

Online Preferences of Customers: A Study of Consumer Buying Behaviour in The Digital Era

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Abstract: *The rapid growth of internet technology and digital platforms has significantly transformed consumer buying behaviour across the world. Online shopping has become an important part of modern consumer lifestyles due to convenience, wider product availability, competitive pricing, and easy access to information. This study examines the online preferences of customers and the factors influencing their purchasing decisions in the digital marketplace. The paper highlights the role of social media marketing, online reviews, digital payment systems, discounts, and e-commerce platforms in shaping consumer preferences. The study also discusses the advantages and challenges associated with online shopping behaviour. Findings indicate that convenience, time-saving, product variety, and attractive promotional offers are the major reasons consumers prefer online shopping over traditional purchasing methods. However, concerns regarding product quality, privacy, cyber fraud, and delayed delivery remain major challenges affecting customer trust. The study concludes that online consumer preferences are continuously evolving with technological advancements and increasing internet penetration, making digital commerce an essential component of the modern economy.*

Keywords: Online Shopping, Consumer Buying Behaviour, Customer Preferences, E-Commerce, Digital Marketing, Consumer Satisfaction, Online Purchasing, Social Media Marketing, Digital Payments

I. INTRODUCTION

The development of digital technology and internet services has revolutionized the global business environment and consumer purchasing behaviour. In recent years, online shopping has become one of the fastest-growing sectors due to increasing smartphone usage, internet penetration, and digital payment systems. Consumers today prefer online platforms for purchasing products and services because they offer convenience, flexibility, wider product choices, and easy access to information. E-commerce platforms such as Amazon, Flipkart, and Myntra have transformed traditional shopping patterns by enabling consumers to purchase products anytime and from anywhere. Social media platforms and digital advertisements further influence customer preferences through online promotions, influencer marketing, customer reviews, and personalized recommendations. Consumer preferences in online shopping are influenced by several factors such as price, product quality, delivery services, security, discounts, convenience, and payment methods. The increasing popularity of digital wallets, Unified Payments Interface (UPI), and cashless transactions has also encouraged online purchasing behaviour. Online shopping not only saves time and travel costs but also provides customers with opportunities to compare products and prices before making purchasing decisions. However, despite its growing popularity, online shopping also faces challenges such as cyber fraud, privacy concerns, fake reviews, delayed deliveries, and lack of physical product inspection. Therefore, understanding online customer preferences has become essential for businesses and marketers to design effective marketing strategies and improve customer satisfaction. This study focuses on analysing the factors influencing online consumer preferences and examining the changing behaviour of customers in the digital marketplace.



Concept of Online Customer Preferences

Online customer preferences refer to the choices, interests, and buying decisions of consumers while purchasing products and services through digital platforms. These preferences are influenced by factors such as convenience, pricing, product quality, brand reputation, online reviews, delivery services, payment security, and promotional offers. Consumers use websites, mobile applications, and social media platforms to search for product information, compare alternatives, and make purchasing decisions. Online customer preferences continuously change with technological developments, changing lifestyles, and digital innovations.

Factors Influencing Online Preferences of Customers

1. Convenience and Time Saving

Consumers prefer online shopping because it allows them to purchase products anytime and from anywhere without visiting physical stores. It saves travel time and provides doorstep delivery services.

2. Discounts and Promotional Offers

Attractive discounts, cashback offers, festival sales, and promotional campaigns strongly influence customer preferences toward online shopping platforms.

3. Variety of Products

Online platforms provide a wide range of products, brands, and categories, allowing consumers to compare features and prices easily.

4. Customer Reviews and Ratings

Consumers rely heavily on reviews and ratings shared by other buyers before making purchasing decisions. Positive reviews increase consumer trust and confidence.

5. Easy Payment Methods

Digital payment systems such as UPI, debit cards, credit cards, and digital wallets make online transactions convenient and secure.

6. Social Media Influence

Social media advertisements, influencer marketing, and online promotions significantly affect customer preferences and buying behaviour.

Growth of Online Shopping (2020–2026)

| Year | Estimated Market Size (US\$ Billion) | Growth Trend |
|------|--------------------------------------|--|
| 2020 | 50 | Rapid growth during COVID-19 pandemic |
| 2021 | 67 | Increase in digital transactions |
| 2022 | 83 | Expansion of e-commerce services |
| 2023 | 100 | Growth in mobile commerce |
| 2024 | 120 | Higher adoption in smaller cities |
| 2025 | 145 | Increasing use of digital payments |
| 2026 | 185 | Projected expansion of e-commerce market |

Advantages of Online Shopping

- Convenience and flexibility
- Wider product availability
- Easy price comparison
- Time-saving purchasing process



- Multiple payment options
- Attractive discounts and offers
- Easy access to customer reviews

Challenges of Online Shopping

- Risk of cyber fraud and online scams
- Privacy and security concerns
- Delayed delivery services
- Fake product reviews
- Lack of physical inspection of products
- Complicated return procedures
- Dependence on internet connectivity

Consumer Attraction Towards Online Shopping

| Factors | Percentage of Consumers (%) |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Discounts and Offers | 82% |
| Free Delivery | 76% |
| Customer Reviews | 70% |
| Product Variety | 72% |
| Easy Payment Options | 68% |
| Social Media Advertisements | 64% |
| Influencer Recommendations | 58% |

Findings of the Study

- Convenience and time-saving are the major reasons consumers prefer online shopping.
- Discounts, cashback offers, and free delivery services strongly influence customer preferences.
- Customer reviews and ratings significantly affect purchasing decisions.
- Social media marketing and influencer promotions play an important role in attracting consumers.
- Security concerns and fake reviews remain major challenges affecting consumer trust.
- Online shopping has increased rapidly due to smartphone usage and digital payment systems.

Suggestions

- E-commerce companies should improve cybersecurity measures to increase customer trust.
- Businesses should provide accurate product information and genuine reviews.
- Faster delivery and easy return policies should be implemented to improve customer satisfaction.
- Companies should use ethical digital marketing strategies to avoid misleading advertisements.
- Awareness regarding secure online transactions should be promoted among consumers.

II. CONCLUSION

Online shopping has become an important component of modern consumer lifestyles due to technological advancements and increasing internet accessibility. Consumer preferences toward online purchasing are influenced by convenience, discounts, product variety, digital payment systems, and social media marketing. E-commerce platforms



have transformed traditional shopping methods by providing consumers with flexible and efficient purchasing experiences. Despite several advantages, online shopping also faces challenges related to privacy, security, fake reviews, and delivery issues. Therefore, businesses must focus on improving customer trust, service quality, and digital security to maintain long-term customer relationships. The future of online shopping in India appears highly promising due to continuous growth in digital infrastructure, smartphone usage, and e-commerce adoption.

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