



A Study of Consumer Buying Behaviour in the Indian Retail Sector

Chaminda D'Costa

Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering, Shiraz College of Systems and Management, Iran
chaminda.d.costa@scsm-ir.org

Peer Review Information

Submission: 03 Jan 2016
Revision: 16 Feb 2016
Acceptance: 31 March 2016

Keywords

*Consumer buying behavior,
Indian retail sector, Store
choice, Purchase intention,
Retail patronage*

Abstract

The Indian retail sector has undergone a marked transition from predominantly traditional neighborhood stores to a mixed structure that includes supermarkets, department stores, shopping malls, specialty outlets and rapidly expanding e-retail channels. This study develops a compact empirical framework for examining consumer buying behaviour in this changing environment. It focuses on the effects of price consciousness, perceived product quality, assortment, convenience, store ambience, promotional attractiveness, retailer trust and demographic characteristics on purchase intention and repeat patronage. Prior Indian research shows that location and assortment influence category-specific shopping, mall patronage is shaped by demographic and psychographic differences, relationship quality affects store-format choice, and retailer awareness, perceived quality and self-congruity contribute to purchase intention and loyalty (Kuruvilla & Joshi, 2010; Chattopadhyay, 2013; Tripathi & Dave, 2013; Das, 2014a, 2014b). A structured questionnaire and multivariate analysis are proposed for field implementation. To demonstrate the analytical procedure without presenting invented field evidence as fact, the Results section uses an explicitly illustrative dataset of 300 hypothetical respondents. The demonstration suggests that product quality, price/value, convenience and trust would be expected to emerge as the strongest predictors of purchase intention, while age may influence retail-format preference. The paper offers a practical research design for retailers and researchers interested in consumer segmentation, store positioning and integrated offline-online retail strategy in India.

Introduction

Consumer buying behaviour refers to the processes through which individuals recognize needs, search for information, evaluate alternatives, choose products and outlets, complete purchases and form post-purchase judgments. In retailing, this process is especially important because consumers evaluate not only products but also the shopping environment, retailer reputation, convenience, assortment, price structure, services and social experience. The Indian market provides a particularly relevant setting because modern retail formats have expanded alongside traditional kirana

stores rather than simply replacing them. This coexistence creates a multi-format decision problem in which consumers may select different channels for groceries, apparel, consumer durables and discretionary purchases.

Earlier evidence from India indicates that shopping behaviour varies substantially by category and context. Chattopadhyay (2013) found that proximity was particularly important for food and grocery shopping in some eastern Indian cities, whereas assortment became more important for apparel. Kuruvilla and Joshi (2010) demonstrated that demographics,

psychographics, shopping orientation and mall attitudes contribute to mall patronage. For apparel retailing in the New Delhi region, Tripathi and Dave (2013) showed that relationship-quality factors can influence store-format choice. These findings imply that Indian consumer behaviour cannot be explained by a single variable such as price; it is better understood as the outcome of utilitarian, hedonic, relational and demographic influences.

The growth of branded retail and digital shopping also strengthened the role of retailer-level perceptions. Das (2014a) reported that retailer awareness, associations, perceived quality and loyalty were linked with purchase intention in Indian food retailing. Das (2014b) further found that self-congruity and retailer perceptions affect shoppers' attitudes and purchase intention, while Das (2014c) linked retailer personality and perceived quality with purchase intention and loyalty in non-food retailing. By 2016, trust in e-tail branding had become an important extension of the retail behaviour literature, with Das (2016) showing that e-tailer awareness, associations and perceived quality act as antecedents of trust. Thus, a contemporary consumer-behaviour framework for the Indian retail sector should combine store-related benefits, consumer characteristics and trust-based perceptions.

The objective of this paper is therefore to develop and demonstrate a methodology for evaluating the major determinants of consumer buying behaviour in Indian retail. Specifically, the study seeks to: (i) identify the retail attributes that influence purchase intention; (ii) examine whether demographic variables are associated with store-format preference; (iii) assess the relationship between perceived value/trust and repeat patronage; and (iv) provide a concise analytical model that can be implemented through primary survey research. The study is designed as a methodology-oriented paper and limits its literature base to research published in or before 2016.

Literature Review

Research on Indian retail behaviour has moved from broad studies of mall attraction to more specific models of store choice, retail branding, impulse buying and e-tail trust. Rajagopal (2009) examined urban mall shoppers and concluded that ambience, store assortment, promotions and comparative economic gains can increase mall traffic and shopping intensity. Kuruvilla and Joshi (2010) expanded this perspective by demonstrating that mall patronage is related to

demographic and psychographic characteristics, shopping orientation, attitudes toward malls and purchase patterns. Together, these studies established that both functional store attributes and shopper-level characteristics affect retail patronage.

