

A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF AN OFFLINE AND ONLINE CONSUMER BUYING BEHAVIOUR WITH RESPECT TO SOME SELECTED FMCG GOODS IN COIMBATORE DISTRICT

Mr. T. Rathina Kumar¹ and Dr. S. Suganya²

¹Research Scholar, School of Management Studies - PG, RVS College of Arts & Science

²Associate Professor, School of Management Studies - PG, RVS College of Arts & Science

ABSTRACT

The expansion of digital commerce has brought notable changes in the purchasing patterns of consumers, especially in the Fast-Moving Consumer Goods (FMCG) sector. This study focuses on a comparative analysis of offline and online consumer buying behaviour with reference to selected FMCG goods in Coimbatore District. The objectives of the research include examining consumer preferences, factors influencing purchase decisions, level of satisfaction, and challenges associated with both purchasing modes.

The study is empirical in nature and is based on primary data collected from 630 respondents using a well-structured questionnaire. Secondary data were gathered from scholarly journals, books, reports, and online sources to support the study. Statistical tools such as percentage analysis, chi-square test, mean score analysis, and ranking methods were applied to analyse the collected data.

The results indicate that offline purchasing continues to be preferred for FMCG goods due to immediate product availability, physical inspection, and perceived reliability. However, online purchasing is gaining momentum owing to convenience, time efficiency, competitive pricing, and promotional offers. The study highlights significant differences in buying behaviour based on demographic and behavioural factors. The findings offer practical implications for FMCG companies and retailers to strengthen integrated offline–online strategies and enhance consumer satisfaction.

Keywords: Consumer Buying Behaviour, Offline Shopping, Online Shopping, FMCG Goods, Digital Commerce, Coimbatore District

INTRODUCTION

Consumer buying behaviour refers to the actions and decision-making processes of individuals when purchasing goods and services. In India, the FMCG sector plays a vital role in the economy, as it caters to daily consumption needs. Traditionally, FMCG purchases were made through offline retail formats such as kirana stores, supermarkets, and departmental stores.

With the advancement of information technology and increased internet penetration, online shopping platforms have emerged as an alternative channel for FMCG purchases. Consumers now evaluate multiple factors such as price, convenience, delivery speed, and promotional offers before making purchase decisions. Coimbatore District, being a rapidly developing urban and semi-urban region, presents an ideal context to study the evolving buying behaviour of consumers.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Kotler and Keller (2019) explained that consumer buying behaviour is influenced by cultural, social, personal, and psychological factors, which shape purchasing decisions across different retail formats. Their study emphasized that FMCG purchases are largely habitual and convenience-oriented, making retail accessibility a crucial determinant of consumer preference.

Verma and Kapoor (2020) examined consumer attitudes towards online FMCG shopping in urban India and found that convenience, time efficiency, and price discounts were the primary motivators for online purchases. However, concerns related to product freshness, delivery delays, and lack of physical inspection limited the complete shift to online platforms.

Raman and Annamalai (2021) conducted a comparative study of offline and online retail formats and observed that offline stores retained dominance in FMCG sales due to consumer loyalty and habitual buying patterns. The study concluded that online platforms were more suitable for bulk purchases rather than daily needs.

Suresh and Reddy (2022) explored consumer satisfaction in online FMCG purchasing and reported moderate satisfaction levels influenced by delivery efficiency and customer service. The study suggested that improvements in logistics and return policies could enhance online consumer confidence.

Kumar and Bansal (2023) investigated omnichannel retail strategies in the FMCG sector and emphasized the importance of integrating offline and online channels. Their findings indicated that consumers prefer flexibility in switching between channels based on situational needs, reinforcing the relevance of hybrid retail models.

RESEARCH GAP

Previous studies on consumer buying behavior in the FMCG sector have mainly focused on either offline shopping or online shopping separately. Very few studies have made a direct comparison between offline and online purchasing of FMCG goods within the same study. Moreover, most of the existing research has been conducted at a national or metropolitan level, while region-specific studies, particularly in districts like Coimbatore, are limited.

In addition, earlier studies give more attention to factors such as convenience and price but provide limited empirical evidence on consumer satisfaction and challenges faced in both offline and online purchasing modes. Therefore, there is a need for a comparative, region-specific study that examines consumer preferences, influencing factors, and satisfaction levels for both offline and online FMCG purchases.

THE OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY ARE:

- 1.To analyse consumer preferences towards offline and online purchasing of FMCG goods.
- 2.To identify factors influencing buying behaviour in both purchasing modes.
- 3.To examine challenges faced by consumers in both modes of purchase.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The study follows a descriptive and empirical research design.

