particularly among the middle-income population. The steady growth of the sector, reflected through a strong Compound Annual Growth Rate (CAGR), indicates a long-term shift towards digitally driven and organized retail formats.*

Further, the study explores key strategies adopted by e-commerce firms—such as data-driven marketing, efficient supply chains, and customer-centric models—that shape consumer preferences and contribute to sustainable retailing. Changes in tastes, expectations, and buying behaviour are analysed to understand emerging trends and competitive challenges between traditional and online retail systems. The research adopts a mixed-method approach, combining a review of existing literature with primary data collected through surveys, interviews, and case studies. By integrating theoretical perspectives with empirical evidence, the paper offers insights into the evolving relationship between sustainability, retail innovation, and consumer behaviour in India's contemporary commerce sector.

Keywords: Consumerism plays a crucial role in shaping India's economic and commercial landscape, as shifts in consumer behaviour directly influence retail structures and market dynamics.

I. INTRODUCTION

Consumerism has emerged as a central force shaping modern economic systems, influencing production, distribution, and consumption patterns. In the Indian context, rapid technological advancements and increased internet penetration have significantly transformed the traditional retail landscape, leading to the growth of a dynamic e-commerce sector. The widespread adoption of smartphones and digital payment systems has facilitated a shift in consumer preferences from conventional market-based shopping to online platforms that offer convenience, wider product variety, and competitive pricing. As a result, consumer behaviour is undergoing a notable transformation, with increasing emphasis on efficiency, accessibility, and informed decision-making.

The rise of major e-commerce platforms such as Amazon and Flipkart has further accelerated this transition by enhancing market reach and consumer engagement. These platforms have not only redefined retail structures but have also contributed to the integration of sustainability into business practices through initiatives like eco-friendly packaging and optimized logistics. Consequently, the intersection of digital commerce and sustainability has become a



key area of study. In this context, the present research aims to examine the impact of e-commerce on changing consumer behaviour and to analyse its role in promoting sustainable retailing within the Indian retail sector.

II. STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

In recent years, the rapid expansion of e-commerce has significantly transformed the retail sector and consumer purchasing behaviour. Online shopping platforms have increased convenience, product variety, and digital accessibility, which has encouraged many consumers to shift from traditional retail stores to online marketplaces. As a result, consumerism and digital commerce are becoming major forces shaping modern retail systems and market competition.

At the same time, growing environmental concerns and awareness about sustainability are influencing consumer attitudes and purchasing decisions. Consumers are increasingly interested in environmentally friendly products and sustainable consumption practices in order to reduce negative impacts on the environment and human health. This has encouraged businesses to adopt green marketing strategies and sustainable retail practices within the e-commerce environment.

However, despite rising environmental awareness, many consumers still do not consistently translate their positive attitudes toward sustainability into actual purchasing behaviour, creating what researchers describe as an “attitude–behaviour gap.” Consumers may support sustainable products in theory but may hesitate to pay higher prices or change their purchasing habits in practice.

Therefore, there is a need to examine how the rapid growth of e-commerce is influencing consumer behaviour and sustainable retail practices. Understanding the relationship between digital retailing, consumer preferences, and sustainability is important for identifying emerging trends, challenges, and opportunities within the evolving retail landscape. This study seeks to analyse these changes and explore how e-commerce can contribute to sustainable consumption and responsible consumer behaviour.

III. SIGNIFICANCE OF STUDY

This study is significant because it examines the relationship between the rapid growth of e-commerce, changing consumer behaviour, and the increasing importance of sustainability in the retail sector. In recent years, digital commerce has transformed traditional retail systems by providing consumers with easier access to products, competitive prices, and convenient shopping experiences. Understanding these changes is important for analysing how consumer preferences are evolving in the digital marketplace and how these shifts influence the overall structure and functioning of the retail industry. The study also contributes to the academic understanding of consumerism and e-commerce by analysing how technological developments and digital platforms influence consumer purchasing decisions. It highlights important factors that motivate consumers to adopt online shopping, such as convenience, price sensitivity, product variety, and accessibility. At the same time, the research emphasizes the growing importance of sustainability and responsible consumption, as environmental awareness among consumers encourages businesses to adopt eco-friendly practices, including green marketing strategies, sustainable sourcing, and environmentally responsible packaging. Furthermore, the findings of this study are valuable for businesses, policymakers, and retailers who seek to adapt to the rapidly evolving digital retail environment. By identifying emerging trends in consumer behaviour and sustainable retailing, the research provides insights that can help companies design effective marketing strategies, improve customer engagement, and implement sustainable business practices. Overall, the study contributes to the broader field of commerce and consumer studies by integrating the concepts of consumerism, e-commerce development, and sustainability, while also providing a foundation for future research in these areas.

