

ORIGINAL ARTICLE

Online Shopping Preferences: A Consumer Behaviour Study

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the online shopping preferences of students at G.B. Pant University of Agriculture and Technology, Pantnagar, India, using a quantitative cross-sectional survey approach. Data were collected from 60 students via a structured questionnaire distributed through Google Forms. The research aimed to explore various aspects of consumer behaviour towards online shopping among university students. The demographic breakdown showed that 78.33% were aged 18-24 years, and 21.67% were 25 years or older. Gender distribution revealed that 33.3% of the respondents were male and 66.7% were female. Educational levels among the respondents included 50% undergraduate students, 6.67% B.Tech students, 11.67% Master's students, and 31.67% Ph.D. students. The survey assessed multiple factors influencing online shopping behaviour using a 5-point Likert scale. The highest-rated factor was obtaining a better price, with an average rating of 89% of the maximum score. Product quality followed closely with an average rating of 88.67%, and the security of payment methods was also crucial, rated at 88%. Other significant factors included product comparison and price comparison (87.67% each), convenience (83.33%), variety (83%), payment mode (80.67%), warranty considerations (79.33%), discounts (81%), and packaging (76%). In terms of platform preferences, Amazon emerged as the most preferred shopping platform with a score of 73, followed by Myntra (69.67) and Flipkart (68.67). Other platforms like Meesho and Ajio were less favoured, with scores of 45.33 and 41.67, respectively. The survey also explored preferred payment methods among respondents. UPI (such as GPay, PhonePe, Paytm, etc.) was the most popular, followed by combinations of UPI, debit cards, and pay-on-delivery options. Credit card/pay later options combined with UPI and debit cards showed lesser preference, while the least favoured methods were using debit cards alone or combining credit cards/pay later with debit cards. Regarding product categories, fashion items were the most commonly purchased (74.67%), followed by tickets (73%), skincare and haircare products (70.67%), books and stationery (67%), and miscellaneous items (66.33%). Healthcare and fitness products were

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less frequently purchased (52.33%). The study also evaluated satisfaction levels with online versus offline shopping. It found that 68.3% of respondents reported high satisfaction (ratings of 4 or 5) with online shopping, compared to 51.63% for offline shopping. Moderate satisfaction (rating of 3) was higher for offline shopping (41.7%) than for online shopping (26.7%). Low satisfaction (ratings of 2 or 1) was slightly higher for offline shopping (6.6%) compared to online shopping (5%). These results indicate that respondents generally derive more satisfaction from online shopping services. Overall, the study emphasizes the significance of perceived value, brand reputation, and secure payment methods in enhancing the online shopping experience for young consumers. This will be useful for businesses aiming to thrive in the competitive online retail landscape by understanding the factors that influence consumer behaviour and satisfaction.

KEYWORDS

• Consumer • E-commerce • Perception • Satisfaction

INTRODUCTION

The emergence of digital marketing and the proliferation of online shopping platforms have significantly reshaped consumer behaviour worldwide. Consumers are increasingly drawn to the convenience and accessibility of online shopping, facilitated by the internet (Nagendra *et al.*, 2020). The digital age has transformed the way people shop, making it easier for consumers to browse and purchase products from the comfort of their homes. This convenience is particularly appealing to busy individuals who may not have the time to visit physical stores. Additionally, the vast array of products available online allows consumers to compare prices and find the best deals, further enhancing the appeal of online shopping. However, concerns regarding pricing and product quality persist, underscoring the importance of perceived value and brand reputation in purchasing decisions (Basu & Anwar, n.d.). Despite the advantages of online shopping, consumers remain wary of the potential pitfalls, such as receiving products that do not match their expectations or encountering issues with returns and refunds. As a result, the perceived value and reputation of brands play a crucial role in influencing purchasing decisions. Consumers are more likely to buy from brands they trust, as brand reputation can serve as a guarantee of quality and reliability.