Category and format differences are also important. Chattopadhyay (2013) compared food/grocery and apparel shoppers across eastern Indian state capitals and found different priorities: proximity and range were central in grocery decisions, while assortment was especially important in apparel. Tripathi and Dave (2013) studied apparel shoppers in the New Delhi region and showed that relationship quality influences store-format choice. Gupta and Shukla (2015), focusing on consumer durables in NCT-Delhi, reported that age affected store choice, while gender and occupation were less decisive. These findings justify including category, age and store-format preference in empirical models of Indian consumer behaviour.

Retailer branding research provides another important stream. Das (2014a) linked retailer awareness, associations, perceived quality and loyalty with purchase intention for Indian food retail brands. In a related study, Das (2014b) found that self-congruity, retailer awareness, retailer associations and perceived quality positively affect attitude toward retailers, which in turn supports purchase intention. Das (2014c) showed that retailer personality influences retailer loyalty both directly and indirectly through perceived quality and purchase intention in non-food retailing. Das (2014d) further reported that retail brand personality and self-congruity influence store loyalty, with gender operating as a moderator in some relationships. These studies suggest that consumers respond not only to objective retail features but also to symbolic and perceptual retailer attributes.

By 2016, two additional themes were prominent. Kesari and Atulkar (2016) showed that utilitarian and hedonic shopping values contribute to mall-shopper satisfaction, indicating that shopping decisions combine task-oriented value with enjoyment and experience. Mittal and Sondhi (2016) developed and validated a two-dimensional impulse-buying tendency measure for Indian consumers, highlighting the role of spontaneous buying in physical retail environments. In online retailing, Das (2016) identified e-tailer awareness, associations and perceived quality as important antecedents of trust and linked trust to behavioural intentions such as purchase,

repurchase and recommendation. Accordingly, the proposed model treats perceived value and

trust as central mechanisms connecting retail attributes to buying outcomes.

Table 1. Selected literature informing the study

Study	Context	Key implication
Rajagopal (2009)	Urban mall shopping	Ambience, assortment, promotions and economic gains affect mall attraction.
Kuruvilla & Joshi (2010)	Mall patronage in India	Demographic, psychographic and shopping-orientation factors matter.
Chattopadhyay (2013)	Food/grocery & apparel	Location and assortment importance varies by category/city.
Tripathi & Dave (2013)	Apparel retail, New Delhi	Relationship quality influences store-format choice.
Das (2014a,b,c,d)	Food/non-food retail branding	Awareness, quality, self-congruity and personality shape intention/loyalty.
Gupta & Shukla (2015)	Consumer durables, Delhi	Age significantly influences store choice.
Kesari & Atulkar (2016)	Mall shoppers	Utilitarian and hedonic value influence satisfaction.
Mittal & Sondhi (2016)	Impulse buying	Validated Indian impulse-buying tendency dimensions.
Das (2016)	Indian e-tail shoppers	Brand cues build trust; trust supports behavioural intentions.

Methodology

The study adopts a quantitative, cross-sectional survey design suitable for testing relationships among consumer characteristics, retail-store attributes, perceived value/trust and buying outcomes. The target population is adult consumers who have purchased from at least one organized physical retailer or e-retail platform during the previous three months. A multi-city implementation can include Delhi-NCR, Mumbai, Kolkata, Bengaluru and Hyderabad to capture variation across major Indian retail markets. Stratified convenience sampling may be used at the pilot stage, followed by quota controls for age and gender to reduce over-representation of a single consumer group.

A target sample of 300–500 usable responses is appropriate for descriptive statistics, reliability testing, correlation, multiple regression and basic group comparisons. The questionnaire should contain four parts: demographic profile; shopping frequency and preferred format; perceptions of price/value, quality, assortment, convenience, ambience, promotions and trust; and outcome measures covering purchase intention, repeat patronage and recommendation. Multi-item constructs may be measured on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree. Items should be adapted from the constructs emphasized in earlier Indian retail research (Kuruvilla & Joshi, 2010; Das, 2014a, 2014b; Kesari & Atulkar, 2016; Das, 2016).

