From Clicks to Commitments: Exploring Online Shoppers' Buying Preferences and Post-purchase Trends

Jeganathan D *

Ph.D. Research Scholar (Part-Time), PG & Research Department of Commerce, Jamal Mohamed College (Autonomous) (Affiliated to Bharathidasan University), Tiruchirappalli, Tamil Nadu, India.

Pasupathi G

Assistant Professor & Research Supervisor, PG & Research Department of Commerce, Jamal Mohamed College (Autonomous) (Affiliated to Bharathidasan University), Tiruchirappalli, Tamil Nadu, India.

**Corresponding Author Email: njeega50@gmail.com*

Abstract: *This study explores the key factors influencing online shopping preferences and post-purchase behaviour among consumers in Tiruchirappalli, a rapidly digitising Tier-II city in Tamil Nadu. Employing a quantitative approach supplemented by qualitative insights, this study focuses on four major determinants: product quality and authenticity, price and discounts, delivery time and logistics, and return, refund, and customer support. Data were collected from 431 respondents using a structured questionnaire, and the proposed model was tested using Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) via SPSS and AMOS Graphics.The findings reveal that all four factors significantly and positively impact consumer buying preferences, with Return, Refund & Customer Support exhibiting the strongest influence. Furthermore, these preferences significantly affect post-purchase behaviours, including repeat purchases, recommendations, and feedback. The model demonstrated good reliability, construct validity, and overall fit, confirming the robustness of the relationships between the variables. This study offers practical insights for e-commerce platforms seeking to improve customer satisfaction and loyalty in semi-urban markets. By understanding the drivers of consumer trust and behaviour, businesses can tailor their strategies to foster lasting relationships with consumers. This study highlights the growing importance of digital experience quality in shaping long-term online shopping engagement in India.*

Keywords: Online Shopping Behaviour, Buying Preferences, Post-Purchase Behaviour, E-Commerce Consumer Trends, Tiruchirappalli Market Analysis

INTRODUCTION

The retail landscape in India has undergone a profound transformation over the past decade, with online shopping becoming increasingly popular in urban and semi-urban areas. Initially considered a phenomenon limited to metropolitan cities, e-commerce has now expanded into Tier II and Tier III cities such as Tiruchirappalli, reflecting a broader digital shift in consumer behaviour (KPMG, 2020). The convenience of browsing products from anywhere, combined with competitive pricing, diverse payment options, and doorstep delivery, has encouraged a significant portion of the population in these regions to embrace online shopping as their preferred mode of purchase (Deloitte, 2021).

Tiruchirappalli, recognised for its educational institutions and cultural heritage, is emerging as a vibrant consumer market. Increased smartphone penetration and affordable Internet access are driving residents to actively explore online platforms for their shopping needs. Consumer buying preferences are shaped by several factors, including brand reputation, product variety, ease of navigation, promotional offers, peer recommendations, and user reviews (PwC India, 2022). Unlike traditional retail, where direct interaction and physical inspection are key, online consumers rely heavily on digital cues to make decisions.

However, consumer behaviour extends beyond the initial purchase. Post-purchase actions, such as satisfaction evaluation,post-purchase intentionPost-purchaseubmission, and word-of-mouth, play a crucial role in shaping brand loyalty and trust within e-commerce platforms (Kotler & Ke Post-purchase SpecificaPost-purchaseing markets like Tiruchirappalli, where trust in digital transactions is still developing, understanding the nuances of post-purchase behaviour is essential for online retailers seeking to sustain and grow their customer base.

This study explores and interprets the underlying patterns of customer buying preferences and post-purchase behaviour within the context of online shopping in the Tiruchirappalli district. By examining both the drivers and outcomes of online purchase decisions, this study aims to provide valuable insights that can assist e-commerce businesses in tailoring their offerings, enhancing customer experience, and fostering long-term consumer engagement in similar regional markets.

LITERATURE REVIEW

In recent years, online shopping has transformed consumer behaviour across India, particularly in semi-urban and urban settings, such as Tamil Nadu. Multiple studies have highlighted that variables, including product quality, pricing strategies, delivery systems, and customer service, significantly influence buying preferences and post-purchase behaviour. Understanding the interactions between these factors is essential for platforms seeking to build long-term consumer relationships.