The availability of online stores round the clock offers unprecedented flexibility, allowing consumers to shop at their convenience (Lakshmi, 2021). Unlike traditional brick and mortar stores with fixed operating hours, online stores are accessible 24/7, providing consumers

with the flexibility to shop at any time. This is particularly beneficial for those with irregular schedules or those living in different time zones. The ability to shop at any time also means that consumers can take advantage of flash sales and special promotions that may occur outside of regular business hours. This shift towards online shopping is gradually altering consumer preferences, leading to the gradual displacement of traditional brick-and-mortar stores (Bhagyasree & Venugopal, 2021). As more consumers turn to online shopping, the demand for physical stores is decreasing. This trend is evident in the closure of many brick-and-mortar stores and the rise of online-only retailers. The convenience and accessibility of online shopping are compelling consumers to shift their purchasing habits, leading to a decline in foot traffic in physical stores.

Understanding consumer behaviour in the online shopping realm is crucial for businesses aiming to thrive in this competitive landscape (Sharma, 2015). To remain competitive, businesses must gain insights into the factors that drive online shopping behaviour. This includes understanding the motivations behind consumers' choices, such as the desire for convenience, better prices, or a wider selection of products. By understanding these factors, businesses can tailor their strategies to meet the needs and preferences of online shoppers, thereby enhancing customer satisfaction and loyalty (Singhal & Patra, 2018).

Furthermore, factors such as ease of use, security, and utility influence customer purchasing behaviour, especially among female consumers, as highlighted by Rao &

Rao (2018). The user-friendliness of online shopping platforms is a critical factor in attracting and retaining customers. Websites that are easy to navigate and provide a seamless shopping experience are more likely to encourage repeat purchases. Security is another major concern for online shoppers, particularly regarding the protection of personal and financial information. Consumers are more likely to shop from websites that have robust security measures in place. Utility, or the practical benefits of online shopping, such as the availability of customer reviews and detailed product information, also plays a significant role in purchasing decisions. Website design, convenience, and security concerns are significant influencers among internet shoppers, as demonstrated by Dani (2017). A well-designed website that is visually appealing and easy to use can enhance the shopping experience and encourage purchases. The convenience of online shopping, such as the ability to shop from anywhere at any time, is a major draw for consumers. However, security concerns, such as the risk of fraud or data breaches, can deter consumers from making online purchases. Ensuring the security of online transactions is essential for building consumer trust and encouraging online shopping.

Despite concerns about product quality and payment security, consumers express satisfaction with online purchases, indicating a growing acceptance of online shopping, as noted by Balakrishna *et al.*, (2016). While some consumers may have reservations about the quality of products purchased online or the security of online payments, many are satisfied with their online shopping experiences. This satisfaction is reflected in the increasing number of consumers who regularly shop online. Positive experiences with online shopping can lead to repeat purchases and increased customer loyalty. Kavitha (2017) emphasizes the importance of secure payment options in fostering consumer trust. Providing secure payment methods is crucial for building consumer confidence in online shopping. Consumers need to feel assured that their personal and financial information is safe when making online transactions. Secure payment options, such as encrypted payment gateways and the availability of multiple payment methods, can help alleviate security concerns and encourage online purchases.

Dr. V. Ranganathan *et al.* (2015) stressed the impact of factors like efficiency, value, and convenience on online purchasing decisions, particularly in regions like Coimbatore. The efficiency of the online shopping process, such as fast loading times and a streamlined checkout process, can significantly impact consumer satisfaction. The perceived value of online shopping, which includes factors like price competitiveness and the quality of products, is also important. Convenience, such as the availability of home delivery and easy return policies, further enhances the appeal of online shopping.

Moreover, Akbar & James (2014) find that online consumers' attitudes are shaped by factors such as website reputation, usability, and security concerns. The reputation of an online shopping platform can influence consumer trust and willingness to make purchases. Websites that are known for providing high-quality products and excellent customer service are more likely to attract and retain customers. Usability, or the ease with which consumers can navigate and use a website, also plays a crucial role in shaping online shopping behaviour. security concerns, such as the risk of identity theft or fraud, can deter consumers from shopping online. Addressing these concerns through robust security measures and transparent policies is essential for building consumer trust. This research aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of consumer behaviour in online shopping. By examining the factors that influence online shopping behaviour, this study seeks to provide insights that can help businesses develop effective strategies for attracting and retaining online shoppers. Understanding the challenges, such as security concerns and product quality issues, as well as the opportunities, such as the convenience and accessibility of online shopping, is crucial for businesses looking to succeed in the competitive online retail market.

