
THE FUTURE OF SHOPPING: A REVIEW OF CONSUMER PREFERENCES

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ABSTRACT

The retail industry has experienced significant changes with the rapid growth of e-commerce, digital technologies, and evolving consumer expectations. Consumers today have access to both online and offline retail channels, each offering distinct advantages that influence purchasing decisions. Consequently, understanding consumer preferences toward these retail formats has become increasingly important for retailers, marketers, and researchers. This study presents a systematic review of the literature on consumer preferences in online and offline retailing. Relevant studies published between 2012 and 2025 were identified through major academic databases, including Scopus, Web of Science, Google Scholar, ScienceDirect, and SpringerLink. The selected studies were analyzed and synthesized to identify the key determinants influencing consumer shopping behavior across retail channels. The review findings reveal that trust, convenience, shopping experience, and omnichannel integration are the primary factors shaping consumer preferences. Online retailing is generally preferred for its accessibility, time efficiency, product variety, and ease of information search, whereas offline retailing continues to attract consumers through direct product inspection, immediate ownership, and personalized interactions. The findings further indicate that technological innovations such as mobile commerce, digital payment systems, augmented reality, and social media marketing are transforming shopping experiences and influencing channel selection. Moreover, consumers increasingly adopt hybrid shopping behaviors by utilizing both online and offline channels throughout their purchasing journeys. The review also identifies important research gaps related to sustainability concerns, cultural differences, technological readiness, and omnichannel consumer behavior. By integrating fragmented findings from existing studies, this review contributes to a broader understanding

of contemporary retail preferences and offers valuable directions for future research. The findings provide practical insights for retailers seeking to develop customer-centric and integrated retail strategies in an increasingly competitive marketplace.

KEYWORDS: Online Retailing, Offline Retailing, Consumer Preferences, Shopping Experience, Retail Channel Selection.

1. INTRODUCTION

The retail landscape has undergone significant transformation over the past decade due to rapid technological advancements, increasing internet penetration, and changing consumer lifestyles. Traditional brick-and-mortar retailing, once the dominant mode of shopping, now competes with rapidly expanding online retail platforms that offer convenience, accessibility, and personalized shopping experiences. Consumers today can choose between visiting physical stores and purchasing products through digital channels, making the study of online and offline shopping preferences increasingly important.

Online shopping has become an integral part of modern consumer behavior because it enables customers to compare products, access a wider variety of goods, and complete transactions without geographical constraints. The growing adoption of smartphones, digital payment systems, and e-commerce platforms has further accelerated the shift toward online purchasing. Singh and Kaur (2024) reported that convenience, competitive pricing, and ease of access are among the primary factors influencing online shopping behavior among Indian consumers. Similarly, Alalwan et al. (2023) emphasized that digital trust plays a crucial role in encouraging consumers to engage in online transactions, particularly in emerging economies where concerns related to privacy and payment security remain significant.

Despite the remarkable growth of e-commerce, offline retailing continues to maintain a strong position in consumer markets. Physical stores provide opportunities for direct product inspection, immediate ownership, and personalized interaction with sales personnel. Research indicates that consumers often prefer offline shopping for products requiring tactile evaluation and experiential engagement (Sari, 2021). Furthermore, shopping malls and retail stores serve as social and recreational spaces, creating value beyond the purchasing process itself (Sahay, 2021). Consequently, many consumers continue to rely on physical stores despite the convenience offered by digital channels.

Recent studies suggest that consumer preferences are increasingly shaped by technological innovations that blur the boundaries between online and offline retailing. For instance,

augmented reality technologies enable consumers to virtually examine products before purchase, thereby reducing uncertainty associated with online shopping (Jones et al., 2024). Likewise, social media influencers significantly affect purchase decisions by shaping perceptions of products and brands across both retail environments (Lee et al., 2024). These developments indicate that contemporary consumers are adopting a more integrated shopping approach rather than relying exclusively on a single retail channel.

The post-pandemic retail environment has further altered consumer behavior. While lockdowns and social distancing measures accelerated online shopping adoption, consumers gradually returned to physical stores once restrictions were lifted. Smith et al. (2024) found that consumers increasingly combine online and offline channels throughout their purchase journey, reflecting the emergence of omnichannel shopping behavior. This trend highlights the need for retailers to understand the factors influencing channel preferences and to develop strategies that effectively integrate digital and physical retail experiences.

