



A STUDY ON SHIFTING CONSUMERS PREFERENCE IN POINT OF PURCHASE BEFORE AND AFTER COVID-19

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Cite This Article: Dr. B. Devipriya & C. Nithya, "A Study on Shifting Consumers Preference in Point of Purchase Before and After Covid-19", International Journal of Scientific Research and Modern Education, Volume 10, Issue 1, January - June, Page Number 5-9, 2025.

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Abstract:

Traits of shopping pattern among Indians are changing faster ever before. The changing expectation of the consumers are creating new challenges to the retailers, branded product marketers and promoters in retaining their consumer base and trying to expand their consumer volume, product sales, earning decent profit and retaining their market share to remain competitive in the current environment. This study aims to assess the shifting consumers preference in point of purchase before and after covid-19. Retail consumers who cross-shop in both traditional and online /social media channels are considered sample population, 600 retail consumers were randomly surveyed for collection of data. The article focused on the retail consumers of Coimbatore city. Findings of the article claims that the shopping pattern of consumers have shifted before and after the out-break of Covid-19 virus. The authors conclude by stating that future of shopping in Indians are slowly moving towards "quick commerce" i.e., delivery of products shopped within a short-time span, it is considered as the major opportunity for online retailers. The traditional retailers can win their market share from the contemporary retail formats, as they were offering quick commerce i.e., quick door delivery of the consumers at their neighbourhoods and they need not consider the modern-day retailers as a threat for their existence, rather they have to strengthen their span and mode of business operations.

Key Words: Shopping Behaviour, Shifting Consumers Buying Behaviour, COVID-19

Introduction:

Traits of shopping pattern among Indians are changing faster ever before. Retailers operating in online, omni channels and operating in physical store are exploring numerous opportunities in attracting and retaining their customers. As the changing expectation of the consumers are creating new challenges to the retailers, branded product marketers and promoters in retaining their consumer base and trying to expand their consumer volume, product sales, earning decent profit and retaining their market share to remain competitive in the current environment. It is true that consumers buying and spending behaviour, especially to low-end product to high-end luxury products or services have drastically changed after the breakout of Covid 19 i.e., pandemic period lockdown period. Priority of purchase and consumption has also changed over the period of the time that in turn shifted the demand and supply of the products/services. The nature of product purchased by the consumers and their spending power greatly influences the business sustainability and growth of retailing business in a country.

Significance of the Study:

Indian consumers pay emphasis to the value for money they paid, convenience of purchase/shopping, variety in term of product segments, adoption to different mode of payments and trusted product delivery, Indian consumers after post-pandemic period prefer to buy personal, beauty and health care from online retail stores, while they buy almost all the products from their physical retail stores, as they demand delivery of the product on same day or say within short-delivery time(Lim, 2021). Realising the changing trend of consumers retailers are adopting omni channels (various social e-commerce channels) to market their products, attract and retain the consumers. Consumers choice of products purchased in the traditional retail stores and through online /social media channels are drastically changing especially with the products like: fashion items including footwear and accessories, buying of electrical or electronic gazettes, dinning out, availing leisure service, home furnishing and various other items. Prevailing shift in the shopping preference among the consumers, influence the author to document this research article.

Aim of the Article:

This study aims to assess the shifting consumers preference in point of purchase before and after covid-19. To derive the needed conclusion the study assessed the consumers purchase pattern of basic essentials, clothing, electronic and electrical goods and various other products before out-break of covid and in new normal situations i.e., after out-break of covid-19.

Literature Assessment:

Literatures collected for assessing changing shopping practices among Indian consumers are presented in this section.

Dey (2017) reported that consumers changing lifestyle culture of Indian influences their consumption behaviour in India. Consumers buying affordability have increased, it is clearly reflected in their spending power on foreign and MNCs (Multi-National Company) branded beverages, packed cum ready-to eat food products, fashion products, sports and gift products. Drawing discussion on the cross-shopping and changing shopping behaviour of Indian consumers, Kothari and Maindargi (2016) found that although 82 per cent of the samples extensively use internet services yet, 68 per cent of them prefer to shop at traditional stores as they are scared to disclosing their personal or card details to the online retail websites, they prefer to physical check the products and they considered that the online products are very expensive. Sharma (2020) found that factors such as: easy access, on-time delivery, safe and secure payment process, a wide range of product availability grievance handling system, easy return and replacing products influence consumers' approach towards selection of POP for shopping at contemporary era.