Objective of the study:

To study the online shopping preferences of students at G.B. Pant University of Agriculture and Technology, Pantnagar, India.

Limitations of the study:

Despite efforts to mitigate potential biases and limitations, the study had several inherent constraints that warrant acknowledgment.

1. The use of convenience sampling may have introduced selection bias and limited the generalizability of the findings to the broader student population.
2. Additionally, the reliance on self-report measures in survey research may have introduced response bias and social desirability effects, potentially influencing the accuracy and reliability of the data.

These limitations should be considered when interpreting the study's findings and implications for future research endeavours.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Sen et. al. (2024) in their study "Customer attitude, buying behaviour and satisfaction towards online shopping: An empirical study in some selected areas of Bangladesh" revealed that 68% of the customers were willing to pay more for security, better quality of the products, and a reliable platform. Further, time-saving (4.17), variety of products (3.93), and cash on delivery (3.86) payment systems were considered satisfactory items for online shopping.

Santhosh & Basavarajappa (2022) found that online shopping is favoured primarily due to the high quality and reasonable pricing of products. Many respondents believe online shopping offers better value than traditional stores and appreciate the positive relationships maintained by online retailers. Satisfaction with online shopping varies significantly across age groups but not by gender. Higher satisfaction levels are reported by postgraduates, undergraduates, and those in professional or self-employed roles. Additionally, individuals from single-family households and those informed by diverse sources such as newspapers, TV, and internet advertisements tend to be more satisfied with their online shopping experiences.

Vidya and Selvamani (2019) found that online shoppers were satisfied with all product dimensions. Factors such as educational qualification, knowledge of online shopping, frequency of online purchases, and preferred mode of payment had a significant relationship with awareness levels about online shopping. They suggested that focusing on product delivery to remote areas and increasing advertisements could boost online sales over time.

Kaur and Kochar (2018) observed that over the years, customer trust in online shopping sites has increased significantly. The growing number of these sites has intensified competition, resulting in better and more affordable products for customers. However, privacy concerns remain a significant issue for customers when shopping online. The internet is transforming the way consumers shop and purchase goods and services, becoming a global phenomenon. Technology-oriented factors such as guaranteed quality, cash on delivery, discounts, and promotions are major influences on customers' attitudes towards online shopping. This research paper aims to analyze consumer behaviour towards online shopping and the various factors driving this trend.

Singhal and Patra (2018) concluded that consumers prioritize convenience and fast delivery when making online purchases. Many individuals tend to inquire at multiple retail stores before finalizing their purchase decision. Debit/credit cards and internet banking are the preferred payment methods for online transactions, while newer portals like Bhim and Tez are less favoured among consumers.

Vora (2018) examined the psychographic profiles of consumers and the attributes influencing their behaviour towards online and offline shopping. The study considered factors such as convenience, variety, price comparison, purchasing old products at lower prices, and discreet purchases. It found that for online shopping, the most influential factors were convenience, variety, price comparison, and the ability to buy old products at reduced prices. Conversely, for offline shopping, the most significant factor was obtaining better prices.

Dani (2017) emphasized the significant concern for security among online shoppers in India. The research also identified several other influential factors for online shoppers, including lower prices, discounts, feedback from previous customers, and product quality. Regarding the demographics of online shoppers, the correlation analysis for age and attitudes toward online shopping revealed that elderly individuals are less inclined to shop online.

Shen et al. (2016) explored the impact of adding offline channels on online customers.

The study predicted how the attributes of offline channels influence consumers' intentions to switch to these offline channels, subsequently increasing the demand for online channels. The research found that the extension of offline channels motivated online consumers to purchase highly utilitarian products, whereas this effect was not observed for hedonic products.

Bhatt (2014) discussed the growing popularity of online shopping, particularly among the younger generation. However, he emphasizes that for e-marketing to become equally popular across all age groups, further advancements are needed. The study highlights that the mode of payment often depends on the income of the respondents, indicating a correlation between financial status and payment preferences. Interestingly, individuals from various age groups are actively engaging in online shopping, signifying a shift in consumer behaviour over time. In India, consumers find online shopping increasingly comfortable due to factors such as cash on delivery, website customization, and home delivery services.