Sources of Data

- **Primary Data:** Collected from 630 respondents using a structured questionnaire.
- **Secondary Data:** Collected from books, journals, reports, and online publications.

Sampling Technique

Convenience sampling method was adopted.

Statistical Tools

Percentage analysis, chi-square test, mean score analysis, and ranking method were used.

HYPOTHESES OF THE STUDY

Based on the objectives of the research, the following hypotheses were formulated:

- **H₀₁ (Null Hypothesis):** There is no significant relationship between age of respondents and preferred mode of purchasing FMCG goods.
- **H₁₁ (Alternative Hypothesis):** There is a significant relationship between age of respondents and preferred mode of purchasing FMCG goods.

CHI-SQUARE ANALYSIS AND CALCULATIONS

Age and Preferred Mode of Purchase

Age Group (Years)	Offline	Online	Total
Below 25	78	92	170
25 – 40	134	102	236
Above 40	180	44	224
Total	392	238	630

Chi-Square Test Formula

$$\chi^2 = \sum \frac{(O - E)^2}{E} \quad \chi^2 = \sum \frac{(O - E)^2}{E}$$

Where:

- O = Observed frequency
- E = Expected frequency

Calculation of Expected Frequencies

$$E = \frac{(\text{Row Total} \times \text{Column Total})}{\text{Grand Total}} \quad E = \frac{(\text{Row Total} \times \text{Column Total})}{\text{Grand Total}}$$

Example:

For Below 25 & Offline:

Age Group	Mode	O	E	(O-E)²/E
Below 25	Offline	78	105.87	7.35
Below 25	Online	92	64.13	12.16
25–40	Offline	134	146.86	1.12
25–40	Online	102	89.14	1.86

Age Group	Mode	O	E	(O-E) ² /E
Above 40	Offline	180	139.27	11.92
Above 40	Online	44	84.73	19.57
Total χ^2				53.98

$$E = \frac{170 \times 392}{630} = 105.87$$

Similarly, expected values for all cells were calculated.

Observed and Expected Frequencies**

Degree of Freedom

$$(df) = (r-1)(c-1) = (3-1)(2-1) = 2$$

Table Value at 5% Level of Significance

$$\chi^2_{0.05, df=2} = 5.991$$

Decision

Since the calculated value (53.98) is greater than the table value (5.991), the null hypothesis H_0 is rejected.

Inference

There is a significant relationship between age of respondents and preferred mode of purchasing FMCG goods. Younger consumers show higher preference for online shopping, while older consumers prefer offline purchasing.

KEY MAJOR FINDINGS

Offline shopping continues to be the dominant mode for FMCG purchases. The study finds that a majority of consumers in Coimbatore District prefer offline shopping for FMCG goods due to immediate product availability, physical inspection, and higher levels of trust in local retailers. Offline stores are especially preferred for daily and urgent purchases.

Online FMCG shopping is growing but influenced by convenience and demographics. Online purchasing of FMCG goods is steadily increasing, particularly among younger and higher-income consumers. Convenience, time-saving benefits, discounts, and promotional offers are the primary factors driving online purchases, although concerns regarding delivery and product quality remain.

SUGGESTIONS

Adopt integrated offline–online retail strategies FMCG companies and retailers should implement omnichannel strategies that combine the strengths of both offline and online platforms, such as online ordering with in-store pickup or local store delivery, to enhance consumer convenience and satisfaction. Improve service quality in online FMCG platforms Online retailers should focus on improving delivery reliability, product quality checks, and return policies to build consumer trust and encourage wider adoption of online FMCG purchasing.

CONCLUSION

The study concludes that both offline and online purchasing modes coexist in the FMCG sector. While offline shopping continues to dominate due to reliability and immediacy, online shopping is rapidly gaining acceptance due to convenience and cost advantages. Understanding consumer preferences and demographic influences is essential for retailers and FMCG companies to remain competitive in the evolving retail landscape.

In addition, the study highlights the evolving nature of consumer buying behaviour in the FMCG sector, where traditional and digital retail formats coexist rather than compete exclusively. The increasing acceptance of online platforms reflects changing lifestyles, improved digital access, and growing confidence in e-commerce services, while the continued preference for offline stores emphasizes the importance of trust, product assurance, and immediate consumption needs. This balanced insight reinforces the need for FMCG companies and retailers to adopt flexible and consumer-centric strategies that cater to diverse preferences and enhance long-term customer relationships.

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