

## A Study on the Behaviour of Shoppers Towards Online and Offline Platforms Using a Qualitative Approach

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### Abstract

**Purpose:** Online shopping has been the main mode of purchase for most of the shoppers and events like COVID have increased the intensity. Many factors impact the choice of the platforms that provide services to the shoppers. For a few products, shoppers use offline platforms and other factors may impact their choice. Earlier studies have focused on adopting a quantitative approach to identify the factors, where the respondents have answered a questionnaire and couldn't express their opinion openly. Also, earlier studies did not focus on finding the type of products preferred by either an offline platform or online platform and other related aspects, which can be identified using a qualitative study. There is a need for a study that identifies the factors that impact the choice of both online and offline factors in detail using a qualitative approach. The current study is taken up to fill this gap.

**Design/methodology/approach:** A qualitative research design has been adopted to achieve the objectives of the study. A sample of 30 shoppers who use various purchasing platforms were considered and their in-depth interviews were conducted, each spanning from 30-35 minutes. Each of the recordings was converted to text and text analysis was adopted to extract the information. Word clouds that explain their behavior were constructed and inferences were drawn based on the same.

**Findings:** The study identifies factors that impact the choice of online and offline platforms and the findings are different from the traditional findings. Shoppers preferred purchasing Fashion, apparel, footwear, etc., with high frequency online as compared to products such as electronic are preferred with less frequency. Both offline and online platforms are preferred equally, based on the type of products. Offline platforms are preferred for products that need touch and feel and online are preferred because of discounts, variety, less time for purchase, and offers. Similarly, we have found other factors such as products, information, etc. impact the choice. Detailed findings can be found in the findings section.

**Limitations:** We have considered the investors and collected data within India and don't include investors outside India. Considering them will enable one to compare the perceptions and also the factors that impact the perceptions towards risk-taking readiness.

**Contribution:** Our study captured the perceptions of both offline shoppers and online shoppers and identified the factors that impact their choices. Service providers can adopt the results to optimize their offerings and increase their customer base. Shoppers can use the results to choose the platforms appropriately based on the type of products and also find other shopper's choices that can be used for future selection.

**Keywords:** Offline, Online, Perception, Platforms, Qualitative, Shoppers,

**JEL:** : M30, M31, M37

## **1. Introduction**

Digitization has brought effective changes in the lifestyles of individuals and has made them move from physical shopping to online shopping. It has helped them to update their technology usage and has made them move from physical cash to plastic money or online modes. With the availability of UPI payment options on mobile phones and an increase in digital platforms, buyers have slowly moved from offline purchases to online purchases. This has made the e-commerce players improve their services, including more payment options, improved security, etc. This also helped the sellers to improve their basket of products and provide more options to the buyers. Buyers have options to select more varieties, brands, and specific modes of payment. In a few cases, customers enjoy the additional discounts provided by the online platforms and customize their products. Online platforms have created more choices as compared to offline platforms and because of virtual experiences, buyers get the same experience as they get in the case of offline platforms. But, in a few cases and products, buyers choose offline platforms over online platforms. For example, for selected electronic products or furniture, etc, buyers still feel to have a physical experience than online experiences.

Either online or offline, it is the buyers' behavior that decides their choices. Understanding this behavior will help the sellers or the service providers improve the quality and bring out more variants or options that appeal to the buyers better than before. Changes appropriate can be brought by them if the factors that impact their behavior are known. Models developed using these factors have helped the service providers, sellers, and buyers to act appropriately and derive the best of the available options. It is a process that determines the optimum benefits from the sellers or service providers and, helps the shoppers or buyers to get the best provided. To identify the factors and build the models, one has to conduct research studies that will help them understand the shoppers' behavior in detail. The factors include various aspects such as quality requirements, pricing, brand, varieties, security, payment options, experience related, attitudinal related, etc.

Events that happen in the society or market change the perception of the shoppers and make them change the way they shop, usage of technology, usage of platforms, modes of payment, etc. One such event that has changed the direction of the is, COVID-19. The restrictions by the governments and other medical restrictions have made shoppers use online platforms for shopping. This event has allowed the service providers to improve the quality of their services and provide more options to the shoppers. The percentage of shoppers who shop online has increased and the usage has spread from household groceries to several other products. Social distancing and contactless delivery, etc., have encouraged shoppers to rely on the online purchase. Also, the comfort levels gained from the payment apps for making quick payments, have made the shoppers shop from home. However, shoppers preferred to purchase a few of the products that needed a physical inspection offline.

After the days of COVID have come to an end, shoppers have continued to shop online for the majority of the products. Window shopping is a new development, where shoppers visit a physical store to gain experience with the products and then purchase the same online. With all these developments, shoppers' behavior started changing and researchers have found a need to study the same in detail, to provide a pathway for the service providers. This has helped both the service providers and shoppers to build their ways of improving the quality of the services and gain better shopping experiences, respectively.

Another event that is changing the lifestyles and behaviors of shoppers, is the usage of artificial intelligence (AI), analytics for improving services. Choices or selections of the shoppers are being captured by the algorithms the service providers are using and, helping them to make changes appropriately. Capturing the changes in the behaviors of the shoppers will help them build their algorithms more effectively and serve them better. This development is contemporary and service providers have challenges in using these algorithms to capture the behavioral aspects of the shoppers.