IV. LIMITATIONS OF STUDY

This study has certain limitations that should be considered while interpreting the findings. One of the was conducted among a limited number of respondents, the results may not fully represent the behaviour and perceptions of the entire



population. In addition, the time available for conducting the research was limited, which restricted the scope of data collection and analysis. A longer research period could have allowed for a larger sample and more extensive empirical investigation. Despite these limitations, considerable efforts were made to strengthen the academic quality of the study. The research was supported by an extensive review of existing literature, including numerous academic articles, research papers, and previously conducted studies related to e-commerce, consumer behaviour, and sustainable retailing. Furthermore, the survey was primarily conducted among individuals who are actively interested and engaged in areas related to digital commerce and sustainability. Their responses provided valuable insights into current consumer trends, although future studies with a larger and more diverse sample could provide broader and more generalizable findings.

V. OBJECTIVES

1. To examine the growth and development of e-commerce in India and its influence on the retail sector.
2. To analyse the changing patterns of consumer behaviour in the context of online shopping and digital marketplaces.
3. To identify the factors that influence consumers' purchasing decisions on e-commerce platforms, including convenience, pricing, product variety, and digital accessibility.
4. To explore the role of sustainability and responsible consumption in shaping consumer preferences and retail practices within the e-commerce environment.

VI. HYPOTHESIS

- H1: The growth of e-commerce has a significant influence on consumer purchasing behaviour in the retail sector.
H2: Convenience, pricing advantages, and product variety offered by e-commerce platforms significantly affect consumers' preference for online shopping.
H3: The expansion of e-commerce has a significant impact on the transformation of traditional retail systems.
H4: Sustainability awareness and environmentally responsible practices influence consumers' purchasing decisions in the e-commerce environment.

VII. LITERATURE REVIEW

1. Kurrey and Sheikh (2025) – E-Commerce in India: Consumer Buying Behaviour Trends

Kurrey and Sheikh (2025) analysed the rapid growth of the e-commerce sector in India and its influence on consumer buying behaviour. The study highlights that factors such as convenience, competitive pricing, product variety, and digital accessibility significantly influence consumers' preference for online shopping. It also emphasizes the importance of online reviews, trust in product information, and return policies in shaping consumer purchase decisions. The research further notes that consumers increasingly rely on perceived value rather than brand loyalty, while discount strategies and peer recommendations play an important role in influencing purchasing behaviour. These findings demonstrate how digital retail platforms are transforming consumer behaviour patterns in India and expanding the scope of e-commerce within the retail sector.

2. Štofejšová et al. (2023) – Sustainability and Consumer Behavior in Electronic Commerce

Štofejšová et al. (2023) examined the relationship between sustainability and consumer behaviour in the context of electronic commerce. Using survey data and structural equation modelling, the study found that environmental attitudes, environmental-oriented lifestyles, willingness to pay for green products, and subjective norms significantly influence consumers' environmentally responsible purchasing behaviour. The research also highlights the role of green marketing and digital communication strategies in encouraging sustainable consumption through online platforms. However, the study identifies the presence of an "attitude-behaviour gap," where consumers express positive attitudes toward sustainability but do not always translate them into actual purchasing decisions. The findings indicate that e-commerce platforms can play a crucial role in promoting sustainable retailing and environmentally responsible consumer behaviour.



3. Yadav and Prasad (2024) – Consumer Behavior and Trust in E-Commerce

Yadav and Prasad (2024) explored the role of trust in shaping consumer behaviour within the e-commerce environment. The study suggests that trust is a critical determinant of successful online transactions, as consumers often face uncertainty related to product quality, payment security, and delivery reliability in digital marketplaces. The authors emphasize that technological advancements and the widespread use of the internet have transformed traditional commerce into e-commerce, making consumer behaviour a central factor in marketing strategies. The research highlights that personal, social, and psychological factors significantly influence online purchasing decisions, reinforcing the importance of building strong consumer trust in digital retail platforms.