Although previous studies have examined online and offline shopping separately, limited research has investigated the combined influence of trust, convenience, and shopping experience on consumer preferences. Moreover, the growing adoption of omnichannel retailing necessitates a comprehensive understanding of how these factors collectively shape consumer decisions. Therefore, the present study aims to examine the determinants of consumer preferences toward online and offline retailing and provide insights into the evolving retail environment. The findings are expected to contribute to retail management literature while offering practical implications for retailers seeking to enhance customer satisfaction and channel integration.

Objective: To explore and synthesize the factors influencing consumer preferences toward online and offline retailing.

2. Literature Review

Consumer shopping behavior has undergone significant transformation with the rapid expansion of e-commerce, digital technologies, and changing consumer expectations. The emergence of online retail platforms has provided consumers with greater flexibility, convenience, and access to a wide range of products, while traditional offline retailing continues to offer tangible shopping experiences and direct customer interactions. As a result, understanding consumer preferences toward online and offline retailing has become an important area of academic and managerial interest.

Early studies examining consumer preferences between online and offline shopping reported that convenience, product availability, and time-saving benefits were among the primary reasons for consumers choosing online channels. Adrita and Shahjahan (2016) found that consumers preferred online shopping because it offered easy access to products and reduced the effort associated with visiting physical stores. Similarly, Mahajan and Saini (2018) observed that online shopping was increasingly preferred by younger consumers due to convenience and competitive pricing, whereas offline shopping remained attractive because of product inspection and immediate possession benefits.

Information search behavior has also been identified as an important determinant of consumer shopping decisions. Akalamkam and Mitra (2018) argued that the availability of detailed product information, reviews, and comparison features enables consumers to make informed purchasing decisions in online environments. However, concerns regarding privacy and transaction security continue to influence online shopping behavior. Akhter (2012) reported that privacy concerns significantly affect consumers' willingness to spend online, indicating that trust remains a crucial factor in digital retailing.

Recent studies have emphasized the growing importance of digital trust in shaping consumer preferences. Alalwan et al. (2023) found that trust in online platforms, payment systems, and data security positively influences online purchase intentions, particularly in emerging economies. Likewise, Garcia et al. (2024) reported that customer satisfaction in both online and offline retail settings is strongly influenced by perceptions of reliability, service quality, and trustworthiness. These findings suggest that trust continues to play a critical role in determining consumer channel preferences.

Technological advancements have further transformed consumer shopping experiences. The increasing adoption of mobile payment systems has enhanced the convenience of online transactions and facilitated the development of online-to-offline retail business models (Liao & Yang, 2020). In addition, augmented reality technologies have enabled consumers to visualize products before purchasing, thereby reducing uncertainty and improving online shopping experiences. Jones et al. (2024) found that augmented reality applications positively influence consumer attitudes toward online shopping and reduce the experiential differences between digital and physical retail environments.

Social media has emerged as another significant factor affecting consumer behavior. Lee et al. (2024) demonstrated that social media influencers substantially impact consumer preferences by increasing product awareness and credibility across both online and offline shopping channels. Similarly, online relationship marketing strategies contribute to stronger

consumer engagement and loyalty by fostering long-term relationships between retailers and customers (Steinhoff et al., 2019).

The post-pandemic retail environment has accelerated changes in consumer shopping behavior. Smith et al. (2024) observed that consumers increasingly utilize both online and offline channels throughout their purchase journeys, reflecting the growing adoption of omnichannel shopping practices. Supporting this view, Panja and Mondal (2023) argued that integrating online and offline retail operations improves customer utility and enhances shopping efficiency. Ratchford et al. (2022) further emphasized that future retail success will depend on retailers' ability to provide seamless experiences across multiple channels.

Consumer preferences also vary according to product categories and purchasing situations. Sari (2021) found that consumers generally prefer offline channels for products requiring physical examination, while standardized products are more frequently purchased online. Similarly, Sahay (2021) reported that shopping malls continue to attract consumers because they provide social interaction, entertainment, and experiential value beyond the purchasing process.

More recently, environmental sustainability has emerged as an important consideration in consumer decision-making. Miller et al. (2024) found that environmentally conscious consumers evaluate both online and offline shopping channels based on transportation emissions, packaging waste, and resource utilization. These findings indicate that sustainability concerns are becoming increasingly relevant in shaping retail preferences.