Another development is, having several service providers for online and offline platforms who are serving different shoppers based on their inclination. The healthy competition in the market has opened gates for the service providers to be creative in designing their services and developing strategies to capture the market share. Shoppers have more options to choose and they shift their choices from one platform to another, also shifting from online to offline (offline to online). This shift also happens with changes in the likes and dislikes of the shoppers. These behavioral changes depend on several factors and need to be identified before making any decision on making improvements/changes in the services. The type of services and quality can be improved by knowing these factors and, there is a

Models such as the Theory of planned behavior (TPB), Technology acceptance model (TAM), and Unified theory of acceptance and use of technology (UTAUT) were used to identify the factors that impact their behaviors towards usage of technology. All these efforts were successful in providing the factors and helping the decision-makers. However, these models are based on quantitative approaches and couldn't capture the perceptions or behavior of the shoppers completely. There is a need for researchers to conduct a qualitative study, where the shoppers express their opinions on the style of purchase, and type of purchase, factors that make them comfortable with their choice of platforms, shifting the platforms, etc. Under this, the shoppers can express their opinions on the type of platforms they use, purpose of usage, changes expected, aspects they are expecting, etc. It will allow the researchers to categorize the shoppers and identify the factors separately for both online and offline users.

In this paper, we use a qualitative approach to identify the factors that make shoppers choose either online or offline platforms. The main objective of this paper is to build a flow that will help the service providers improve their services and also build strategies to further improve or diversify their services.

The following sections are organized in the following way. In section 2, we present the literature review, which gives the findings from the previous studies, followed by the proposed model, problem statement, methodology, etc.

## **2. Review of Literature**

In this section, we present the studies related to investments/personal financial planning and also the research gap. We get motivated to conduct the current study and also the schedule required for conducting the survey. We consider the studies between the years 2015 to 2023 and present the key findings.

Huseynov and Yildirim (2014) conducted a study to understand the attitude of online buyers and identified that the majority of shoppers tend to shop online as compared to offline shopping. Shoppers expressed that convenience and ease of use are the main reasons. Other reasons include saving money, being unable to find the intended products in local stores, and being able to shop at any time. Those who shop offline expressed that they will be able to examine the products physically, lack of trust, difficulty judging the quality of the online products, etc. are key reasons for offline shopping. Lim (2015) shows that perceived value, social factors, perceived ease of use, perceived usefulness, entertainment gratification, web irritation, emotional state, and web atmospherics, are key factors in adopting e-shopping. Ather and Ejaz (2015) also show that perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use, perceived risk, perceived enjoyment, legal framework, and distrust are key factors that impact the intention toward online shopping. In a few cases shoppers' online social interaction influences their online purchases (Cheung et.al. (2015)).

With the increase in the usage of technology, shoppers tend to use mobiles for shopping, and more orders are placed using their smartphones (Rebecca et.al (2015)). This study suggests leveraging this habit of the shoppers in promoting the products. Kidane and Sharma (2016) show that trust, satisfaction, return policy, cash on delivery, after-sale service, cash-back warranty, business reputation, and social and individual attitude are key factors for shopper decisions for choosing online platforms. Lim et.al. (2016) show that perceived usefulness significantly positively influences online purchase intention, but subjective norms do not significantly impact the intention. Also, purchase intention positively influences online shopping behavior.

Among several modes of motivation for shoppers to choose online platforms, online product reviews play an important role (Efthymios and Nina (2016)). Shoppers have loyalty towards the platforms based on coupon proneness and value consciousness (Zheng et.al. (2017)). The usage of online platforms includes both males and females who have the same type of behavior toward liking and disliking factors. Factors that motivate them include home delivery and cash on delivery as a mode of payment. The factor they dislike in online shopping is their inability to touch and feel the products. They are also concerned with the security of the payment system and their overall experience is mixed (Rahman et.al. (2018)). Jozef et.al. (2018) identify factors such as Price, shipping, discounts and special offers, payment method, delivery time, reviews, security, etc impact the choice of online platforms for shopping.

Kaur and Kochar (2018) show that guaranteed quality, cash on delivery, discounts, and promotions as major factors motivating shoppers to choose online platforms. Sonwaney and Chincholkar (2019) show that factors such as marketing stimuli, psychological factors, social factors, website factors, and buyer's decisions motivate shoppers to make online

purchases. Huseynov and Yıldırım (2019) find that perceived enjoyment, perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use, compatibility, perceived information security, and perceived social pressure impact the shoppers' attitudes and intentions toward choosing online platforms.

Daroch et.al. (2020) identify that fear of bank transactions and faith, traditional shopping, services provided, experience, insecurity, and insufficient product information are important and lack of trust are factors that make a few shoppers not choose the online platforms. Sometimes the events that happen around us motivate us to choose the platforms. Van et.al. (2020) show that COVID-19 acts as a moderator for shoppers to choose online shopping. Neger and Uddin (2020) show that product, time-saving factors, payment, administrative aspects, and psychological factors play an important role in choosing online shopping. An interesting finding from Youssef and Hajar (2020) is that the relative advantage of using online shopping, electronic word of mouth (eWOM) and, trust impact the shoppers' attitude towards online shopping. The study also stresses the role of trust as a mediator between relative advantage and eWOM. This indicates the power of social media platforms in taking the details of the product in the right way. Usman and Kumar (2020) show that factors such as trust, security and privacy, accessibility, service quality, perceived price, convenience, and compatibility influence the shopper's intention to buy online.

Tang et.al. (2021) adopt the theory of planned behavior (TPB) and find that website trust and E-shopping attitude influences the E-shopping intentions and actual behaviors of the shoppers. Fernandes (2021) conducted a study to find Hedonic motivations (HM), price-saving orientation (PSO), and post-usage usefulness of services (PUS), impact the attitude of shoppers towards online websites. Ha et.al. (2021) show that online shopping intention is positively related to attitude, subjective norms, perception of behavioral control, perception of usefulness, and trust. The study also found that online shopping intentions are negatively related to perceived risks and have a high influence on online shopping intention. Website design and cash on delivery are other factors that impact online shopping intention.

