

Beyond the Buy Button: Demographics Influence on Consumer Behavior in India's Online Shopping

Kiruthika N *

Assistant Professor, PG and Research Department of Commerce, Srimad Andavan Arts and Science College (Autonomous), Affiliated to Bharathidasan University, Tiruchirappalli, Tamil Nadu, India.

Rajam K

Assistant Professor & Research Supervisor, PG and Research Department of Commerce, Srimad Andavan Arts and Science College (Autonomous), Affiliated to Bharathidasan University, Tiruchirappalli, Tamil Nadu, India.

*Corresponding Author Email: kiruthiraajeshb@gmail.com

Abstract: India's digital economy is expanding rapidly, fueled by a growing number of internet users and widespread adoption of mobile technologies. This study investigates the effect of demographic factors on consumer behavior related to social media advertising and online shopping. Data were collected from 558 respondents across various age groups, educational qualifications, and occupations using a structured questionnaire. The study analyzes how these demographic variables influence perceptions of social media advertisements, satisfaction with online shopping, and factors affecting consumer decisions. Using SPSS for statistical analysis, the study reveals significant differences in the perceived relevance and informativeness of social media advertisements, along with social media engagement and its influence on shopping behavior. Educational qualification and occupation were found to significantly influence key constructs, while gender differences played a role in how users perceive the informativeness and relevance of online ads. However, no significant differences were observed in social media advertisement performance expectancy and satisfaction with online shopping across demographic groups. These findings suggest that marketers should consider demographic factors when developing strategies for social media advertising, as different segments respond uniquely to various aspects of online shopping and digital engagement. The study contributes valuable insights into how India's growing digital landscape shapes consumer behavior, offering actionable recommendations for businesses to better tailor their marketing efforts. Future research should explore additional factors like income level, digital literacy, and platform preferences to offer a more inclusive understanding of online shopping behavior in India's digital economy.

Keywords: Consumer, Digital, Online, Purchase, Technology.

INTRODUCTION

India has swiftly emerged as one of the world's largest and fastest-growing digital markets, boasting nearly half a billion Internet users. The Indian digital economy is projected to outpace many other countries in both growth and scale, thanks to the increasing integration of digital tools and platforms. As more consumers embrace digital technologies, the role of Internet services becomes crucial in facilitating business operations and creating global networks. The study of consumer behavior includes both the total consumption process of the customer as well as the justifications for purchasing. Throughout the entire purchasing process, a variety of factors, including emotions, motivation, finances, lifestyle, beliefs, culture, and character, impact customers (Rahman, A.K., & S., J.S. 2024). The rise of digital infrastructure, coupled with the widespread use of mobile devices, has fostered significant changes in the way individuals and businesses interact. Improved communication capabilities, broader access to information, and enhanced technology have been key drivers in this transformation, particularly in sectors like e-commerce. The shift toward digitalization has contributed to the rapid growth of online shopping in India, with technology playing a central role in reshaping consumer behavior and business models. Various factors have spurred the surge in online retail, including customer satisfaction with delivery services, innovative marketing strategies, and better accessibility. Studies suggest that the increasing use of mobile technology and the widespread availability of the Internet have been pivotal in driving e-commerce growth, especially among the younger, digitally literate population along with improvements in pricing and product variety, have led to the rise of new market players who prioritize customer-centric business models. Moreover, the affordability and accessibility of online shopping have made products and services available to a broader demographic, enabling the digital economy to flourish. Digital platforms, internet-based trading, and cross-sector technology advancements have altered the significance of social media (Tomar, Gupta, & Sood, 2023). Its influence on enterprises is increasing as it promotes growth and brand equity. With more users of various ages, social networks are always evolving. Social media platforms are now a worldwide resource for exchanging ideas, messages, videos, and information about a variety of topics, such as fashion, music, travel, good health, sporting events, eating habits, schooling, and more. (Tomar, Gupta, & Sood, 2023).