Product Quality and Authenticity (PQA)

Product quality and authenticity are key determinants of online shopping satisfaction. When products received align with descriptions and images presented online, they build consumer confidence and reduce perceived risk (Jarvenpaa& Todd, 1997). Gupta and Kim (2007) argue that trust is largely driven by the accuracy of product representation and the perceived authenticity of the item. In markets such as Tamil Nadu, where word-of-mouth marketing retains considerable influence, poor product quality can deter repurchase intentions and negatively influence reviews, which are key components of post-purchase behaviour.

Price and Discounts (PD)

Competitive pricing and promotional discounts are prominent motivators of online purchases. Ratchford et al. (2003) argue that consumers are more inclined to shop online when they perceive price advantages over physical stores. Price-conscious consumers, particularly in Tier-II cities, actively compare prices across multiple platforms before making a purchase decision. Priyadharshini and Kumar (2023) observed that frequent discounts increase buying preference; however, the sustainability of this preference depends on the value-for-money perception, which subsequently affects repurchase behaviour.

Delivery Time and Logistics (DTL)

Timely delivery and efficient logistics significantly influence consumer preference. Studies have consistently demonstrated that delayed deliveries and inadequate tracking systems diminish platform credibility and discourage repeat purchases (Chiu et al., 2014). In a regional context, Vasanthakumar and Gokila (2022) reported that efficient last-mile delivery directly enhances buying preference, particularly among working professionals who value convenience. Positive delivery experiences also contribute to favourable post-purchase behaviours, including platform recommendations and customer loyalty.

Return, Refund & Customer Support (RRCS)

Return policies and customer support mechanisms are essential for risk mitigation in online settings. Dabholkar and Sheng (2012) found that flexible return and refund processes reduce consumer anxiety and enhance the likelihood of repeat business. In India, where consumer rights awareness is increasing, responsive customer service builds trust and influences both current purchasing decisions and future loyalty. Transparent refund systems and empathetic complaint handling are frequently cited as major influencers of post-purchase satisfaction (Srinivasan & Rao, 2021).

Influence on Buying Preferences (BP) and Post Purchase Behaviour (PPB)

The interplay between PQA, PD, DTL, and RRCS significantly shapes consumers' buying preferences. Consumers tend to favour platforms that consistently deliver high-quality products at fair prices, on time, and with supportive policies (Gao & Bai, 2014). These factors influence both immediate purchase decisions and post-purchase behaviours, including repurchase intentions, platform recommendations, and online reviews (Chen & Dubinsky, 2003). In Tamil Nadu, consumers who are satisfied with these service dimensions often become loyal customers and strong brand advocates.

Hypotheses of the Study

Based on the above literature review the following hypotheses were made

H : A significant positive relationship exists between Product Quality and Authenticity (PQA) and the Buying Preferences (BP) of online shoppers.

Price and discounts (PD) significantly influence consumers' buying preferences (BP) when they shop online.

H*f* : Delivery time and logistics significantly influence consumer buying preferences in the Tiruchirappalli District.

Return, refund, and customer support processes positively influence the purchasing preferences of online shoppers.

H… : A significant relationship exists between buying preferences and post-purchase behaviour among online consumers.

Figure 1: The Conceptual Model

Source: created by the author using Adobe Photoshop

Based on a review of the literature, the conceptual model presented in Figure 1 and the associated hypotheses were developed.

Statement of the Problem

Recently, online shopping has experienced rapid growth in India, particularly among consumers in semi-post-purchase areas suPost-purchaserappalli. Although the convenience of ordering products from home has simplified daily life, many consumers continue to experience confusion when selecting appropriate platforms and trusting online product representations. Concerns have been raised

regarding product quality, shipment delays, inadequate customer support, and complex return or refund processes. These issues have directly influenced buyers' shopping preferences and subsequent purchasing behaviour.Despite the increasing reliance on e-commerce platforms, limited research has examined the influence of product quality, pricing strategies, delivery reliability, and post-sale services on consumer trust and repeat purchase behaviour, particularly in the Tiruchirappalli District. This gap in understanding forms the core focus of the present study. This research gap forms the core of the present study, necessitating an exploration of how these service factors shape consumer confidence and long-term engagement with online platforms.

Objectives of the Study

1. To examine the influence of product quality, pricing, delivery, and customer support on the buying preferences of online shoppers within the Tiruchirappalli District.

2. To analyse the relationship between post-purchase preferences and post-purchase behaviour, such as repurchasing, recommendations, and feedback.

3. To provide practical suggestions for improving customer satisfaction and retention, informed by the key factors influencing them identified in this study.