The study of Hasan et.al. (2022) identifies factors such as service quality, responsiveness, Price, consumer resource, perceived risk, trialability, generational gap, website factor, payment procedure, and demographic considerations that impact the online shopping behavior of the shoppers. Celia (2022) shows that quality, customer knowledge, price, shop's reputation are the most important factors that impact the shoppers' intention to use online shopping. Muluken and Shimelis (2022) conducted a systematic review of the literature to identify the factors that determine the behavior of online shoppers. The study identifies, perceived usefulness, perceived risk, attitude, perceived ease of use, trust, social influence, subjective norms, perceived enjoyment, security, perceived behavioral control, web design quality, privacy and security concerns, perceived value, service quality, satisfaction, psychological factors, facilitating conditions, and experience are the factors that impact the online shopper behavior. Wang et.al. (2023) use a machine learning-based K-means clustering method to cluster the factors influencing shopper buying behavior. These factors include, perceived emergency context, product innovation, and function attributes. Ibrahim et.al. (2023) identify through their study that factors such as trust, cultural hurdles such as uncertainty avoidance and lack of understanding, security, perceived ease of use, and perceived utility impact online shopping behavior. Haml and Sobaih (2023) show that product variety, payment method, and psychological factors impact online shopping behavior.

Based on these studies, we designed the current study to fill the gap identified. Also, the schedule was designed for collecting the responses.

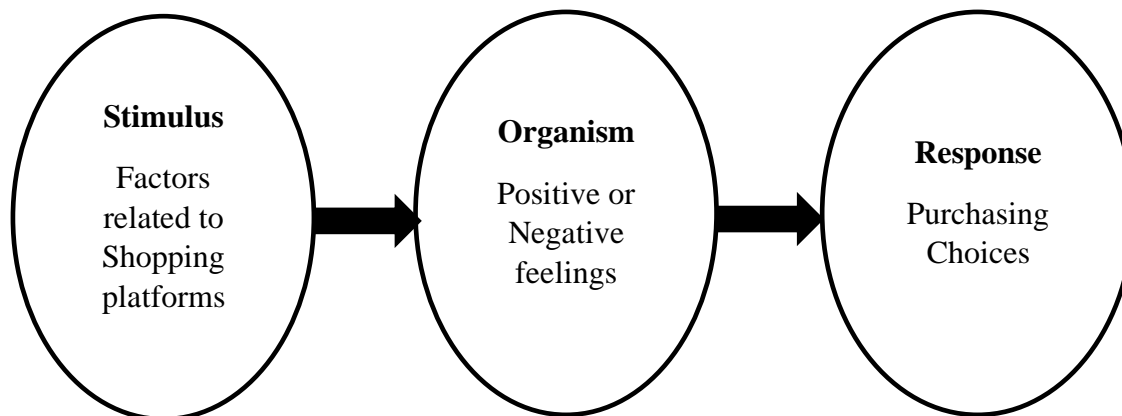
### **2.1. Research Gap**

The studies presented above have focused on collecting data using a questionnaire based on a LIKERT scale and used modeling methods for identifying the factors associated with the usage of the platforms. Not many have considered a qualitative research design for capturing the perceptions of the shoppers. Earlier studies have focused on collecting data from students or other populations, but not directly from the users of both online and offline platforms. Studies have considered either online users or offline users and not both. Considering both the users and a qualitative research design will give more insights related to the behavior of the shoppers. The current study has been taken up to fill the gap, by considering both online and offline users and capturing more insights through a qualitative research design. Also, not many have been done on the Indian Users.

## **2.2. SOR (Stimulus- Organism- Response) Model**

Mehrabian and Russel (1974) proposed the SOR (Stimulus-Organism-Response) model and the same is used in the current study. The first part of the model is the stimulus, which influences the shoppers/users and solicits latent information from them. The second part, organism captures the emotions of the shoppers (both positive and negative) and the last part captures the response or experience/choices of the shoppers. The stimulus for the current study is the factors related to shopping platforms that influence the shopping experience, and using the same we try to capture the feelings of the shoppers and present their choices.

Figure 1: Research Framework



Source: From the Literature review

## **3. Research Methodology**

In the current study, we have adopted a qualitative research design to capture the emotions/feelings of the shoppers. This process helps us to understand the shoppers in-depth and identify the new factors that impact their shopping experience/choices. The qualitative research method was the decisive method chosen, taking a sample opinion survey by structured telephonic interview and questionnaire form, into the picture. This method was taken into account to delve deeper into the problem, thus finding the pinnacle. Qualitative research allows for obtaining various information, broadening the issue, and analyzing it in a formidable contextual way. An interview (telephonic) is considered to be one of the most effective qualitative research methods, which provides detailed answers, especially to open questions. The interview was carried out following the pre-formulated questions and respondents were asked, following the same procedure.

The questionnaire was made following the principles of drawing up the questionnaire. The objective of the research was introduced, and the respondents were quite familiar with the issue of the research. The average length of the interview was around 30-40 minutes for 30 participants, where the answers of the participants were audio recorded. The recordings were converted to text to extract the latent information about their choices.

We present the problem statement, the scope of the study, the sampling design adopted for collecting the data, the limitations of the study, and the design of the study, in this section.