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

In recent years, online shopping has become a transformative force in the global retail landscape, reshaping the way consumers make purchasing decisions and interact

with digital marketplaces. This transformation is driven by multiple factors that collectively influence consumer behavior, including trust, convenience, perceived risk, technological advancements, and the evolving role of social media. Numerous studies have explored the determinants of online shopping behavior, each contributing valuable insights to a growing body of literature that aims to understand what compels or hinders consumers from making purchases online. Bashir and Mehboob (2019) emphasized the significance of five essential factors like conviction, period, product variety, accessibility, and privacy in determining consumer attitudes toward online shopping. Their research revealed that trust and convenience exert the most profound impact, particularly among younger consumers who are more familiar with digital technologies but remain cautious about issues related to privacy and fraud. Trust, in this context, serves as a psychological assurance that influences whether a consumer feels comfortable engaging in transactions over the internet. Likewise, convenience plays a critical role in making online shopping appealing, as it reduces time and effort compared to traditional shopping methods. Their findings are consistent with those of Kutty, Vasudevan, and Aslan (2024), who investigated online purchasing behavior in Malaysia's Klang Valley during the COVID-19 pandemic. Using a quantitative approach, their study demonstrated that trust and product variety significantly influenced consumer decisions, while perceived risk negatively affected shopping behavior. Conversely, product variety and trust were positively associated with online buying behavior, emphasizing the importance of choice and reliability in determining consumer confidence. Lim et al., (2016) offered a nuanced understanding of online shopping by exploring the facilitating role of purchase intention. Their research focused on subjective norms and perceived usefulness as antecedents of purchase intention, which in turn influenced actual online shopping behavior. By employing structural equation modeling on data collected from university students, they discovered that while both subjective norm and perceived usefulness positively affected purchase intention, only purchase intention had a significant direct impact on shopping behavior. Interestingly, subjective norm had a negative and insignificant influence on actual behavior, suggesting that social pressure alone may not be enough to drive online purchases unless the individual also perceives the process as useful and beneficial. This finding aligns with behavioral theories such as the Theory of Planned Behavior, where intention serves as a critical mediator between attitude and behavior. The centrality of intention underscores the need for online platforms to not only create a positive image but also ensure functional and emotional value that encourages consumers to follow through with purchases. Technological advancements have further deepened the impact of these behavioral factors, especially during disruptive periods such as the COVID-19 pandemic. Suriانشa (2025) examined the Indonesian retail context and reported that the pandemic, coupled with rapid technological development, had significantly altered consumer preferences and purchasing habits. With the growing adoption of online shopping, this shift did not necessarily lead to increased consumerism; instead, it reflected a change in how consumers prioritized convenience, necessity, and financial awareness in their buying decisions. Retailers responded by enhancing their digital presence and offering services that align with emerging consumer expectations, such as faster delivery, easier navigation, and secure payment options. Sulistyowati

(2024) conducted a bibliometric review of 95 scholarly articles to map the evolving research trends surrounding online purchase decisions. The review identified recurring variables such as belief, value, online ratings, website features, and social media influence. These variables are frequently studied across multiple disciplines, highlighting their centrality to consumer decision-making in digital environments. This reflects an increasing awareness of the multifaceted nature of the issue and diversity of online consumer behavior and calls for more targeted and inclusive research that considers demographic and cultural contexts. The role of social networks in determining consumer behavior has also received increasing attention. Sindhuja, Panda, and Krishna (2023) explored how digital connectivity, particularly through social media platforms, has become a vital channel for consumer engagement and marketing influence. Their study revealed that social media not only provides a platform for brand visibility but also actively shapes purchasing decisions through features such as product reviews, influencer endorsements, and targeted advertising. Consumers today are exposed to curated content that aligns with their preferences, often leading to impulse buying or brand loyalty based on perceived authenticity and social proof. The research underscores the importance of maintaining responsive customer service and ensuring seamless access to information to build consumer trust. Further contributing to this understanding, Efendioglu Internet content interaction, and search behavior. The study noted that empirical research has grown significantly, reflecting increased interest in quantifiable consumer patterns. One emerging trend is the prevalence of mobile-first shopping experiences, wherein consumers use smartphones not only to browse but also to compare prices. (2024) conducted a comprehensive review of existing research on digital consumer behavior, highlighting key themes such as Engagement with mobile applications, read reviews, and make purchases. This shift necessitates a focus on mobile interface design, application speed, and data security, all of which influence trust and usability. As consumers become more digitally literate, their expectations of online shopping platforms grow, emphasizing the need for continuous innovation and user-centric design. Together, these studies provide a comprehensive overview of the multifaceted nature of online shopping behavior. They highlight that consumer decisions are not influenced by a single factor but rather by an intricate web of psychological, technological, and social variables. Trust remains a cornerstone in consumer decision-making, serving as a prerequisite for engagement—especially in environments where physical inspection is not possible. Convenience, perceived usefulness, and product variety further drive engagement, while perceived risk and weak social norms may inhibit it. Technological changes and external disruptions like pandemics reshape consumer expectations and force both consumers and businesses to adapt. Moreover, the growing role of social media and mobile technology signals a shift toward more interactive, responsive, and personalized online shopping experiences. These perceptions are vital for e-commerce practitioners and researchers aiming to design effective strategies that align with the evolving preferences and behaviors of digital consumers.