Jain et. al. (2014) found that perceived risk was the only significant factor affecting online shopping behaviour among consumers in Delhi. Perceived enjoyment and perceived ease of use, on the other hand, deterred consumers from shopping online. The researchers suggest that companies should focus on addressing perceived risks to build consumer trust in online shopping.

Hooda and Aggarwal (2012) concluded that most of the respondents are hesitant to purchase items over internet because of security concerns. Most of the respondents irrespective of gender of different age group (especially age group of 18-30 years) find e-shopping more convenient & time saving and prefer credit card as the convenient mode of the payment.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Study Design:

This research employed a quantitative cross-sectional survey design, a widely used method in social science research, to comprehensively explore the online shopping preferences and behaviours of students at G.B. Pant University of Agriculture and Technology,

Pantnagar, India. The study aimed to collect in-depth data regarding consumer behaviour towards online shopping among university students, providing valuable insights into this demographic's purchasing habits and preferences.

Sampling Method:

The study sample consisted of 60 students conveniently selected from G.B. Pant University of Agriculture and Technology. Convenience sampling, although subject to potential biases, was chosen due to its practicality and accessibility, allowing for the inclusion of participants who were readily available and willing to participate in the study. While this sampling method may limit the generalizability of the findings, it provided valuable insights into the online shopping behaviours of university students in the specific context of the study.

Data Collection Instrument

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire distributed through Google Forms, a widely accessible and user-friendly platform for survey administration. The questionnaire was carefully designed to gather detailed information on various aspects of students' online shopping habits, preferences, and perceptions. It comprised multiple sections addressing demographics, online shopping habits, platform preferences, factors influencing online shopping decisions, and satisfaction levels.

The demographic section included questions about the participants' gender (Male, Female, Other) and age. The section on online shopping habits asked respondents to rate their likelihood of purchasing various items online (such as fashion, tickets, healthcare and fitness products, books and stationery, skincare/haircare products, and miscellaneous items) on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from "Most Unlikely (1)" to "Most Likely (5)".

In terms of platform preferences, participants were asked how frequently they use specific online platforms (Amazon, Flipkart, Myntra, Meesho, Ajo, and Others) on a scale from "Never (1)" to "Always (5)". Preferred payment methods were also surveyed, with options including credit card/pay later, debit card, UPI (GPay, PhonePe, Paytm, etc.), pay on delivery, and mobile banking.

To assess factors influencing online shopping decisions, the questionnaire included Likert scale questions where respondents rated their agreement with statements about various factors (such as quality, discounts, proper packaging, payment methods, warranty, convenience, variety of products, safe payment, product comparison, price comparison, and better price) on a scale from “Strongly Disagree (1)” to “Strongly Agree (5)”.

Finally, the questionnaire evaluated overall satisfaction levels with online and offline shopping services. Participants rated their satisfaction on a scale from “Most Unsatisfactory (1)” to “Most Satisfactory (5)”. This diverse range of question types, including short-answer, multiple-choice, and Likert scale questions, enabled a comprehensive exploration of the research objectives. The questionnaire can be seen in appendix at the end of the manuscript.

Data Analysis:

Data analysis was conducted using a combination of techniques, including table creation, graph plotting, and descriptive statistics. Responses from the questionnaire were systematically analysed to identify trends, patterns, and insights into online shopping behaviour among university students. Descriptive statistics, such as mean, standard deviation, and percentage distributions, were utilized to summarize the data and highlight key findings. This analytical approach allowed for a rigorous examination of the collected data and facilitated the interpretation of results in relation to the research objectives.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical guidelines were strictly adhered to throughout the research process to ensure the protection of participants' rights and confidentiality. Participants were provided with clear information about the study's purpose and procedures, and informed consent was obtained before data collection. Measures were implemented to safeguard participants' privacy and anonymity, and data were handled confidentially in accordance with ethical standards outlined by the university's research ethics committee.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The survey collected responses from 60 students at G.B. Pant University of Agriculture and Technology. The age distribution of respondents was as follows: 18-24 years (47 respondents, 78.33%) and 25 and above (13 respondents, 21.67%). Regarding gender, 33.3% of respondents were male (20 respondents) and 66.7% were female (40 respondents) mirroring trends observed in studies on online consumer behaviour, where women often exhibit greater engagement with e-commerce platforms. In terms of education level, the respondents were distributed as follows: 30 Undergraduate students (50%), 4 B. Tech students (6.67%), 7 Master's students (11.67%), and 19 Ph.D. students (31.66%) indicating the study's broad reach and relevance across academic levels. The above demographic distribution of respondents is shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Demographic distribution of the respondents (N=60)