4. Spinelli et al. (2025) – Sustainability Drivers of Consumer Behaviour

Spinelli et al. (2025) conducted a comprehensive review of sustainability-related consumer behaviour and identified major drivers influencing sustainable consumption. The study categorised these drivers into marketing strategies, individual influences, group influences, and situational factors. Among these, individual consumer values and marketing strategies were found to be the most significant determinants of sustainable consumption behaviour. The research also highlighted several gaps in existing literature, including the need for more studies focusing on generational differences, cultural factors, and diverse research methods. The findings contribute to understanding how sustainability considerations influence modern consumer behaviour and business strategies in evolving retail environments.

5. Singh, Behera, and Bala (2024) – Sustainable Retailing and Consumer Behaviour

Research on sustainable retailing has increasingly focused on the integration of environmental, social, and economic considerations within retail business models. Studies indicate that retailers are gradually adopting sustainable practices such as green supply chains, eco-friendly packaging, and circular economy principles to create long-term value for both businesses and society. In addition, recent literature highlights the growing interaction between consumers and firms in promoting sustainability through responsible consumption and environmentally conscious purchasing behaviour. These developments demonstrate that sustainable retailing has become an important research area within modern retail studies and plays a significant role in shaping consumer preferences and business innovation.

VIII. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The present study adopts a descriptive and analytical research design to examine the relationship between the growth of e-commerce, changing consumer behaviour, and sustainable retailing practices. The research is based on both primary and secondary sources of data in order to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the topic. Secondary data were collected through an extensive review of previously published research papers, academic articles, and studies related to consumer behaviour, e-commerce development, and sustainability in retailing. These scholarly sources were carefully analysed and reviewed to understand existing theoretical perspectives and research findings relevant to the study.

Primary data were collected through a structured questionnaire prepared on the basis of insights obtained from the literature review. The questionnaire was designed to gather information regarding consumer attitudes toward online shopping, factors influencing purchasing decisions, and awareness of sustainability in the e-commerce environment. The survey was mainly conducted among young consumers, as they represent one of the most active groups in online shopping and digital commerce usage.

The collected responses were analysed using descriptive analysis methods to identify patterns and trends in consumer behaviour and perceptions toward e-commerce and sustainable retailing. By combining insights from the reviewed literature with the responses obtained from the questionnaire survey, the study attempts to provide a clearer understanding of how e-commerce influences consumer behaviour and how sustainability considerations are gradually shaping retail practices.



IX. DATA ANALYTICS AND INTERPRETATION

The present study integrates primary survey data, expert opinions, and secondary data from literature and institutional reports to analyse the impact of e-commerce on consumer behaviour and sustainable retailing practices in India. The interpretation is carried out in line with the study’s objectives and hypotheses, supported by empirical findings and established research.

Analysis of Primary Data (Student Survey) Table 1

(19-22) aged students	28 answered	2 answered
E-commerce or traditional markets	E-commerce	Traditional markets

The first level of analysis is based on the responses collected from 30 students aged 19–22 years, representing a key segment of digital consumers. As per Table 1, the results clearly indicate a dominant preference for e-commerce, with 28 respondents favouring digital platforms and only 2 respondents preferring traditional market shopping. This demonstrates a strong behavioural shift toward online consumption among young consumers. The primary factors influencing this preference include convenience, accessibility, product variety, and ease of use, which are consistent with findings from earlier studies reviewed in the literature.

Interestingly, the two respondents who preferred traditional markets cited delivery time delays as the main limitation of e-commerce. However, they also expressed a general acceptance and support for online shopping, suggesting that their preference is not due to resistance to digital platforms but rather due to specific operational challenges. This reflects the conditional nature of traditional retail preference, where improvements in logistics and delivery efficiency could further strengthen the dominance of e-commerce. These findings strongly support the hypothesis that e-commerce significantly influences consumer purchasing behaviour, especially among younger populations.