Study of Faldu (2021) provided an insight that shopping practices differs among aged and young shoppers, at the same time techno-savvy and technical literacy of the shoppers also influences their POP selection i.e., to shop either in traditional retail

store or shop online or in social media. Article of Iyer and Verma (2023) documented that consumers purchase behaviour have changed during and after the Covid-19 pandemic spread and it differ among different age group and changes technology adoption. Charkarvorty (2024) informed Consumers choice of products purchased in the traditional retail stores and through online /social media channels are drastically changing especially with the products like: fashion items including footwear and accessories, buying of electrical or electronic gazettes, dinning out, availing leisure service, home furnishing and various other items.

Data discussion made in the above provided an insight that shopping patterns of Indian consumers have changes i.e., shifted from traditional retail stores to the online stores. The provided wider scope for the conduct of this study. Indian consumers shopping trend is shifting due to their preferences of POP (Point-of-Purchase), economic growth and also due to technology advancements. In changing market environments customers expectation have influenced them to search for different POP to meet their expectations (ICFAI B-School, 2023).

Methodology and Design:

The authors adopted descriptive research methodology for the construct of this article. Retail consumers who cross-shop in both traditional and online /social media channels are considered sample population, 600 retail consumers were randomly surveyed for collection of data. The article focused on the retail consumers of Coimbatore city.

Results and Discussion:

Out of 600 retail consumers surveyed 53.67 per cent are men and 46.33 per cent are women. Around 63.66 per cent of the samples are in the group of 22 to 27 years and 36.34 per cent of the samples are aged 28 years to 45 years and 48.54 per cent of the consumers are found to be well educated (i.e., graduates or post graduates), 35 per cent of the samples are private sector employees and 33 per cent of the samples earn between ₹.20,000 to ₹.30,000 per month. Approximately 87 per cent of the retail consumers' have said that they are very well aware changing consumers' preference of shopping mediums.

Table 1: Consumers Buying Products Before & After Outbreak of Covid

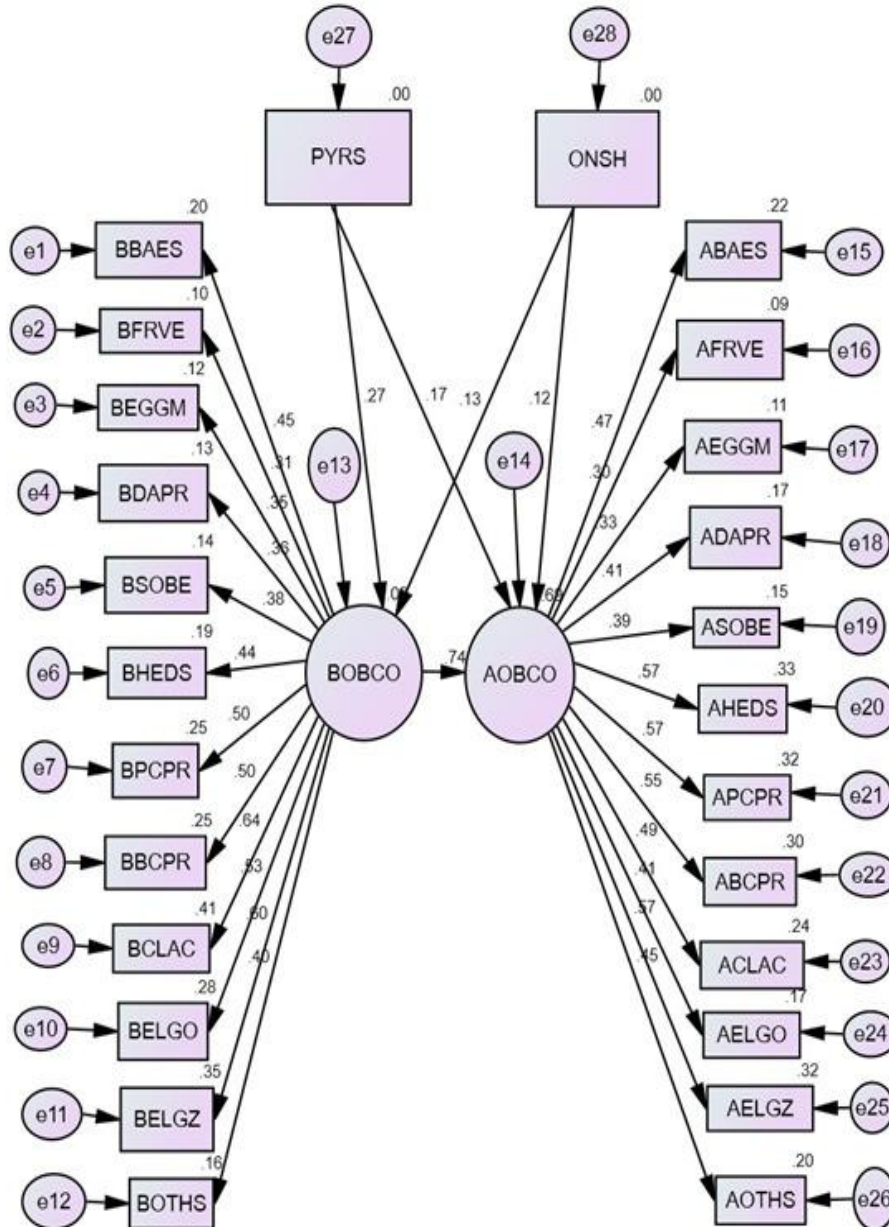
Variables	Physical Stores		Online		Depend on Situation (Physical or Retail Store)	
	Before Covid	After Covid	Before Covid	After Covid	Before Covid	After Covid
Basic Essentials(Food Items & Groceries)	438	459	115	108	47	33
	-73	-76.5	-19.17	-18	-7.83	-5.5
Fruits & Vegetables	415	376	134	186	51	38
	-69.17	-62.67	-22.33	-31	-8.5	-6.33
Egg, Meat etc.	435	442	89	87	76	71
	-72.5	-73.67	-14.83	-14.5	-12.67	-11.83
Dairy Products	451	439	117	99	32	62
	-75.17	-73.17	-19.5	-16.5	-5.33	-10.33
Soft Beverages (Tea / Coffee / Cold Drinks)	441	424	108	120	51	56
	-73.5	-70.67	-18	-20	-8.5	-9.33
Health Drinks & Supplements	360	310	158	184	82	106
	-60	-51.67	-26.33	-30.67	-13.67	-17.66
Personal Care Products	250	233	226	279	124	88
	-41.67	-38.83	-37.67	-46.5	-20.66	-14.67
Beauty Care Products	192	184	327	310	81	106
	-32	-30.67	-54.5	-51.67	-13.5	-17.66
Clothing & Accessories	228	200	241	275	131	125
	-38	-33.33	-40.17	-45.83	-21.83	-20.84
Electrical Goods	315	248	175	227	110	125
	-52.5	-41.33	-29.17	-37.83	-18.33	-20.84
Electronic Gazettes	297	257	209	209	94	134
	-49.5	-42.83	-34.83	-34.83	-15.67	-22.34
Other Household Items	299	280	143	184	158	136
	-49.83	-46.67	-23.83	-30.67	-26.34	-22.66