### **3.1. Statement of the Problem**

Shopping is a routine activity for any individual to fulfill their needs and also ensure that one is comfortable by using the products (services) purchased. With the change in the trends, the choices change and shoppers look for those products that are of the latest trends and the latest brands. Purchase behavior changes as time changes, and sometimes it is cyclical or seasonal. Based on the time it can be even irregular. Continuous monitoring of these changes in the behavior of the shoppers will help the service providers to accommodate these changes and stand unique in the market by capturing the market share. It is important to know the platform (online or offline) the shoppers prefer to shop at, the type of products frequently shopped for, reasons for choosing a platform, means of advertisements, etc. This will help the service providers to act

appropriately at the right time and convert one-time shoppers to repeat shoppers. Also, shoppers expect the service providers to give them the best experience. A mismatch between the expectations and the actual service will increase the gap between the service providers and the shoppers, and this leads to dissatisfaction or disappointment. Service providers may lose their customers to their competitors and also lose a chance of converting a one-time shopper to a repeat shopper. The current study has been taken up to understand the behavior of the shoppers in-depth and note the changes.

### **3.2. Scope of the study**

Shoppers who use various platforms (both online and offline) regularly for shopping and who can evaluate them critically and share their experiences in detail have been considered. Personal Interviews were conducted with shoppers belonging to various parts of India, with varying demographics.

### **3.3. Sampling and Data Collection**

We have adopted a non-probability sampling design (a judgemental sampling design) for selecting the respondents for the study. Respondents were those who frequently shop through both online and offline platforms, who can understand variations in the brands, and who express their opinions openly. Also, who had an understanding of the changing trends in the market. Respondents were chosen based on the discussion the researcher had at the initial phase and based on their awareness levels, ability to evaluate, purchase behavior, and inclination to participate in the survey, the final sample was chosen. The sample for the study was 30, considered after filtering the respondents based on the initial discussion. A structured schedule was used to conduct the personal interviews and each interview was about 30-40 minutes. The information gathered includes their opinion on platforms from where they shop, type of advertisements, modes of advertisements, etc. All the interviews are recorded and then converted to text.

### **3.4. Limitations of the Study**

As in any study, the current study also has got few limitations. We have considered individual shoppers and the conclusions drawn reflect their emotions. But, we haven't considered sellers or those who advertise on various platforms or designers of the platforms or the service providers. Including them will allow one to compare the differences in the perceptions. Also, we haven't considered the shoppers outside India. Considering the same will help one to compare and present the changes in the choices based on different cultures and demographic factors. This can be considered future work.

### **3.5. Design of the Study**

To achieve the objectives of the study, we have adopted a qualitative research design. Under this, we conducted 30 in-depth interviews with the shoppers, using a structured schedule (Appendix 1). Each interview was about 30-40 minutes and the same was recorded to capture the responses to various aspects related to their shopping experience. These recordings were converted to text and content analysis was used to extract the latent information from the text. The schedule designed has questions related to the types of platforms one uses, types of advertisements and modes of advertisements, opinions on digital platforms, purchase behavior using these platforms, drawbacks of offline purchase, usage of mobile apps for purchase, etc. We also gather the ratings the shoppers gave for offline and online shopping. The text data was analyzed using content analysis, under which the verbal data was coded, classified, summarized, and tabulated.

Respondents were between the age group 18-30 years, 43% (13) were female 57% (17) were male, and belonged to different places in India. Also, they were qualified and belonged to different professions (bank employees, digital marketers, doctors, students, etc.). We summarize the text data by constructing the frequency tables, and word clouds. Using the same we draw inferences related to the behavior of the shoppers. The summary tables can be found in Appendix 2.

## **4. Data Analysis and Findings**

We present the results of the analysis in this section, followed by an interpretation of the same linking to the objectives of the study. The objectives of the study include understanding the behavior of the shoppers using both offline and online platforms and identifying the factors that impact their shopping experience.

### **4.1. Findings from text analysis**

We first present the key findings from the text analysis related to the shopping behavior of the shoppers, followed by the word clouds and inferences.

Online and Offline shopping have been the two choices for shoppers to buy products be it groceries, electronic gadgets, apparel, etc. These variations in choices were due to their shopping preferences. 43% of the shoppers chose online shopping

and 33% of the shoppers chose both modes of shopping. Among the products, apparel, and groceries were chosen regularly whilst electronic gadgets were chosen scarcely. Shoppers expressed that the touch and feel of the product, aesthetics, faster delivery and replacement, and quality of the products were some of the advantages of offline shopping. Accessibility, enormous collections, and discounts were some of the advantages of online shopping over offline shopping. The survey also revealed that people chose offline for daily needs and online shopping for electronic gadgets, stationary, food, etc. Shoppers have rated online purchasing as 7.85 and offline purchasing as 8.3 on a scale of 1-10, this indicates the level of importance given to each of the platforms.

Advertising has been a tool to introduce a new product, increase the sales of a product, or implant the product or services in the customer's head. This tool has been used for a long time and there are a series of advancements in the field of advertising. Digital marketing has been one of the recent advancements in attaining the goal of advertising. From the survey, 69.69% of individuals purchased a product after viewing an advertisement, and the advertisement was rated a solid 8, in terms of completing the goal of advertising, on a scale of 1-10. This indicates that a proper advertisement takes the product perfectly to the customers.

Motion and non-motion advertising are being used to advertise a product on a series of platforms starting from television to social media applications on smartphones. Shoppers opted (81.18% of shoppers) for motion advertising over non-motion, mainly because of the level of information provided about the product in minimal time, and also the attractive or engaging level of animation, thus reducing the time required to understand the product for each individual. The percentage of shoppers engaged in social media, television advertising, and webpages are 70%, 66.67%, and 6.67% respectively, and suggested that social media advertising is better than the rest, as it attracts a wide arena of customers. More than 90% of the shoppers were well-versed in digital advertisements, within this more than 70% chose online to offline platforms. Some of the reasons for choosing online platforms were due to the digital platform, convenience, varied collections, and impeccable discounts. Whereas, offline purchasing is time-baffling, has minimal availability, and less cost-effective. People mainly buy any product based on reviews, ratings, details of products along seller information. 90% of the surveyed people agreed that digital ads suffice and take the products faster to the customers. 70% of the people didn't prefer advertisements for grocery products.