Demographic	Category	Number of respondents	Percentage
<i>Age</i>	18-24 years	47	78.33%
	25 and above	13	21.67%
<i>Gender</i>	Male	20	33.3%
	Female	40	66.7%
<i>Education Level</i>	Undergraduate	30	50%
	B. Tech	4	6.67%
	Master's	7	11.67%
	Ph.D.	19	31.66%

Various factors influencing online shopping behaviour were assessed using a 5-point

Likert scale. The results shown in Fig. 1 reveals that the highest-rated factor was obtaining a

better price, with an average rating of 89% of the maximum score. Product quality closely followed with an average rating of 88.67%. The security of payment methods was also crucial, with an average rating of 88%. Product comparison and price comparison were significant, each with an average rating of 87.67%. Convenience and variety were rated at 83.33% and 83%, respectively. The payment mode was significant, with an average rating of 80.67%, while warranty considerations had an average score of 79.33%. Discounts and packaging were also notable, with average ratings of 81% and 76%, respectively. The

findings are in line with Sen *et. al.* (2024) emphasising the significance of economic considerations in driving consumer choices, with students prioritizing cost-effectiveness in their shopping endeavors. Moreover, the high ratings assigned to product quality and security of payment methods emphasise the importance of trust and reliability in shaping online shopping preferences. These findings align with existing literature on consumer behaviour, which emphasizes the pivotal role of perceived value and trust worthiness in influencing purchasing decisions in the online realm.



Figure 1: Factors influencing online shopping behaviour

The study also evaluated the popularity of various online shopping platforms among the students, revealing their preferences and usage patterns. Amazon emerged as the most preferred platform with a percentage score of 73, ranking first among the options. Myntra followed in second place with a score of 69.67, while Flipkart secured the third position with a score of 68.67. Other platforms were less favoured, with “Others” scoring 48 and

ranking fourth. Meesho and Ajio were the least preferred, with scores of 45.33 and 41.67, ranking fifth and sixth, respectively as shown in Fig. 2. The analysis of platform preferences unveils the dominance of established players like Amazon, Myntra, and Flipkart in the online shopping landscape, reflecting their strong brand presence and user-friendly interfaces.



Figure 2: Popularity of various online shopping platforms

The study also explored the preferred payment methods among the respondents as shown in Fig. 3. The results, illustrated in the bar chart, indicate that UPI (such as GPay, PhonePe, Paytm, etc.) is the most popular payment method, with the highest number of respondents choosing it. Following closely are combinations of payment methods: UPI, debit cards and pay on delivery are the second most preferred, and UPI along with pay-on-delivery options also have notable usage. Credit card/pay later options combined with UPI and debit cards show lesser preference. The least favoured payment methods are using debit cards alone or combining credit cards/pay later with debit cards. This data emphasizes the popularity and convenience of UPI-based payment methods among the respondents. The results slightly differ from Sen *et al.* (2024) and Mahmud *et al.* (2019), who reported that people believe that

cash on delivery (57.92%) is the most preferred method of payment for online purchases. This discrepancy could be attributed to geographic and technological context, as Mahmud *et al.*'s study was conducted in Bangladesh, where UPI systems are not prevalent. In contrast, India's widespread adoption of UPI has likely influenced the strong preference for this payment method among the students surveyed. The preference for UPI-based payment methods corroborates the growing adoption of digital payment solutions in India, driven by factors such as convenience, security, and government initiatives promoting cashless transactions. The divergence in payment method preferences from previous studies stress the dynamic nature of consumer behaviour, shaped by evolving technological infrastructures and cultural contexts.