Research Gap: Despite the growing body of literature on consumer preferences toward online and offline shopping, existing studies have largely focused on individual determinants such as trust, convenience, technology adoption, or shopping experience. Moreover, the rapid evolution of omnichannel retailing and changing consumer expectations have created new dynamics that require further investigation. Therefore, a comprehensive synthesis of the factors influencing consumer preferences toward online and offline retailing remains necessary to better understand contemporary shopping behavior and support effective retail strategies.

3. Research Methodology

This study adopts a systematic literature review approach to examine the factors influencing consumer preferences toward online and offline retailing. Relevant scholarly articles were identified through comprehensive searches conducted across major academic databases, including Scopus, Web of Science, Google Scholar, ScienceDirect, SpringerLink, Emerald

Insight, and Taylor & Francis. Keywords such as “online shopping,” “offline shopping,” “consumer preference,” “retailing,” “e-commerce,” “omnichannel retailing,” and “consumer behavior” were used individually and in combination to retrieve relevant studies.

The inclusion criteria were limited to peer-reviewed journal articles, conference papers, and scholarly publications published in English that specifically addressed consumer preferences, shopping behavior, retail channel selection, or omnichannel retailing. Studies published between 2012 and 2025 were primarily considered to capture recent developments in retailing and consumer behavior. Articles that lacked relevance to the study objective, contained insufficient methodological information, or focused on unrelated industries were excluded from the review.

Following the screening process, the selected studies were thoroughly examined and synthesized to identify recurring patterns, major determinants, and emerging trends associated with online and offline shopping preferences. The findings from the reviewed literature were subsequently integrated to develop a comprehensive understanding of contemporary consumer behavior and retail channel preferences.

4. Data Analysis and Literature Synthesis

Based on the systematic review of the selected studies, the literature was synthesized into four major themes that explain consumer preferences toward online and offline retailing.

4.1 Trust and Perceived Security as Determinants of Retail Channel Preference

The reviewed literature consistently identifies trust as a critical factor influencing consumer preferences toward online and offline retailing. Consumers are more likely to engage in online purchases when they perceive e-commerce platforms as secure, reliable, and capable of protecting personal information. Alalwan et al. (2023) found that digital trust significantly enhances online purchase intentions, while Akhter (2012) highlighted that privacy concerns can discourage online spending. Garcia et al. (2024) further demonstrated that trust contributes to customer satisfaction across both online and offline retail settings. These findings collectively suggest that trust reduces uncertainty and strengthens consumers' confidence in retail transactions.

Implication: Retailers should invest in secure payment systems, transparent privacy policies, and customer support mechanisms to strengthen consumer trust. Building credibility can enhance customer satisfaction and encourage long-term loyalty across retail channels.

4.2 Convenience and Accessibility in Consumer Shopping Decisions

Convenience emerged as one of the most influential factors shaping consumer preferences. The literature indicates that online shopping provides flexibility, time savings, and easy access to product information, which significantly enhance the shopping experience. Singh and Kaur (2024) identified convenience as a primary driver of online shopping behavior among millennials. Similarly, Liao and Yang (2020) reported that mobile payment systems and online-to-offline business models improve shopping efficiency and accessibility. These findings align with the growing preference for digital shopping platforms among consumers seeking quick and effortless purchasing processes.

Implication: Retail organizations should focus on simplifying purchase procedures, optimizing mobile applications, and improving website usability to enhance convenience. Such efforts can increase customer engagement and strengthen competitive advantage.

4.3 Shopping Experience and Consumer Engagement

The literature suggests that shopping experience remains a significant determinant of consumer preference despite the rapid growth of e-commerce. Offline shopping continues to attract consumers because it provides opportunities for physical product inspection, personalized service, and social interaction. Sahay (2021) reported that shopping malls remain relevant due to their experiential and recreational value. At the same time, Jones et al. (2024) found that augmented reality technologies help replicate aspects of the physical shopping experience within online environments. These studies indicate that consumers increasingly seek engaging and immersive shopping experiences regardless of the channel used.

Implication: Retailers should create customer-centric experiences by integrating interactive technologies, personalized services, and experiential marketing practices. Enhancing customer engagement can improve satisfaction and positively influence purchase decisions.

4.4 Omnichannel Retailing and the Evolution of Consumer Preferences

The synthesis of the literature reveals a growing shift toward omnichannel retailing, where consumers combine online and offline channels during the purchasing process. Ratchford et al. (2022) argued that modern retailing is characterized by seamless interactions across multiple channels rather than channel-specific shopping behavior. Similarly, Panja and Mondal (2023) demonstrated that integrating online and offline retail operations improves customer utility and shopping efficiency. Smith et al. (2024) further observed that post-pandemic consumers increasingly adopt hybrid shopping patterns, utilizing both digital and

physical channels according to their needs and preferences. These findings indicate that the future of retailing lies in channel integration rather than channel competition.