Source: Primary Data

Data classified provides in-depth knowledge on the products preferred to purchase by the shoppers from different POP i.e., physical retail stores, online and either from physical or online stores. It has been well documented that consumers primarily purchase essential groceries, egg and meat from physical stores as it can be procured as fresh as possible and can purchase same day produce. Consumers keep-up the trend of shopping fashion articles, beauty care, electric, electronic and household goods from specific online retail stores. There exists about 5 to 22.66 per cent of cross shoppers from both physical stores and online retail stores.

Before the out-break of pandemic consumers in general sort for efficiency of retailers and convenience of shopping. This concept has completely changed in the new normal situation i.e., after three phases of Covid-19 out spread and lock-downs implemented for preventing virus spread. The share of the traditional retail stores in India has dipped from 95 per cent in 2018 to 92.60 per cent in 2023. On the reverse, side the online retail share has raised to 7.40 per cent in 2023. The attitude of consumers has changed, some consumers prefer to shop in retail store, whereas, another category of consumers express a desire to visit to the retail store to buy products, as they can assess, determine the price, quality and quality of the products they can shop. Drawing correlation to these concepts, following SE-Modle is constructed. SEM models is performed to frequently visit retail stores for purchase of products and before and after outbreak of covid.

Exhibit 1: Association between Frequently Visit Retail Stores for Purchase of Products and Before and After Outbreak of Covid



Note: BBAES- Before Basic Essentials (Food Items & Groceries), BFRVE- Before Fruits & Vegetables, BEGGM- Before Egg, Meat etc., BDAPR- Before Dairy Products, BSOBE- Before Soft Beverages (Tea /Coffee/Cold Drinks), BHEDS- Before Health Drinks & Supplements, BPCPR- Before Personal Care Products, BBCPR- Before Beauty Care Products, BCLAC- Before Clothing & Accessories, BELGO- Before Electrical Goods, BELGZ- Before Electronic Gazettes, BOTHS- Before Other Household Items, ABAES- After Basic Essentials (Food Items & Groceries), AFRVE- After Fruits & Vegetables, AEGGM- After Egg, Meat etc., ADAPR- After Dairy Products, ASOBE- After Soft Beverages (Tea /Coffee/Cold Drinks), AHEDS- After Health Drinks & Supplements, APCPR- After Personal Care Products, ABCPR- After Beauty Care Products, ACLAC- After Clothing & Accessories, AELGO- After Electrical Goods, AELGZ- After Electronic Gazettes, AOTHS- After Other Household Items, PYRS- Physical Retail Store, ONSH-Online Shopping, BOBCO-Before Outbreak of Covid and AOBCO-After Outbreak of Covid.

Table 1: Confirmatory Factor Analysis Chi-Square Result and Goodness of Fit Indices of the Proposed Model

Fit Indices	Obtained Value	Accepted Thresholds Levels	Acceptable Value
c2(CMIN)	877	NA	NA
DF	599	NA	NA
P	0	NA	NA
Scaledc2/df	2.963	<0.05	<0.05
Goodness of Fit Index (GFI)	0.955	Value Greater than 0.95	0-1