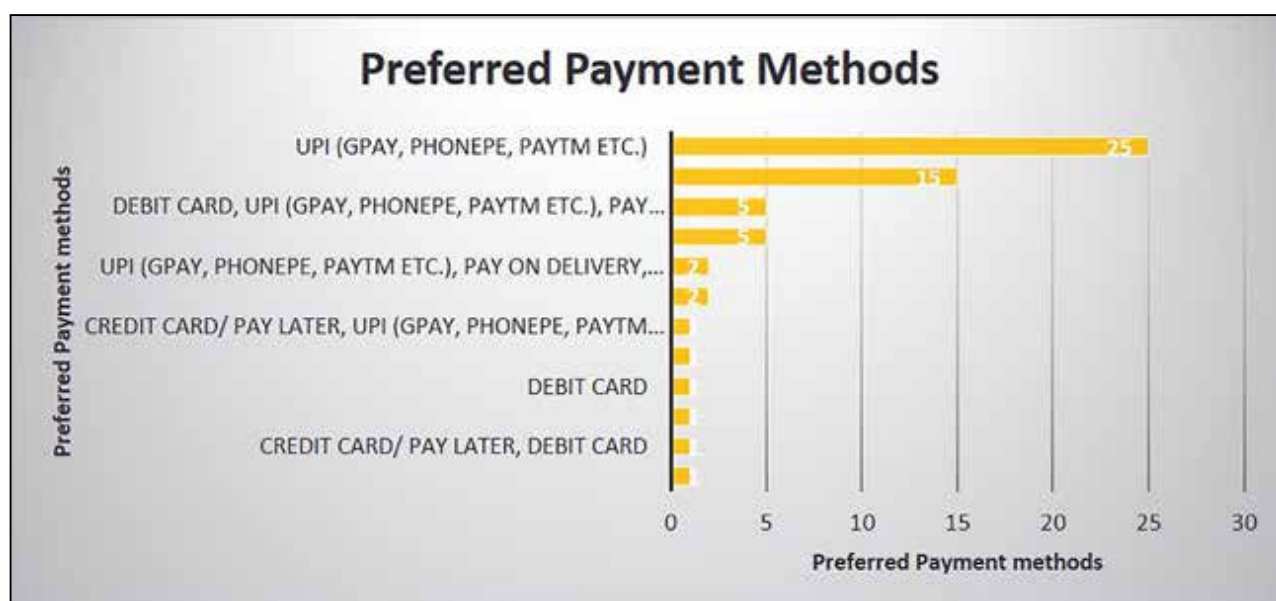


Figure 3: Preferred payment methods while shopping online

Regarding the categories of products and services most commonly purchased online by respondents, fashion emerged as the leading category, with a percentage score of 74.67%. Tickets followed closely with a score of 73%. Skincare and haircare products were also popular, scoring 70.67%, while books and stationery had a score of 67%. Miscellaneous items scored 66.33%. Healthcare and fitness products were less frequently purchased, with a score of 52.33%. These results shown in Fig. 4. highlight that fashion and tickets are the most preferred categories for online

shopping among the respondents. These findings resonate with broader trends in the e-commerce industry, where apparel and accessories constitute a significant share of online retail sales. The popularity of tickets and skincare products highlights the diverse range of products sought by students, reflecting their varied interests and lifestyle needs.

From the survey results, it is evident that respondents generally report higher satisfaction levels with online shopping services compared to offline shopping services as shown in Table 2.

- High Satisfaction (5/5 and 4/5): 68.3% of respondents rated their online shopping experience as 4 or 5, compared to 51.63% for offline shopping.
- Moderate Satisfaction (3/5): A higher proportion of respondents rated their satisfaction as 3 for offline shopping (41.7%) compared to online shopping (26.7%).
- Low Satisfaction (2/5 and 1/5): Online shopping had a slightly higher percentage of low satisfaction ratings (5%) compared to offline shopping (6.6%).