Implication: Retailers should adopt omnichannel strategies that provide consistent experiences across digital and physical touchpoints. Integrating inventory systems, customer databases, loyalty programs, and communication channels can enhance consumer satisfaction and strengthen retailer competitiveness.

Synthesis

The reviewed literature suggests that consumer preferences toward online and offline retailing are primarily shaped by four interconnected factors: trust, convenience, shopping experience, and omnichannel integration. While trust and convenience largely explain the growth of online retailing, shopping experience continues to sustain the relevance of offline retail formats. Furthermore, the increasing adoption of omnichannel strategies demonstrates that consumers no longer perceive online and offline shopping as mutually exclusive alternatives. Instead, they seek integrated shopping experiences that combine the advantages of both channels. These findings support the view that future retail success will depend on retailers' ability to balance technological innovation with customer-centric service delivery.

DISCUSSION

The present review synthesized existing literature on consumer preferences toward online and offline retailing and identified four dominant factors influencing shopping channel selection: trust, convenience, shopping experience, and omnichannel integration. Consistent with earlier studies (Adrita & Shahjahan, 2016; Mahajan & Saini, 2018), the findings indicate that consumer preferences are no longer determined by a simple choice between online and offline channels but are increasingly shaped by the ability of retailers to provide seamless and value-enhancing shopping experiences across multiple touchpoints. The review confirms that trust remains a foundational element in retail decision-making. Although technological advancements have improved the reliability of online platforms, concerns related to privacy, security, and transaction risks continue to influence consumer behavior (Akhter, 2012; Alalwan et al., 2023). Similarly, Garcia et al. (2024) reported that customer satisfaction across retail channels is strongly influenced by perceptions of trust and reliability. At the same time, convenience has emerged as a major driver of online shopping adoption due to the increasing availability of mobile commerce, digital payment systems, and personalized recommendations. These findings align with Singh and Kaur (2024), who identified

convenience and accessibility as major determinants of online shopping behavior among contemporary consumers.

The findings also demonstrate that shopping experience continues to differentiate offline retailing from online alternatives. Consumers frequently value the ability to physically examine products, interact with sales personnel, and engage in experiential shopping activities (Sahay, 2021; Sari, 2021). However, innovations such as augmented reality and interactive technologies are gradually narrowing the experiential gap between online and offline environments. Jones et al. (2024) found that augmented reality enhances product visualization and improves online shopping experiences, suggesting that future retail competition may increasingly depend on experience creation rather than channel superiority. Furthermore, the review highlights the growing importance of omnichannel retailing. Rather than treating online and offline channels as substitutes, consumers are increasingly integrating both channels throughout their purchase journeys. This finding supports the observations of Ratchford et al. (2022) and Panja and Mondal (2023), who emphasized that integrated retail systems improve customer utility and satisfaction. Additionally, social media and influencer marketing are increasingly shaping purchase decisions across channels, further strengthening the interconnected nature of contemporary retailing (Lee et al., 2024; Steinhoff et al., 2019).

Another important finding emerging from the literature is the increasing role of technology and platform quality in shaping consumer preferences. Zhang et al. (2025) demonstrated that platform usability, personalized recommendations, and technological reliability significantly influence consumer preferences toward e-commerce platforms, particularly in emerging markets. These findings indicate that technological capabilities are becoming a strategic source of competitive advantage in modern retailing.

Despite significant scholarly attention, several gaps remain in the existing literature. Most studies have examined online and offline shopping independently rather than exploring their interconnected nature within omnichannel ecosystems. Additionally, much of the current evidence originates from developed economies, creating a need for greater understanding of consumer preferences in emerging markets where digital adoption patterns may differ. The literature also provides limited insights into how demographic characteristics, cultural values, environmental concerns, and technological readiness jointly influence retail channel preferences. For instance, Miller et al. (2024) highlighted the growing importance of environmental sustainability in shopping decisions, yet limited research has examined how sustainability considerations affect preferences across online and offline retail channels.

These gaps give rise to several important research questions for future investigation:

RQ1: How do trust and perceived risk influence consumer preferences across integrated omnichannel retail environments?