According to the survey, advertisements on webpages have a better response than mobile application advertisements, and thus shoppers prefer them. They even added that mobile application advertisements are irritating, and they prefer to ignore them. High-quality images and an appropriate description of the product given in the advertisements played a major role in attracting the shoppers and they even received advertisements on relevant products. The number of shoppers influenced by this is less than 5%, which indicates that it played a minor role in attracting customers. Tourism, food, automobile, and apparel, are some of the sectors from which brochures were received by the shoppers. Further adding to this, shoppers even suggested that publicizing over mail, regarding current trends, based on their interests can attract and also make them loyal to the company.

Online purchasing has choices without the need to move around or travel between stores. Around 90% of the shoppers agreed that the variations available online were much more than what offline can offer. For shoppers to purchase, the main criteria that each individual has in mind is the brand, provided the description is satisfactory. Shoppers spend around 2-2.2k per month on an average basis, on online purchases of gadgets, fashion apparel, health products, etc. More than 50% of the shoppers changed their brand mainly due to advertisements. Updates and awareness providing advertisements created a sense of contentedness in customers thus making them stay loyal to the company.

Relevance > Brand > Content > Actors or Ambassadors > Ambiance > Emotional touch. This is the actual customer preference when it comes to advertisement. According to the survey, brand ambassadors didn't make the shoppers buy the product, but it sure made them engage with the advertisement. Thus, achieving the goal of having a brand ambassador in a company.

Finally, the respondents stated that digital advertisements can be made better by focusing on targeting the audience, improving the content, and most importantly avoiding pop-ups. Products with good competition, good products with no awareness, and good services with no or less awareness need to be advertised.

Online and offline purchasing have their advantages and disadvantages. However, online purchasing is surpassing offline purchasing. Online purchasing and advertising go hand in hand in making things easier for shoppers to purchase any products or utilize any service, where digital marketing is being widely used by various organizations in making customers aware of products or services. With knowledge of digital platforms on a good level, it's making things easier for people as well as companies in creating awareness. Social media advertising is the most preferred by shoppers. We conclude that online shopping has a series of advantages over offline, thus making it the one-stop destination for all the requirements of each individual on the planet Earth in the 21st century.

We now present the word clouds that reflect the behavior of the shoppers on key aspects related to shopping.

#### 4.2. Findings from Word Clouds

**Frequency of Purchase:** Word cloud that gives the details of the products shoppers buy with high frequency and less frequency. The frequency table for the same is presented in Appendix 2.

**Figure-1 Products purchased with high and low frequency**



Source: From the researcher's data analysis

The above word cloud has two quadrants. The first quadrant gives the products that were shopped with more frequency through either platform and the second quadrant gives the products that were shopped with less frequency. The corresponding frequency tables are presented in Appendix 2. The Shoppers preferred purchasing fashion products with high frequency and electronic products with less frequency. One can also get the list of products that are purchased by the shoppers based on their frequency. This will help one to understand the type of products the shoppers prefer to buy regularly and reflect their behavior towards shopping. Fashion products being the more preferred, service providers can stock the brands appropriately to attract the shoppers and ensure that they get the edge over the competitors. Since electronic products are the least preferred, service providers need to identify the reasons for this change and build their plans to attract shoppers toward these. One reason could be that shoppers may not change electronic products more frequently as they change fashion products or apparel. Hence, the service providers need to follow up with the existing customers and inform them about the new brands to motivate them to change the existing ones. The same can be observed in other products and service providers can act appropriately. Also, service providers need to provide timely discounts on these products that may motivate the shoppers to change the existing ones. Either online or offline, service providers can use this finding to make changes in their plans for advertisements, offers, etc., to attract shoppers. We now present the analysis that gives the reasons for the choice of the platforms for shopping.

**Platform Preference for Shopping and Reasons:** Under this, we present the platform the shoppers chose for shopping and the associated reasons. (refer to Appendix 3 for the frequency tables)



Figure 2: Choice of the Platforms and the reasons for the choice



From the above, we conclude that both online and offline platforms are preferred for shopping. Among the reasons for choosing an offline platform for purchase, feel for the product, and touch for the product play a major role. This, when associated with the type of products the shoppers purchase with less frequency, indicates that electronic products need touch and feel, and proper inspection. Other reasons include the quality of the product, the experience of the product, the option for immediate purchase, etc. play an important role in the selection of offline platforms for shopping. Similarly, discounts, variety, less time for purchase, and offers are the major reasons for shoppers to choose online platforms. Other reasons include the availability of the products/brands, easy access, etc. This also gives the contrast between the choice of online and offline platforms for shopping. Among other aspects that make the shoppers buy a product, an attractive advertisement plays an important role. Also, the information that the shoppers get out of the advertisements is very important and influences them to purchase the product. Service providers can use these findings to appropriately plan to attract shoppers. For example, offline service providers can make provisions to touch the products and give the shoppers a feel for the same. This will help the shoppers to get closer to the products and purchase with complete information related to them. Also, service providers can plan the display of the products that reflect the quality, create a sense of experience, and create a sense of purchase. These findings give the service providers a set of steps that they can implement to convert the one-time shoppers to repeat shoppers. Similarly, online service providers can attract shoppers by providing and communicating about discounts, variety, delivery time, offers, availability, etc., along with easy accessibility of the products. Changes on the platform can be made by adding these aspects in a better way and communicating the same to the shoppers. These aspects need to be blended with the means of advertisements, to make the shopping experience more effective.