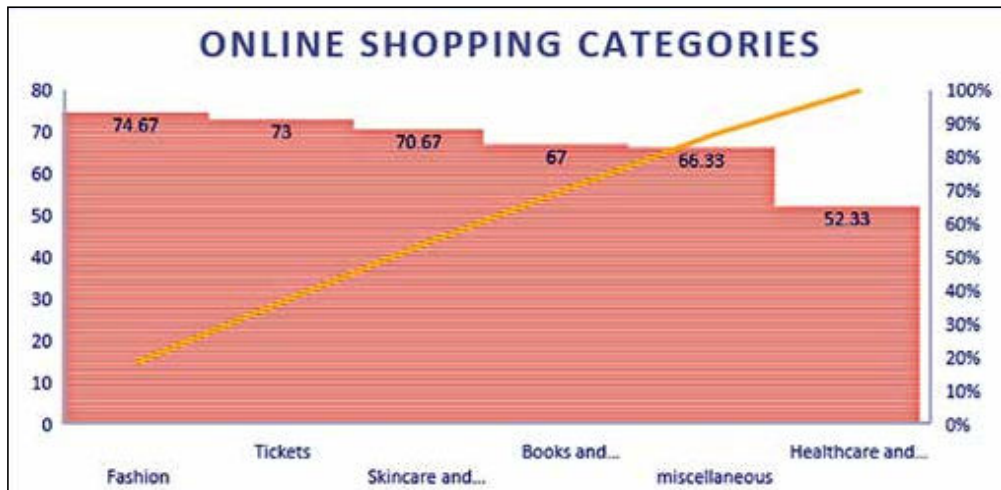


Figure 4: Preferred categories for online shopping

These results suggest that while both online and offline shopping services have their strengths, respondents generally derive more satisfaction from online shopping services drawing attention to the perceived advantages of online shopping, as evidenced by higher satisfaction ratings reported by respondents. The convenience, accessibility, and wider product selection offered by online platforms contribute to enhanced satisfaction levels among consumers, aligning with previous research and highlighting the benefits of e-commerce over traditional retail channels. Sen *et al.* (2024); Santhosh & Basavarajappa (2022); Hooda & Aggarwal (2012) in their study found similar results regarding satisfaction from online shopping.

Table 2: Customer satisfaction levels with online and offline shopping respectively.

Shopping type	Satisfaction Rating	Frequency	Percentage
Online	5	6	10
	4	35	58.3
	3	16	26.7
	2	3	5
	1	0	0

Offline

5	11	18.3
4	20	33.33
3	25	41.7
2	2	3.3
1	2	3.3

CONCLUSION

The study reveals a strong inclination among university students towards online shopping, driven by factors like competitive pricing, product quality, and payment security. Students prioritize getting good deals and value for their money, showing a keen eye for quality products at affordable rates. Payment security is also crucial, with the popularity of UPI-based methods indicating a shift towards digital transactions for their convenience and safety. Amazon emerges as the top choice among online shopping platforms, thanks to its wide range of products and reliable service, meeting students' needs for convenience and accessibility. Fashion and ticketing are the most preferred categories, reflecting students' interest in lifestyle purchases and experiences. Overall, students report higher satisfaction

levels with online shopping compared to offline, highlighting the convenience and variety offered by digital platforms. These findings highlight the growing importance of online retail in meeting the evolving needs and preferences of young consumers, with digital channels becoming increasingly indispensable in today's shopping landscape.

Implications of the Study:

The emphasis on competitive pricing and product quality suggests that online retailers should continue to focus on offering high-quality products at affordable prices. Implementing effective pricing strategies and ensuring rigorous quality control can help attract and retain price-sensitive student consumers. The significant preference for UPI-based payment methods highlights the necessity for online retailers to support a variety of digital payment options. As security and convenience are major concerns, enhancing payment security measures and providing seamless transaction experiences can boost consumer confidence and satisfaction.

Amazon's dominance as the preferred shopping platform explains the importance of a diverse product range and reliable service. Other online retailers can take cues from Amazon's model by expanding their product offerings and ensuring efficient, reliable delivery services. Building a strong, trustworthy brand image can also help in gaining a competitive edge in the online marketplace. The popularity of fashion and ticketing as top shopping categories indicates a strong demand for lifestyle and experiential products among students. Online retailers should consider tailoring their marketing strategies to highlight these categories, offering exclusive deals and targeted promotions to cater to this demographic's interests.

The higher satisfaction levels associated with online shopping suggest that digital platforms are effectively meeting the needs for convenience and variety. This trend implies that brick-and-mortar stores may need to innovate and integrate digital features into their business models to remain competitive. Hybrid shopping experiences, such as online ordering with in-store pickup, could be a way to bridge the gap between physical and digital retail.

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