Adjusted Goodness of Fit Index (AGFI)	0.99	Value Greater than 0.95	0-1
Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI)	0.916	Value Greater than 0.95	0-1
Comparative Fit Index (CFI)	0.968	Value Greater than 0.95	0-1
Normed Fit Index (NFI)	0.909	Value Greater than 0.95	0-1
Parsimonious Normed Fit Index (PNFI)	0.972	0=Poor Fit, 1=Good Fit	0-1
Parsimonious Comparative Fit Index(PCFI)	0.926	0=Poor Fit, 1=Good Fit	0-1

Relative Fit Index (RFI)	0.951	0=Poor Fit, 1=Good Fit	0-1
Incremental Fit Index (IFI)	0.977	0=Poor Fit, 1=Good Fit	0-1
Root Mean Square Approximation Method (RMSEA)	0.005	Range between 0.05-0.08	.05 or less would indicate a close fit of the model

Level of Significance: 5 per cent

Minimization: .015

Miscellaneous: .969

Bootstrap: .000

Total: .984

The CFA results are presented in table 1 and exhibit 1. The fit indices indicate that the measure has a good fit overall. On the basis of these measurements, the result of the study shows that the proposed model has a Good data fit χ^2 (CMIN) = 877 ($p=.000$), GFI=.955, AGFI=.990, TLI=.916, CFI=.968, NFI=.909, PNFI=.972, PCFI=.926, RFI=.951, IFI=.977, RMSEA=.005, indicative of a good fit, although not all of the values to the right of the observed variables represent standardised factor loadings (β), it is represented in the following table: 2.

Table 2: Confirmatory Factor Analysis Path Analysis Structure Maximum Likelihood - Regression Weightage

Path			Unstandardised Estimates	Standardised Estimates	S.E	C.R	P Value	Relationship
BOBCO	<---	ONSH	0.048	0.134	0.027	1.744	0.001	Significant
BOBCO	<---	PYRS	0.104	0.267	0.03	3.419	0	Significant
AOBCO	<---	BOBCO	0.454	0.744	0.085	5.341	0	Significant
AOBCO	<---	PYRS	0.041	0.174	0.016	2.6	0.009	Significant
AOBCO	<---	ONSH	0.027	0.124	0.014	1.945	0.002	Significant
BELGZ	<---	BOBCO	1	0.596	0.045	2.632	0	Significant
BELGO	<---	BOBCO	0.946	0.531	0.149	6.333	0	Significant
BCLAC	<---	BOBCO	1.133	0.642	0.161	7.028	0	Significant
BBCPR	<---	BOBCO	0.754	0.504	0.128	5.9	0	Significant
BPCPR	<---	BOBCO	0.879	0.5	0.151	5.808	0	Significant
BHEDS	<---	BOBCO	0.734	0.438	0.139	5.277	0	Significant
BSOBE	<---	BOBCO	0.544	0.38	0.114	4.782	0	Significant
BDAPR	<---	BOBCO	0.459	0.361	0.101	4.553	0	Significant
BEGGM	<---	BOBCO	0.571	0.353	0.128	4.471	0	Significant
BFRVE	<---	BOBCO	0.453	0.312	0.113	4	0	Significant
BBAES	<---	BOBCO	0.639	0.45	0.113	5.671	0	Significant
ABAES	<---	AOBCO	1	0.471	0.114	6.352	0	Significant
AFRVE	<---	AOBCO	0.693	0.301	0.184	3.77	0	Significant
AEGGM	<---	AOBCO	0.852	0.329	0.214	3.99	0	Significant
ADAPR	<---	AOBCO	1.025	0.409	0.215	4.766	0	Significant
ASOBE	<---	AOBCO	0.949	0.39	0.207	4.579	0	Significant
AHEDS	<---	AOBCO	1.647	0.573	0.289	5.69	0	Significant
APCPR	<---	AOBCO	1.501	0.569	0.27	5.553	0	Significant
ABCPR	<---	AOBCO	1.42	0.547	0.265	5.364	0	Significant
ACLAC	<---	AOBCO	1.355	0.49	0.273	4.959	0	Significant
AELGO	<---	AOBCO	1.187	0.412	0.251	4.724	0	Significant
AELGZ	<---	AOBCO	1.665	0.566	0.297	5.597	0	Significant
BOTHS	<---	BOBCO	0.782	0.402	0.155	5.046	0	Significant
AOTHS	<---	AOBCO	1.34	0.447	0.279	4.796	0	Significant