We now present word clouds that give the details of the sources for advertisements and the sources for information.

**Sources for advertisements and the best source for getting information about the products:** This word cloud gives the shoppers a choice of sources for advertisements and also a platform from where they can get more information about the products. (refer to Appendix 4 for the frequency tables)

Figure 3: Source for advertisements and Information platform



Source: From the researcher's data analysis

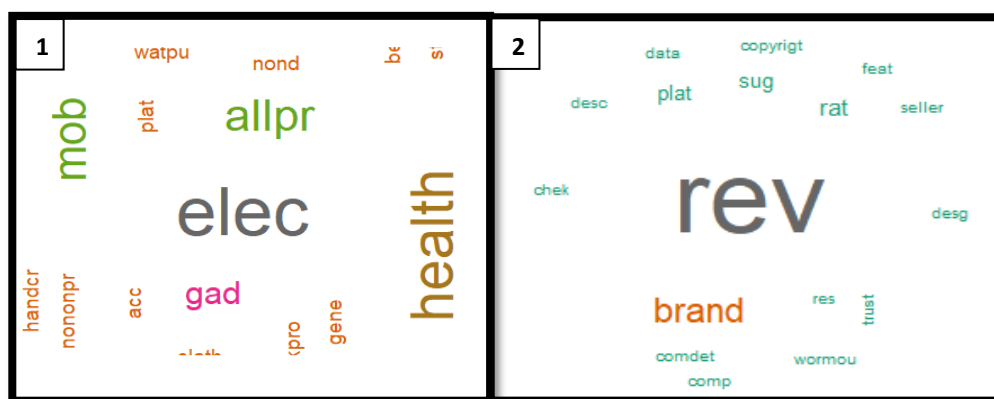
From the above word clouds, one can conclude that social media has been the best platform for advertisements and also the best means for information about products. Service providers can use appropriate social media platforms to communicate with customers about recent updates in the products, new brands, etc. It also helps the shoppers to quickly browse through the product catalog and choose the products. Service providers can use these platforms to promote those products that are chosen with less frequency and increase sales. Appropriately position the products through the platforms to convert the one-time shoppers into repeat shoppers. The second choice for advertisements was mobile phones, followed by television. Usage of mobile phones has significantly increased and service providers can advertise the products on social media platforms that can be used on mobile phones. The current usage of social media on smartphones makes attempts by service providers a success in promoting the products of different brands.

Webpages are the second choice for getting appropriate information about the products, followed by mobile apps. This shows the choices of the shoppers concerning the ads and the information related to the products. This combined with the choice of platforms, the type of products, the source of ads, and the source of information will help the sellers market their products appropriately. For example, It will help them to rightly design their ads for apparel, publish the same on appropriate social media platforms, and also provide information about the products. This connection leads to a model that can be used by sellers to attract customers. Appropriate usage of a platform will make the promotions effective and attract the shoppers to choose the right products and brands.

We now present the word clouds that give the details of the products that need advertisements and the motivation for purchase.

**Products that need advertisements and motivation for purchase:** These word clouds give the products shoppers feel for a definite advertisement and the reason/motivation for their purchase. (refer to Appendix 5 for the frequency tables)

Figure 4: Products that need advertisements and motivation for purchase



Source: From the researcher's data analysis

From the above word cloud, it is very evident that electronic products, health products, etc., need proper advertisements. This connected with other results indicates that service providers need to design advertisements related to these products, on appropriate social media platforms to attract shoppers. A key finding is that shoppers need more information through advertisements on health products. This indicates that shoppers are cautious about these products and want to have a proper advertisement indicating the pros and cons. Service providers can appropriately design the advertisements that will have the requirements components and take it before the shoppers.

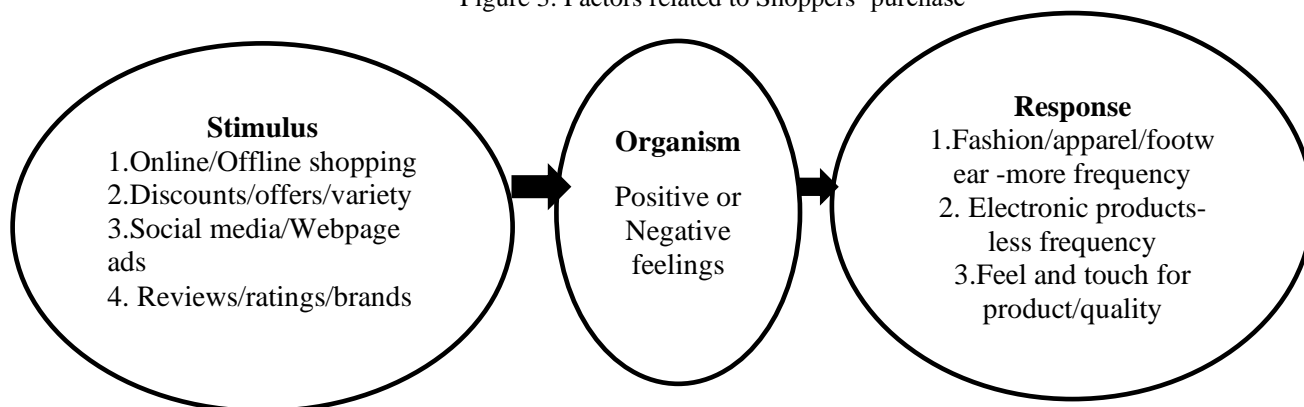
Another key finding is that the shoppers purchased products based on the reviews. The service providers need to ensure that they provide what they promised to the shoppers. Shoppers tend to create a perception of what they have received and pass on the same to others. They write reviews on different platforms about the products they experience and influence other shoppers to purchase the products. Hence, the service providers need to provide what they promise and create a positive perception among the shoppers. To some extent, brand and ratings also play a role. After reviews service providers have to focus on promoting the brands they have. They need to advertise the available brands on appropriate platforms to reach the shoppers and provide them with complete information about the same. Shoppers prefer to have branded products and the service providers need to focus on this. Ratings also play a role when shoppers choose a brand or a product. Hence, the service providers need to improve ratings of the products, by improving quality and other related aspects.