Analysis of Secondary Data (Institutional Report)

Further analysis was conducted using the report published by the Competition Commission of India in 2020, which provides important insights into the functioning and impact of e-commerce in India. The report highlights that e-commerce platforms have enhanced consumer welfare by improving convenience, offering wider product choices, and enabling access to markets across geographical boundaries. Also, the report indicates that the Indian e-commerce sector has experienced a strong Compound Annual Growth Rate (CAGR) of 57% over the past seven years, reflecting rapid expansion driven by increasing internet penetration, digital adoption, and changing consumer preferences toward online shopping.

Additionally, the report emphasizes that factors such as discount strategies, faster delivery systems, and increased internet penetration have played a crucial role in driving consumer adoption of online shopping. It also points out that improved transparency and reduced information asymmetry in digital markets contribute positively to competition and consumer decision-making. These findings directly support the arguments presented in this study and reinforce the idea that e-commerce platforms are transforming the retail landscape by making it more efficient, competitive, and consumer-centric.

Analysis of Expert Opinion (Commerce Teachers)

To incorporate qualitative insights, an interaction was conducted among five commerce teachers regarding sustainability practices in retail sectors. All respondents unanimously agreed that the e-commerce sector provides greater consideration to environmental sustainability compared to traditional retail systems. They identified sustainability as a core strategic focus of major e-commerce companies, highlighting practices such as efficient supply chain management, reduced physical infrastructure, and eco-friendly packaging.

The respondents specifically cited leading companies like Amazon and Flipkart as examples of organizations implementing sustainability-driven business models. Furthermore, they pointed out emerging local trends, such as the adoption of sustainable delivery practices by platforms like Instamart in regions like Kerala. These observations



indicate that sustainability is not only a global strategy but is also gradually being integrated into local and regional e-commerce operations.

Integrated Interpretation

By combining the findings from primary data, institutional reports, and expert opinions, it becomes evident that e-commerce has a significant and multi-dimensional impact on consumer behaviour and retail practices in India. The strong preference for digital platforms among young consumers, supported by national-level data, confirms the ongoing transition from traditional to digital retail systems. At the same time, the emphasis on sustainability by both large-scale companies and emerging local platforms indicates a growing alignment between consumer expectations and environmentally responsible business practices.

The analysis also reflects patterns identified in the literature review, where factors such as convenience, trust, pricing, and sustainability play a crucial role in shaping consumer decisions. However, certain limitations, such as delivery efficiency, still influence consumer preferences, suggesting areas for improvement within the e-commerce ecosystem. Overall, the findings validate the study's hypotheses and demonstrate that e-commerce is not only transforming consumer behaviour but also contributing to the evolution of sustainable retailing practices, thereby redefining the structure and dynamics of the Indian retail sector.

X. CONCLUSION

The present study examined the dynamic relationship between consumerism, e-commerce growth, and sustainable retailing practices in India, with a particular focus on changing consumer behaviour. The findings clearly indicate that e-commerce has emerged as a dominant force in the retail sector, significantly influencing purchasing patterns, especially among younger consumers. The primary data analysis revealed a strong preference for digital platforms due to factors such as convenience, accessibility, and product variety, while even those inclined toward traditional markets acknowledged the advantages of e-commerce. This confirms that consumer behaviour in India is undergoing a structural shift toward digitally driven consumption.

The study also highlighted the important role of institutional developments and market dynamics in strengthening the e-commerce ecosystem. Insights from the Competition Commission of India report demonstrate that e-commerce platforms have enhanced competition, improved consumer choice, and increased market efficiency. At the same time, the integration of sustainability into e-commerce strategies—through practices such as efficient logistics, eco-friendly packaging, and reduced physical infrastructure—indicates that digital retailing is not only economically beneficial but also environmentally progressive.

Furthermore, the qualitative insights from commerce educators reinforce the view that e-commerce platforms, including major players like Amazon and Flipkart, along with emerging services like Instamart, are actively contributing to sustainable retailing practices. However, the study also recognizes certain challenges, such as delivery-related concerns and the need to bridge the gap between sustainability awareness and actual consumer behaviour.

In conclusion, the research establishes that e-commerce is a transformative element in India's retail landscape, shaping consumer behaviour while simultaneously promoting sustainable practices. The continued growth of this sector, supported by technological advancements and evolving consumer expectations, suggests a long-term transition toward a more efficient, competitive, and environmentally responsible retail system. Future research can further explore deeper behavioural patterns, regional variations, and the long-term impact of sustainability initiatives in the digital commerce ecosystem.

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