Scope of the Study

This study focuses on understanding the online shopping behaviour of customers in the Tiruchirappalli District of Tamil Nadu. This study examined individual buyers who regularly utilise online platforms to purchase products, including clothing, electronics, home essentials, and other consumer goods. It specifically investigates the key factors influencing buying preferences and how these preferences translate into post-purchase actions such as providing feedback, repeat purchases, or recommendations.

This analysis is limited to examining four key independent factors: Product Quality & Authenticity (PQA), Price & Discounts (PD), Delivery Time & Logistics (DTL), and Return, Refund & Customer Support (RRCS), and their influence on Buying Preferences (BP) and Post-Purchase Behaviour (PPB). This study excludes business-to-business (B2B) transactions, groceries, and services such as food delivery and online streaming services.

The findings of this study will assist online retailers, app developers, and customer service teams in gaining a better understanding of shopper expectations within a Tier-II city setting and, consequently, improving their service offerings.

Sampling Procedure

For this study, participants were selected using convenience sampling, focusing on individuals who actively engaged in online shopping within the Tiruchirappalli District. The sample included a diverse group comprising college students, working professionals, homemakers, and small business owners, all of whom regularly used e-commerce platforms to purchase consumer goods.

The minimum sample size required for the study was determined using an online sample size calculator, assuming a 95% confidence level and 5% margin of error. The calculation indicated that a minimum of 385 responses was needed to ensure the statistical validity and generalisability of the findings. To enhance the reliability and strength of the analysis, the researcher aimed to collect data from a larger group of participants.

Accordingly, primary data were collected from 470 online shoppers. Following a thorough data cleaning process, which included checking for incomplete responses, inconsistencies, and straight-lining patterns, the final usable sample consisted of 431 respondents. This sample size was deemed sufficient for conducting a structural equation model (SEM) and other relevant statistical analyses using SPSS a Post-purchasea Post-purchase

full-scale data collection, a pilot survey was conducted with a group of 30 respondents to assess the clarity, absence of ambiguity, and internal reliability of the questionnaire. Following the pilot feedback, minor revisions were made to the wording and structure of several items to enhance the instrument's clarity and flow.

ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

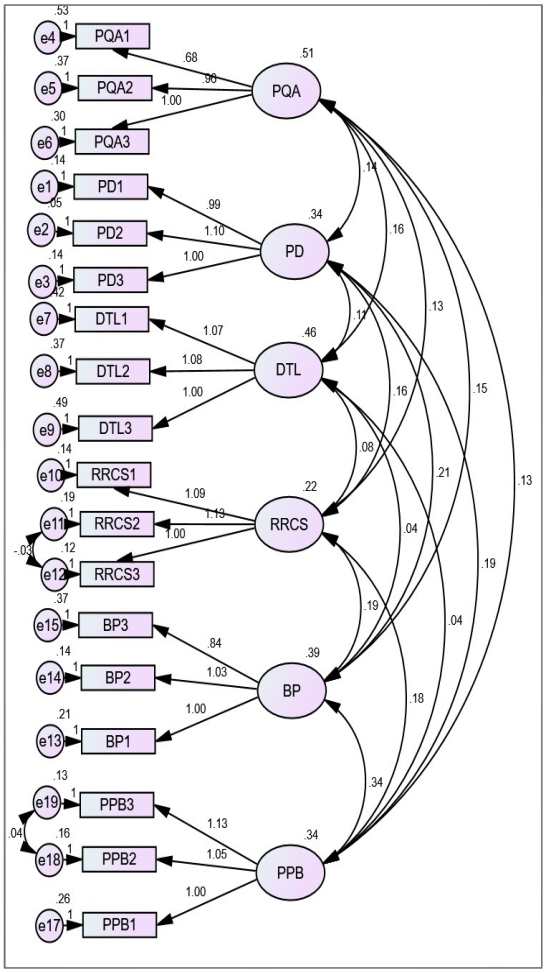
Table 1: Demographic profile

Items	Classification	%
Gender	Male	315
	Female	106
	Others	10
Age	18-24	78
	25–34	162
	35–44	122
	45 and above	69
Educational Qualification	High School	45
	Diploma	120
	UG	107
	PG	122
	Ph.D	37
Employment Status	Student	65
	Job Holder	175
	Self Employed	147
	Retired	44
Monthly Income (in Rs)	Below Rs 15,000	59
	Rs 15,001- 30,000	100
	Rs 30,001- 45,000	128
	Rs 45,000 and Above	144
Online Shopping Frequency	Very Rare	47
	Rarely	139
	Occationally	26
	Often	54
	Frequently	165
Internet Usage Frequency	Very Rare	45
	Rarely	119
	Occationally	140
	Often	103
	Frequently	24