Based on all the above word clouds, a model can be built and the following section gives the model built based on SOR.

#### **5. Model built based on findings**

We now present the model built based on the text analysis and word clouds

Figure 3: Factors related to Shoppers' purchase



Source: From Researcher's findings from text analysis

Figure 3 summarizes the findings of the text analysis and word clouds built.

#### **6. Conclusion**

Shoppers' expectations change from time to time and service providers need to meet their expectations. Service providers should know what shoppers expect and a study needs to be conducted to bridge the gap between the shoppers and the service providers. Either offline or online, factors need to be identified and the service providers should understand the behavioral changes and act accordingly. The current study has been taken up to understand the behavior of the shoppers, using a qualitative research design. Based on the personal interviews conducted and the text analysis, we identified the behavioral changes. We conclude from the analysis that shoppers preferred both online and offline platforms for shopping. Among the products, fashion, apparel, and footwear were preferred the most, and electronic products were purchased with less frequency. Social media, mobile phones, and web pages were the preferred means of advertisement. Offline platforms were preferred due to the feel and touch of the product, followed by quality. Online platforms were preferred due to discounts, variety, offers, less time for delivery, etc. Shoppers preferred advertisements for electronic and health products. The main motivation for the purchase was the reviews given by other shoppers, the brand, and the ratings. From these findings, we conclude that either offline or online, the service providers need to build platforms such that they include the found aspects. This will make the platforms more effective and will help the service providers to convert one-time shoppers

to repeat shoppers. We also conclude that service providers need to advertise effectively to communicate about the brands and product features to the shoppers. Especially they need to focus more on health products, as the shoppers prefer to have more clarity. The current study will give the service providers to know about the behavior of the current shoppers and make changes appropriately will help them to build their business better way.

## **7. Limitations and Scope for Further Research**

The current study focused on collecting data from the regular users of the platforms (online and offline) for shopping, and most of them are from India. Including those who are outside India will help one to capture more variations and compare with those who are in India. Also, separate models can be built for a better comparison, and for bringing more differences. This can be taken for future work, One can also consider a quantitative study along with a qualitative study and bring more variations. One can also include the service providers in the study to get their perception of the services being provided and the type of improvements they are planning in the future and compare the same with the expectations of the shoppers. This will help one to decrease the gap between the actuals and the expectations and provide better services. One can design an experiment on the users by showing them various brands/products through both online and offline platforms. Data so obtained can be used for building strategies. All these can be taken as future research.

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### **Appendix-1**

#### **Schedule for the personal interview**

1. May we know your good name.....
2. Can you please specify the age bracket you belong to
  - a. <18
  - b. 18-25
  - c. 25-30
  - d. 30-35
  - e. 35-40
  - f. >=40
3. Can you specify the place you belong to?
4. Can you please specify the occupation?
5. Can you please let us know your shopping habits? For example, what type of products you usually purchase more frequently and less frequently?
6. Which are the platforms you use for making a purchase? Online or Offline.
7. If offline, can you specify the reasons for the choice? What advantages you see in offline purchase to online purchase? Please share any of your best experiences.
8. If you prefer an online purchase, then can you please specify the reasons? What are the benefits you see in an online purchase?
9. What are your suggestions with respect to purchase platform (online/offline)? For example, which are those that have to be purchased online and those to be purchased offline. Please help us in this.
10. How would you rate your online/offline purchasing on a scale of 1 to 10?
11. What rating on a scale of 1 to 10 you give to an advertisement you have seen?
12. Have you ever purchased a product after seeing an advertisement? If yes, can you please share your experience?
13. What type of the advertisements do you like? Motion or non-motion. Can you please specify the reason?
14. What advantages you see in a motion advertisement to a non-motion?
15. On which platforms you have seen the advertisements the most? For example, on televisions, during movies in a theatre, print media-newspapers and pamphlets, on your mobile, e-mail, on web pages while you browse, social media platforms, etc.
16. Are you aware of digital platforms for advertisements? If yes, can you please share your experience? If no, which are the platforms you prefer the most?
17. Which do you prefer to be a better digital platform or others? Why do you prefer online over offline or vice versa?
18. Can you specify the reasons for your choice of the platforms for advertisements?
19. What drawbacks of offline you think is solved in an online platform?