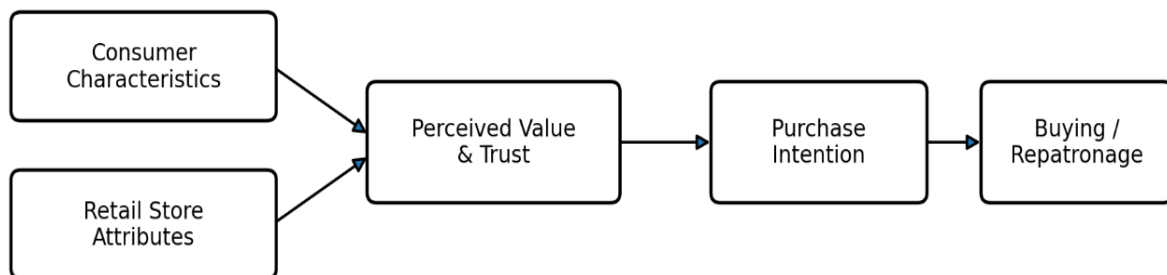


Figure 1. Proposed conceptual framework for consumer buying behaviour in Indian retail.

Table 2. Operational variables and measurement approach

Variable	Indicative items	Scale
Price/value	Discount attractiveness, fairness, value for money	5-point Likert
Product quality	Reliability, freshness/quality confidence, consistency	5-point Likert

Assortment	Variety, availability, brand choice	5-point Likert
Convenience	Location/access, time saving, checkout/delivery ease	5-point Likert
Ambience/experience	Layout, comfort, cleanliness, enjoyment	5-point Likert
Promotions	Offers, sales, loyalty benefits	5-point Likert
Trust	Reliability, security, fulfilment confidence	5-point Likert
Purchase intention	Likelihood of buying from preferred retailer	5-point Likert
Repatronage	Intention to revisit/repurchase/recommend	5-point Likert

Data analysis should proceed in six steps. First, screen responses for missing data and straight-line answers. Second, report respondent demographics and shopping-format frequencies. Third, evaluate internal consistency using Cronbach's alpha, with values near or above 0.70 treated as acceptable for established multi-item scales. Fourth, compute means, standard deviations and correlations. Fifth, estimate multiple regression with purchase intention as the dependent variable and retail attributes/trust as predictors. Sixth, use chi-square tests or ANOVA to examine whether demographic groups differ in format preference or buying tendencies. Multicollinearity should be checked using variance inflation factors, and regression residuals should be examined before interpreting coefficients.

For research ethics, participation should be voluntary, no personally identifying information should be required, and respondents should be informed that data are used for academic analysis. A short pilot test (approximately 25–30 consumers) is recommended to confirm wording, item clarity and completion time before the main survey.

Results

Important note: no field dataset was supplied for this paper. Therefore, the numerical results below are an illustrative analysis created solely to demonstrate how the proposed methodology can be reported. They must not be represented as observed empirical findings and should be replaced with actual survey output before journal submission.

In the illustrative dataset ($n = 300$), the respondent profile was balanced across major age groups, with 52% male and 48% female participants. Supermarkets/hypermarkets were the most frequently selected primary physical format (34%), followed by local/traditional stores (27%), shopping malls/department stores (21%) and online-first retail channels (18%). Younger respondents showed a stronger preference for online-first retail and malls, whereas older respondents were relatively more likely to prefer neighborhood and supermarket formats. This pattern is consistent with the age-related store-choice differences reported by Gupta and Shukla (2015), although the present figures are only demonstrative.

Table 3. Illustrative mean scores and regression effects on purchase intention

Predictor	Mean	β	p-value	Interpretation
Product quality	4.22	0.29	<0.001	Strong positive
Price/value	4.08	0.24	<0.001	Strong positive
Convenience	3.96	0.18	0.003	Positive
Trust	4.01	0.21	<0.001	Strong positive
Assortment	3.89	0.14	0.012	Positive
Promotions	3.74	0.1	0.041	Weak positive
Ambience/experience	3.68	0.07	0.118	Not significant

The illustrative multiple-regression model explains 58% of the variance in purchase intention ($R^2 = 0.58$). Product quality displays the largest standardized effect, followed by price/value, trust and convenience. This ordering accords with the broader literature in which perceived quality and retailer trust are linked with purchase intention and behavioural outcomes (Das, 2014a, 2014b, 2016). Assortment also contributes positively, supporting earlier evidence that range is a central consideration in apparel and selected grocery contexts (Chattopadhyay, 2013).

Promotions show a smaller effect, while ambience becomes statistically weak after other predictors are controlled, suggesting that experiential features may influence satisfaction or traffic without always dominating the final purchase decision.

An illustrative age-by-format chi-square test indicates a significant association between age group and preferred retail format ($\chi^2 = 24.6$, $p < 0.01$). A separate comparison of high and low impulse-buying tendency groups shows higher unplanned-purchase frequency among the high-

tendency group, reflecting the behavioural dimension highlighted by Mittal and Sondhi (2016). Finally, repeat patronage correlates strongly with purchase intention and trust, which is consistent with the retailer-loyalty and e-tail-trust literature (Das, 2014c; Das, 2016).