Source: Primary

As shown in Figure 2, the model demonstrated a solid and acceptable fit with the observed data. The CMIN/DF value of 1.828 indicates a good fit, falling well within the accepted range, and suggesting a reliable model structure. The GFI value of 0.949 suggests a good overall fit of the model. Furthermore, both the CFI (0.977) and TLI (0.970) exceed the typical benchmark of 0.90, indicating an excellent fit relative to the alternative models. The RMSEA was 0.044, and the SRMR was 0.0353, both of which were comfortably within the acceptable limits. Finally,

the NFI value of 0.949 provides further support for the model 's strength and consistency. Collectively, these fit indices demonstrate that the model is statistically reliable, conceptually valid, and effectively explains the relationships in the data.



Source: compiled by the author using AMOS

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The reliability and validity results for all constructs in the model confirmed strong internal consistency and measurement accuracy. Product Quality & Authenticity recorded an AVE of 0.613, a Cronbach's alpha of 0.739, and a CR of 0.824, indicating a reliable measurement. Price & Discounts demonstrated an AVE of 0.515, Cronbach's alpha of 0.904, and CR of 0.746.

Table 3: Reliability analysis

Factors	Items	M	St.d	AVE	Cr-al	CR
Product Quality & Authenticity	PQA 1	2.90	.876	.613	.739	.824
	PQA 2	3.07	.920			
	PQA 3	2.79	.900			
Price & Discounts	PD1	4.03	.690	.515	.904	.746
	PD2	3.99	.680			
	PD3	3.97	.697			
Delivery Time & Logistics	DTL1	2.65	.973	.679	.782	.863
	DTL2	3.24	.955			
	DTL3	2.52	.978			
Return, Refund & Customer Support	RRCS1	4.01	.631	.633	.819	.838
	RRCS2	3.86	.687			
	RRCS3	4.11	.582			
Buying Preferences	BP1	3.76	.778	.546	.875	.783
	BP2	3.89	.733			
	BP3	3.88	.747			
Post Purchase Behaviour	PPB1	3.77	.780	.764	.812	.906
	PPB2	3.76	.746			
	PPB3	3.91	.808			

Source: compiled by the author using SPSS & AMOS

Delivery Time & Logistics showed strong consistency, with an AVE of 0.679, Cronbach's alpha of 0.782, and CR of 0.863. Return, Refund, and Customer Support also exhibited good reliability, as evidenced by an AVE of 0.633, Cronbach's Alpha of 0.819, and CR of 0.838. The factor Buying Preferences reflected dependable item alignment, with an AVE of 0.546, Cronbach's Alpha of 0.875, and CR of 0.783. Finally, post-purchase behaviour demonstrated excellent reliability, as indicated by the highest AVE of 0.764, a Cronbach's alpha of 0.812, and a CR of 0.906, confirming its strong measurement. Overall, these indicators confirm that the constructs used in this model are both statistically and conceptually valid.

Variable description:

PQA – Product Quality & Authenticity (Independent)

The product conformed to the description provided online.

PQA2: I believe that the product I received was original and genuine.

The images available online accurately represent the products.

PD – Price & Discounts (Independent)

PD1: I prefer to purchase items online because of competitive pricing.

PD2: Discount offers and promotions influence my buying decisions.

PD3: I compare prices across different online platforms before buying

DTL – Delivery Time & Logistics (Independent)

DTL1: The product was delivered within the promised timeframe.

DTL2: I found order tracking and delivery updates helpful.

DTL3: The logistics/delivery process was smooth and hassle free

RRCS – Return, Refund & Customer Support (Independent)

RRCS1: I could easily return/exchange the product when needed.

RRCS2: The refund process was rapid and transparent.

RRCS3: Customer care resolved my issue promptly and professionally.

BP – Buying Preferences (Mediator / Dependent)

BP1: I frequently shop online because of better choices and convenience.

BP2: I prefer specific platforms based on the product range and reliability.

BP3: I feel confident about my online buying decisions.