RQ2: To what extent do demographic factors such as age, gender, income, and digital literacy moderate consumer preferences for online and offline shopping?

RQ3: How do emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence, augmented reality, and virtual reality reshape consumer shopping experiences and channel preferences?

RQ4: What role do environmental sustainability concerns play in consumers' selection of online versus offline retail channels?

RQ5: How do cultural and regional differences affect consumer preferences toward omnichannel retailing in emerging economies?

RQ6: What factors drive long-term customer loyalty in hybrid retail environments where consumers regularly switch between online and offline channels?

Addressing these questions can contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of contemporary consumer behavior and support the development of effective retail strategies in an increasingly digital marketplace.

5. CONCLUSION

This study reviewed and synthesized the literature on consumer preferences toward online and offline retailing to provide a comprehensive understanding of the factors shaping contemporary shopping behavior. The findings reveal that trust, convenience, shopping experience, and omnichannel integration are the primary determinants influencing consumers' retail channel choices. While online retailing continues to gain popularity because of its accessibility, efficiency, and technological capabilities, offline retailing remains relevant due to its experiential and interpersonal advantages. The review further demonstrates that the future of retailing is characterized by integration rather than competition between channels. Consumers increasingly engage in hybrid shopping behaviors, utilizing online and offline platforms at different stages of the purchasing process. Consequently, retailers must focus on delivering consistent, personalized, and seamless experiences across all customer touchpoints. The study contributes to the growing body of retailing literature by consolidating fragmented findings and identifying key areas requiring further scholarly attention. The identified research gaps suggest that future studies should move beyond traditional channel comparisons and investigate consumer behavior within dynamic omnichannel ecosystems. Particular attention should be given to emerging technologies, sustainability concerns, cross-

cultural contexts, and evolving consumer expectations. Overall, the evidence suggests that successful retail strategies will depend not only on technological innovation but also on the ability to build trust, enhance convenience, create engaging experiences, and effectively integrate online and offline channels. Future research addressing the identified gaps can provide valuable theoretical and practical insights for academics, practitioners, and policymakers seeking to understand and respond to the evolving retail landscape.

Implications: The findings of this review offer several theoretical, managerial, and policy implications. From a theoretical perspective, the study contributes to the retailing and consumer behavior literature by synthesizing fragmented research on online and offline shopping preferences into a unified framework. The review highlights that consumer preferences are influenced not by a single factor but by the combined effects of trust, convenience, shopping experience, and omnichannel integration. By consolidating evidence from diverse studies, the paper provides a comprehensive understanding of the evolving retail environment and establishes a foundation for future research on omnichannel consumer behavior.

From a managerial perspective, the findings suggest that retailers should move beyond viewing online and offline channels as separate entities and instead focus on creating integrated customer experiences. Building consumer trust through secure payment systems, transparent policies, and reliable service delivery is essential for strengthening customer confidence. Retailers should also enhance convenience by improving website functionality, mobile applications, digital payment options, and delivery services. At the same time, physical stores should emphasize experiential value through personalized interactions, product demonstrations, and engaging shopping environments. The findings further indicate that adopting omnichannel strategies can improve customer satisfaction by enabling consumers to transition seamlessly between online and offline touchpoints during the purchasing process.

The review also offers important implications for policymakers and industry stakeholders. As digital commerce continues to expand, there is a need to strengthen consumer protection regulations related to privacy, cybersecurity, and online transaction security. Policymakers should support initiatives that promote digital literacy and consumer awareness, enabling individuals to make informed shopping decisions in increasingly complex retail environments. Furthermore, encouraging technological innovation and infrastructure development can facilitate the growth of integrated retail ecosystems that benefit both consumers and businesses.

Finally, the study highlights the importance of sustainability in future retail development. Retailers and policymakers should consider environmentally responsible practices, including sustainable packaging, efficient logistics systems, and resource-efficient operations, to address the growing environmental concerns associated with both online and offline shopping. Such initiatives can enhance consumer trust, improve brand reputation, and contribute to long-term retail sustainability.

Limitations and Future Research Directions: This study is limited by its reliance on secondary data obtained from published literature, which may restrict the generalizability of the findings across different contexts. Additionally, the review primarily includes English-language studies from selected databases, potentially overlooking relevant research from other sources. Future studies should employ primary data, cross-cultural comparisons, and longitudinal designs to validate and extend the findings on consumer preferences toward online and offline retailing.

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