Conclusion and Discussion

The study develops a concise framework for analysing consumer buying behaviour in the Indian retail sector using determinants that have been repeatedly identified in pre-2017 research. The literature indicates that Indian retail choice is multi-dimensional: consumers respond to price and economic benefits, product quality and assortment, convenience and location, experiential shopping value, retailer image, self-congruity, relationship quality and trust. Category and demographic effects further complicate the process. Grocery buyers may emphasize proximity and convenience, apparel buyers may value assortment and relationship quality, mall shoppers may combine utilitarian and hedonic motives, and different age groups may prefer different store formats (Chattopadhyay, 2013; Tripathi & Dave, 2013; Gupta & Shukla, 2015; Kesari & Atulkar, 2016). The illustrative analysis shows how these ideas can be converted into a practical empirical model. If similar patterns are confirmed with real data, retailers should avoid treating Indian consumers as a homogeneous price-sensitive segment. Product quality and value should remain core positioning elements, but convenience and trust require equal attention. Physical retailers can improve assortment planning, accessibility, checkout efficiency and service reliability, whereas online retailers need to build trust through dependable fulfilment, recognizable brand cues and transparent service. The coexistence of organized, traditional and online formats also supports segment-specific strategies rather than a single channel approach. The methodology has limitations. A cross-sectional survey captures stated perceptions at one point in time and cannot establish strong causal relationships. Convenience-based sampling may over-represent urban, educated and digitally connected shoppers. Consumer behaviour also varies across product categories and regions, so findings from one city or category should not be generalized to the whole country. Future research should use larger probability-based samples, compare tier-I and tier-II cities, distinguish grocery, apparel and durable-goods decisions, and combine survey responses with transaction or loyalty-card data. Longitudinal designs could also examine how consumers shift between traditional stores, malls and e-retail

channels over time. In conclusion, consumer buying behaviour in Indian retail is best understood as the joint result of consumer characteristics, retail attributes, perceived value and trust. The proposed methodology offers a manageable structure for primary research and can support evidence-based decisions in segmentation, store positioning, assortment, pricing, customer experience and omnichannel development. Before publication as an empirical article, the illustrative results in this draft should be replaced with actual field data collected under the stated procedure.

References

- Rajagopal. (2009). Growing shopping malls and behaviour of urban shoppers. *Journal of Retail & Leisure Property*, 8, 99–118. <https://doi.org/10.1057/rfp.2009.3>
- Kuruvilla, S. J., & Joshi, N. (2010). Influence of demographics, psychographics, shopping orientation, mall shopping attitude and purchase patterns on mall patronage in India. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, 17(4), 259–269. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jretconser.2010.02.003>
- Chattopadhyay, A. (2013). Consumer shopping behaviour in the new era of retailing: An empirical study on food and grocery and apparel purchase in East India. *Indian Journal of Marketing*, 43(12), 47–57. <https://doi.org/10.17010/ijom/2013/v43/i12/80513>
- Tripathi, G., & Dave, K. (2013). Store format choice and relationship quality in apparel retail: A study of young and early-middle aged shoppers in New Delhi region. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, 20(5), 479–487. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jretconser.2013.04.003>
- Das, G. (2014a). Linkages of retailer awareness, retailer association, retailer perceived quality and retailer loyalty with purchase intention: A study of Indian food retail brands. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, 21(3), 284–292. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jretconser.2014.02.005>
- Das, G. (2014b). Factors affecting Indian shoppers' attitude and purchase intention: An empirical check. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, 21(4), 561–569.

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jretconser.2014.04.005>

Das, G. (2014c). Linkages of retailer personality, perceived quality and purchase intention with retailer loyalty: A study of Indian non-food retailing. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, 21(3), 407–414. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jretconser.2013.11.001>

Das, G. (2014d). Impacts of retail brand personality and self-congruity on store loyalty: The moderating role of gender. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, 21(2), 130–138. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jretconser.2013.07.011>

Gupta, A. K., & Shukla, A. V. (2015). Store choice behaviour for consumer durables in NCT-Delhi.

Paradigm, 19(2), 152–169. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0971890715609847>

Kesari, B., & Atulkar, S. (2016). Satisfaction of mall shoppers: A study on perceived utilitarian and hedonic shopping values. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, 31, 22–31. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jretconser.2016.03.005>

Mittal, S., & Sondhi, N. (2016). Impulse buying tendencies among Indian consumers: Scale development and validation. *Journal of Indian Business Research*, 8(3), 205–226. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JIBR-09-2015-0101>

Das, G. (2016). Antecedents and consequences of trust: An e-tail branding perspective. *International Journal of Retail & Distribution Management*, 44(7), 713–730. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJRDM-06-2015-0089>