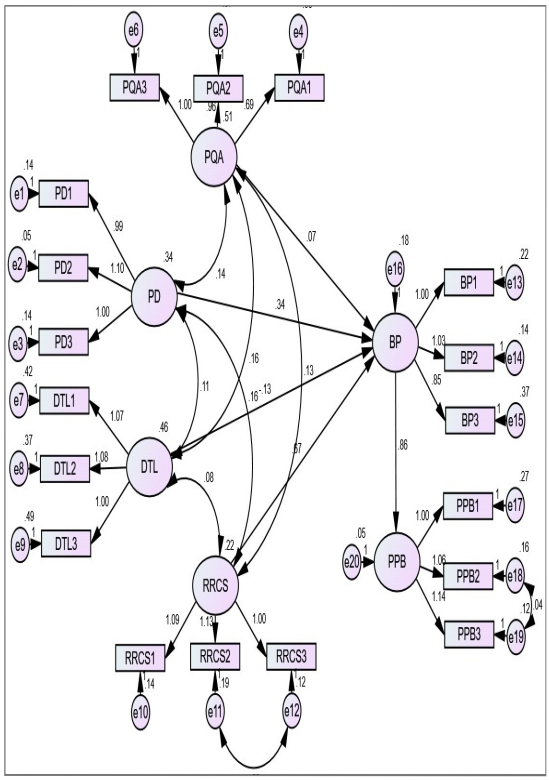
PPB – Post Purchase Behaviour (Final Dependent)

PPB1: I am likely to purchase from the same platform again.

PPB2: I often recommend the product/platform to others.

PPB3: I leave feedback or reviews after making online purchases.

Figure 3: SEM



Source: compiled by the author using AMOS

As shown in Figure 3, the model demonstrated a strong match with the observed data. The CMIN/DF value of 1.808 indicates a good fit, suggesting that the model accurately represents the data. The GFI value of 0.948 indicates that the model fits well. The CFI (0.976) and TLI (0.970) values are higher than the usual benchmark of 0.90, which shows that the model performs better than a basic comparison model. Furthermore, the RMSEA value of 0.022 and SRMR value of 0.0355 both fall within the 'good fit' range, indicating minimal discrepancy between model predictions and observed data. Finally, the NFI value of 0.938 supports the robustness of the model. Collectively, these values demonstrate that the model is reliable, valid, and effectively captures the relationships between variPost-purchasestudy.

Table 4: Hypothesis testing Regression Weights: (Group number 1 - Default model)

Path			S.E.	C.R.	P
BP	<---	PQA	.046	1.492	.036
BP	<---	PD	.059	5.808	***
BP	<---	DTL	.045	-2.969	.003
BP	<---	RRCS	.087	7.706	***
PPB	<---	BP	.058	14.886	***

Source: compiled by the author using AMOS

The findings indicate that Product Quality & Authenticity (PQA) positively impacts Buying Preferences (BP) and this relationship is statistically significant at the 5% level ($p = 0.036$). Price and discounts (PD) exerted a strong and highly significant effect on BP ($p < 0.001$). Delivery Time & Logistics (DTL) positively affected BP ($p = 0.003$). Return, Refund, and Customer Support (RRCS) had the strongest positive influence on BP ($p < 0.001$). Furthermore, Buying Preferences (BP) significantly impact post-purchase behaviour (PPB) ($p < 0.001$), suggesting that positive buying experiences drive repeat purchases, recommendations, and reviews.

CONCLUSION

In a place like Tiruchirappalli, where people value both tradition and progress, online shopping is quietly becoming a part of everyday life. What once felt unfamiliar or risky is now seen as a normal way to shop, thanks to growing trust, better service, and ease. However, for people here, shopping online is not just about clicking and buying. It is about feeling confident, respected, and satisfied with the entire experience.

This study demonstrates that customer preferences extend beyond promotional advertising or short-term discounts. Customers primarily seek straightforward and reliable experiences, including products that meet stated promises, fair pricing, timely deliveries, and effective customer suppoPost-purchasPost-purchasel elements are executed successfully, consumers tend to favour one platform over others and demonstrate continued loyalty to the brand.

However, the journey does not end after the purchase. What occurs afterwards–whether it involves sharing feedback, recommending the product to friends, or deciding to make a repeat purchase–offers significant insight into customer sentiment. In a district such as Tiruchirappalli, where personal recommendations retain considerable influence, satisfied customers can quietly become strong brand advocates.

For online sellers and platforms, the key takeaway is that success hinges on prioritising customer service over increasing sales volume. Platforms that focus on factors

such as quality, price, delivery, and support cultivate customer loyalty, which in turn fosters long-term success. In the long run, this is what builds lasting success.

After all, people may forget discounts. However, they will remember how they were treated. In a place like Tiruchirappalli, respect and trust matter, both online and offline.

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