OBJECTIVES

- ♦ To explore how demographic factors (including gender, age, education, and occupation) affect consumer perceptions

of social media advertising and online shopping behavior.

♦ To investigate the relationship between social media usage patterns and key factors such as informativeness, relevance, engagement, and satisfaction in the context of online shopping.

METHODOLOGY

This study employed a quantitative research approach using a structured questionnaire to examine how demographic factors influence perceptions and behaviors related to social media advertising and online shopping. A total of 558 participants were recruited through stratified sampling to ensure broad inclusion across gender, age, education level, and occupation. The online survey included 33 items addressing key constructs such as performance expectancy, satisfaction, informativeness, and social media engagement. Data were analyzed using SPSS, with a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.745 confirming reliability. Statistical tools such as descriptive statistics, ANOVA were used for analysis.

RESULTS

Table 1: Descriptive analysis

Variables	Valid	Frequency
Gender	Male	312
	Female	246
Age (in years)	Below 20	81
	20-30	141
	30-40	114
	40-50	108
	50 and above	114
Educational Qualification	UG	156
	PG	324
	Others	78
Occupation	Student	93
	Business	117
	Private employee	129
	Government employee	117
	Others	102
Duration of social media usage (in hours)	1-3	156
	3-6	246
	6-9	156
Reason for using social media	Network building	102
	Information on brands	177
	Information on product /Services	132
	Latest News and trends	75
	Others	72

Source: Authors' compilation using SPSS

Table 1: The majority of respondents were male (312), and the largest age group was 20–30 years (141). In terms of educational qualifications, most participants held a postgraduate degree (324). The most common occupation among respondents was private employment (129). Regarding social media usage, the majority reported spending 3–6 hours daily on these platforms (246). The most frequently cited purpose for using social media was to obtain information regarding brands (177).

Table 2: Reliability Analysis

Cronbach's Alpha	N
.745	33

Source: Authors' compilation using SPSS

Table 2: The Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.745 indicates an adequate level of internal reliability for the 33 items tested. This suggests that the scale used is reliable for measuring the intended constructs.

Table 3: There is no significant difference in the performance expectancy, satisfaction with online shopping, perceived relevance, informativeness of social media advertising, social media engagement, and factors influencing online shopping based on educational qualification.

ANOVA						
		Sum of Sqrs	Dig frd	Mean Sq	F	Sig.
Social Media Advertisement Performance Expectancy	Between Groups	18.402	2	9.201	.926	.397
	Within Groups	5517.017	555	9.941		
	Total	5535.419	557			
Satisfaction with online shopping	Between Groups	73.736	2	36.868	3.492	.031
	Within Groups	5859.184	555	10.557		
	Total	5932.919	557			
Perceived Relevance of Social Media Advertising	Between Groups	274.464	2	137.232	6.653	.001
	Within Groups	11447.923	555	20.627		
	Total	11722.387	557			
Informativeness of Social Media Advertising	Between Groups	439.677	2	219.839	11.261	.000
	Within Groups	10835.177	555	19.523		
	Total	11274.855	557			
Social Media Engagement	Between Groups	305.776	2	152.888	5.155	.006
	Within Groups	16459.966	555	29.658		
	Total	16765.742	557			
Factors influencing of online shopping	Between Groups	374.360	2	187.180	11.435	.000
	Within Groups	9084.479	555	16.368		
	Total	9458.839	557			

Source: Authors' compilation using SPSS

Table 3: The ANOVA results reveal significant group differences in satisfaction with online shopping ($F = 3.492$, $p = 0.031$), perceived relevance of social media advertising ($F = 6.653$, $p = 0.001$), informativeness of social media advertising ($F = 11.261$, $p = 0.000$), social media engagement ($F = 5.155$, $p = 0.006$), and factors influencing online shopping ($F = 11.435$, $p = 0.000$). However, no significant differences were found in social media advertisement performance expectancy ($F = 0.926$, $p = 0.397$).