Level of Significance: 5 per cent

- Association between frequently visit retail stores for purchase of products and before and after outbreak of covid: BOBCO vs ONSH ($\beta=.134$, $p=.001$), BOBCO vs PYRS ($\beta=.267$, $p=.000$), AOBCO vs BOBCO ($\beta=.744$, $p=.000$), AOBCO vs PYRS ($\beta=.174$, $p=.009$) and AOBCO vs ONSH ($\beta=.124$, $p=.002$) are positively correlated and found to be significant.
- The intercorrelation of before outbreak of covid: BELGZ vs BOBCO ($\beta=.596$, $p=.000$), BELGO vs BOBCO ($\beta=.531$, $p=.000$), BCLAC vs BOBCO ($\beta=.642$, $p=.000$), BBCPR vs BOBCO ($\beta=.504$, $p=.000$), BPCPR vs BOBCO ($\beta=.500$, $p=.000$), BHEDS vs BOBCO ($\beta=.438$, $p=.000$), BSOBE vs BOBCO ($\beta=.380$, $p=.000$), BDAPR vs BOBCO ($\beta=.361$, $p=.000$), BEGGM vs BOBCO ($\beta=.353$, $p=.000$), BFRVE vs BOBCO ($\beta=.312$, $p=.000$) and BBAES vs BOBCO ($\beta=.450$, $p=.000$) are positively correlated and found to be significant.
- The intercorrelation of after outbreak of covid: ABAES vs AOBCO ($\beta=.471$, $p=.000$), AFRVE vs AOBCO ($\beta=.301$, $p=.000$), AEGGM vs AOBCO ($\beta=.329$, $p=.000$), ADAPR vs AOBCO ($\beta=.409$, $p=.000$), ASOBE vs AOBCO ($\beta=.390$, $p=.000$), AHEDS vs AOBCO ($\beta=.573$, $p=.000$), APCPR vs AOBCO ($\beta=.569$, $p=.000$), ABCPR vs AOBCO ($\beta=.547$, $p=.000$), ACLAC vs AOBCO ($\beta=.490$, $p=.000$), AELGO vs AOBCO ($\beta=.412$, $p=.000$), AELGZ vs AOBCO ($\beta=.566$, $p=.000$), BOTHS vs AOBCO ($\beta=.402$, $p=.000$) and AOTHS vs AOBCO ($\beta=.447$, $p=.000$) are positively correlated and found to be significant.

The hypotheses framed stands accepted and it has been concluded that the shopping pattern of consumers have shifted before and after the out-break of Covid-19 virus.

Conclusion:

Shopping pattern of Indian consumers keep changing from one period of time to other. Number of factors like: upliftment in their socio-demographic status, buying cum spending power, convenience of shopping, influence of digital upgradation in term of shopping and in term of payment moder and also due to the growth or organised retail store on online retailing. Findings of the article claims that the shopping pattern of consumers have shifted before and after the out-break of Covid-19 virus. The authors conclude by stating that future of shopping in Indians is slowly moving towards “quick commerce” i.e., delivery of products shopped within a short-time span, it is considered as the major opportunity for online retailers. The traditional retailers can win their market share from the contemporary retail formats, as they were offering quick commerce i.e., quick door delivery of the consumers at their neighbourhoods and they need not consider the modern-day retailers as a threat for their existence, rather they have to strengthen their span and mode of business operations.

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