20. Assume that you have viewed a product based on a picture, which was posted in an online platform. How do you manage to decide based on this? Do you trust the product?
21. Can one judge the quality based on a motion advertisement? Please help us understand.
22. Have you ever seen an advertisement on your mobile apps? Do you prefer to have apps that give you advertisements? Please help us understand the reasons for either yes or no.
23. Have you seen an advertisement on the webpages you are browsing? Have you ever navigated to the page with a click or entered into the website through google after you have seen the advertisement on the webpage? Did you purchase the product?
24. Can we expect that the high-quality images and description of the product given in an advertisement attract us to purchase the product?
25. Did you ever receive any promotional email from any of the brands you are looking for? Did you purchase based on the details given in the email?
26. Did you receive any brochure or details on your social media pages or apps? What type of advertisements you have received? Did you make a purchase based on this?
27. Can we say that we get to see more variations in the products online than offline? Can you share your views on this?
28. Is it good to purchase a product based on an advertisement we see on digital platforms? Can you please share your views on this?
29. Which according to you is a best means of advertising about the products? Email, social media pages, webpages, mobile apps etc. What is your choice?
30. Can the organizations change their means to attract more customers? If yes, can you please your views on this? If no, why do you think so?
31. How much do you spend on average for purchase products monthly? Which are the products you purchase more?
32. Did these advertisements made you to change your brand anytime? If yes, please share your experience? If no, please share why?
33. To which of the aspects of an advertisement you give more importance. Please rate on a scale of 1 to 5 on these. Actors, brand, content, relevance of the product, emotional touch in the advertisement, ambience shown in the advertisement. Any others please specify.
34. Did the brand ambassador or the actors made you purchase the product or change the brand? Please share your experience.
35. Will the advertisements increase the loyalty of the customers? Please share your viewpoints.
36. Do you give importance to advertisements while purchasing groceries or other home needs?
37. Which products according to you need proper advertisements and why?
38. Will the digital advertisements suffice and take the products faster to the customers?
39. Are there any other viewpoints that you would like to share related to digital advertisements?

**We thank you for the valuable responses you have given to us and we are grateful to you**

Appendix-2

Products purchased with more frequency			Products purchased with less frequency		
Code	Keyword	Count	Code	Keyword	count
Fash	Fashion	10	elec	Electronic products	15
Apparel	Apparel	4	cloth	Clothes	6
Footw	Footwear	4	shoe	Shoes	4
cloth	Clothes	4	book	Books	3
food	Food	3	gadget	Gadgets	2
groce	Groceries	3	softwar	Software	1
beauti	Beauty Products	3	netm	Net meds	1

casu	Casuals	2	innergar	Inner garments	1
acc	Accessories	2	sport	Sports items	1
dailyne	Daily needs	2			
houseitem	House Items	2			
health	Health Products	2			
gadget	Gadgets	1			
shoe	Shoes	1			
elec	Electronic items	1			
person	Personal care items	1			
basic	Basic products	1			
book	Books	1			
paint	Paints	1			

Source: From Researcher's Data Analysis

**Appendix-3**

Platforms				Reasons for using the Online Platforms				Reasons for using the Online Platforms	
	Code	Keyword	count	Code	Keyword	count	Code	Keyword	count
	offlin	Offline	11	feel	Feel the Product	18	Disc	Discount	10
	onlin	Online	9	touch	Touch the Product	18	Vari	Variety	10
	amazon	Amazon	1	qualiti	Quality of the Product	8	Lesstim	Less time	7
	myntra	Myntra	1	Exp	Experiencing the Product	5	Offer	Offers	7
	supermarket	Supermarket	1	immpur	Immediate purchase	3	Avai	Available	5
				comf	Comfort	2	Easacc	Easy Access	4
				conv	Convenience	2	Price	Price	3
				color	Colour	2	Paym	Payment	2
				price	Price	2	Rev	Review	2
				gdpro	Good Product	1	Brand	Brand	2
				samepr	Same Product is purchased	1	Option	Options	2
				geniun	Genuine	1	Lesstra	Less Travelling	1
				deliveri	Delivery of the Product	1	Casless	Cashless payments	1
				fresh	Fresh Products	1	Sale	Sales	1
				exch	Exchanging the Products is easy	1	Eas	Easy to purchase	1
				rep	Repeat purchase of Products	1	Cost	Cost	1
				trust	Trust with the Products	1	Return	Return policies	1
				barg	Bargaining the Products	1	Conv	Convenience	1
							easeacc	Easy Access	1

Source: From Researcher's Data Analysis



Appendix-4

Platforms for advertisements				Word Cloud for best means for purchase		
	term	count		Code	Keyword	count
	socialmedia	20		Socm	Social Media	26
	mobilephon	9		Webp	Web Pages	9
	televis	8		Moba	Mobile Apps	5
	email	4		email	Email	4
	mobileapp	4				
	webpag	2				
	newspap	2				
	youtub	1				
	instagram	1				
	platform	1				

Source: From Researcher's Data Analysis

Appendix-5

Which products need advertisements				Decision on the purchase based on picture			
	Code	Keyword	count		Code	Keyword	count
	elec	Electronic Goods	5		Rev	Reviews	24
	health	Health	4		brand	Brand	6
	allpr	All Products	3		Rat	Ratings	3
	mob	Mobiles	3		Sug	Suggestion	2
	newpr	New Products	3		Plat	Platform	2
	gad	Gadgets	2		Res	Research	1
	lackpro	Lacking Promotion	1		comdet	Complete details	1
	plat	Platform	1		copyrigt	Copyright	1
	acc	Accessories	1		Trust	Trust	1
	cloth	Clothes	1		comp	Comparison	1
	gene	Generic	1		wormou	Word of Mouth	1
	nond	Non-Durable	1		seller	Seller	1
	nononpr	Non-Online Products	1		Data	Data	1
	bever	Beverages	1		Desc	Description	1
	watpu	Water Purifier	1		chek	Checking	1
	groce	Groceries	1		desg	Design	1
	handcr	Hand Crafts	1		feat	Features	1
	persc	Personal Care	1				
	stat	Stationary	1				
	autom	Automobiles	1				
	newor	New Organic Products	1				

Source: From Researcher's Data Analysis