Table 4: There is no statistically significant variation in performance expectancy of social media advertisements, satisfaction with online shopping experiences, perceived relevance and informativeness of social media advertising, social media engagement, and key determinants of online shopping behavior among individuals from different occupational backgrounds

ANOVA						
		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Social Media Advertisement Performance Expectancy	Between Groups	18.692	4	4.673	.468	.759
	Within Groups	5516.727	553	9.976		
	Total	5535.419	557			
Satisfaction with online shopping	Between Groups	36.632	4	9.158	.859	.488
	Within Groups	5896.287	553	10.662		
	Total	5932.919	557			
Perceived Relevance of Social Media Advertising	Between Groups	259.143	4	64.786	3.125	.015
	Within Groups	11463.244	553	20.729		
	Total	11722.387	557			
Informativeness of Social Media Advertising	Between Groups	453.102	4	113.275	5.788	.000
	Within Groups	10821.753	553	19.569		
	Total	11274.855	557			
Social Media Engagement	Between Groups	917.422	4	229.356	8.003	.000
	Within Groups	15848.320	553	28.659		
	Total	16765.742	557			
Factors influencing of online shopping	Between Groups	570.611	4	142.653	8.875	.000
	Within Groups	8888.228	553	16.073		
	Total	9458.839	557			

Source: Authors' compilation using SPSS

Table 4: The ANOVA results in Table 4 reveal significant differences in perceived relevance of social media advertising ($F = 3.125$, $p = 0.015$), informativeness ($F = 5.788$, $p = 0.000$), social media engagement ($F = 8.003$, $p = 0.000$), and factors influencing online shopping ($F = 8.875$, $p = 0.000$). However, no significant differences were observed in social media advertisement performance expectancy ($F = 0.468$, $p = 0.759$) and satisfaction with online shopping ($F = 0.859$, $p = 0.488$). These results suggest that social media advertising aspects like engagement and informativeness vary across groups, while performance expectancy and satisfaction remain unchanged. Targeting specific social media factors could enhance strategy effectiveness.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study underscore the importance of demographic variables-particularly educational qualification and occupation-in shaping consumer perceptions of social media advertising and online shopping behavior. While gender differences emerged in how users perceive the informativeness and relevance of advertisements, no significant impact was observed on satisfaction or performance expectancy. This suggests that user expectations regarding functionality may be relatively uniform across demographic groups. The statistically significant variations in perceived relevance, informativeness, and engagement indicate that marketing strategies must be differentiated and tailored to specific audience segments. For instance, highly educated and employed individuals may respond more positively to detailed and informative advertisements, whereas students and younger users might be more drawn to visually appealing and interactive content. This study provides a valuable framework for businesses to develop customer-centric marketing strategies based on consumer demographics. However, it also highlights areas for further investigation. Future research should explore the role of income level and digital literacy in shaping online shopping preferences, as these factors may influence perceptions of value and trust in digital platforms. Additionally, analyzing the impact of platform-specific experiences-such as those on Instagram, YouTube, or WhatsApp-could offer more nuanced insights into consumer engagement. Longitudinal studies may also help assess how consumer behavior evolves over time with increased digital exposure. Finally, qualitative approaches, such as interviews or focus groups, could complement this quantitative analysis by capturing the emotional and psychological dimensions of online consumer decision-making in India's rapidly evolving digital economy.

CONCLUSION

This study offers critical insights into how demographic variables influence consumer perceptions and behaviors in the context of social media advertising and online shopping within India's evolving digital economy. The findings underscore that educational qualifications and occupations significantly shape how consumers perceive the informativeness, relevance, and engagement of social media advertisements. Gender differences further emphasize the varying responses to ad content across demographic lines. However, the lack of significant variation in performance expectancy and overall satisfaction with online shopping suggests a baseline of consumer expectations that transcend demographic distinctions. These results highlight the necessity for businesses and marketers to adopt data-driven, demographically informed strategies that cater to the nuanced preferences of diverse consumer groups. As social media continues to shape purchasing behavior, businesses must leverage these insights to design more personalized and engaging digital experiences. Future research should extend this framework by incorporating variables such as income, digital literacy, and platform-specific behaviors to build a more inclusive understanding of the Indian online consumer landscape.

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