

Factors Influencing Online Purchase Behaviour Of Rural Consumers

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ABSTRACT

Although global retail has been significantly transformed by e-commerce, its impact on rural consumers remains comparatively limited (Pratiwi et al., 2025; Sanketh, 2024). This study examines the online purchasing behaviour of rural consumers in the Thiruvallur area, focusing primarily on trust, security, and loyalty in online shopping (Kumar & Gupta, 2022; Choudhury & Kar, 2021; Singh et al., 2020). Primary data collected through a structured questionnaire were analysed using percentage analysis, exploratory factor analysis, and one-way ANOVA with SPSS v25 (Hair et al., 2019). The findings indicate that technological features alone do not significantly drive rural buying behaviour; rather, trust and confidence shaped by prior experience play a decisive role (Rana & Dwivedi, 2020). Key influencing factors identified include convenience and accessibility, trust and security issues, preferred payment methods, high shipping costs and delayed deliveries, and digital literacy. Additionally, age, occupation, education, and monthly income were found to significantly influence online purchase behaviour.

Keywords: Online shopping, Rural consumers, Purchase behaviour, Thiruvallur district, E-commerce adoption, Trust, Security.

INTRODUCTION

E-commerce has significantly reshaped purchasing patterns through convenience, wider product choices, and competitive pricing, with rapid growth in India driven by affordable smartphones and digital payment innovations. However, rural consumers remain comparatively cautious due to infrastructural limitations, low trust, and limited awareness of return and refund policies (Patnaik, 2020). Although rural India represents nearly two-thirds of the population and holds strong growth potential, purchasing preferences differ from urban consumers, necessitating focused research (Singh, Viji, & Pardesi, 2020).

Online purchase behaviour refers to the decision-making process involved in buying goods through digital platforms, influenced by functional factors such as convenience and price, as well as psychological aspects like trust and satisfaction (Bianchi & Andrews, 2012). In rural areas, buying decisions are strongly shaped by word-of-mouth and peer validation, with greater concerns regarding product quality and transaction security (Choudhury & Kar, 2021). Key influencing factors include convenience and accessibility, trust and security issues, preference for cash-on-delivery, high shipping costs, delayed deliveries, and digital literacy constraints (Shivendra Kumar Singh & Lalhall, 2017). Demographic variables such as age, income, and education significantly affect adoption, with younger consumers showing greater acceptance (Murali, 2024).

Despite the rural-urban divide where rural consumers prioritise affordability and reliability over variety (Santhosh & Basavarajappa, 2022) online shopping is steadily increasing in rural regions due to smartphone penetration, regional-language applications, and digital inclusion initiatives (Rana & Dwivedi, 2020; Kumar & Gupta, 2022). Platforms like Meesho are gaining traction among value-conscious rural buyers. Strengthening trust through transparent return policies, improved last-mile delivery, and

vernacular engagement can further accelerate rural e-commerce adoption (Pratiwi et al., 2025; Singh et al., 2020).

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Recent studies highlight the growing relevance of digital platforms in shaping rural online purchase behaviour.

1. Arumugam, Hameed, and Sanjeev (2025) identified convenience, price sensitivity, smartphone access, and perceived product reliability as key predictors of rural online buying, emphasizing the importance of cash-on-delivery options and regional-language applications.
2. Sardar et al. (2025) found that trust, transparent return policies, secure digital payments, and word-of-mouth recommendations significantly enhance rural consumer confidence, with platforms like Meesho and Flipkart gaining preference due to localized support.
3. Murali (2024) reported a strong association between young adults and online shopping adoption, while Santhosh and Basavarajappa (2022) emphasized the cost efficiency and competitiveness enabled by online retailing.
4. Patnaik (2020) observed a notable shift in rural buying patterns toward e-marketing, driven by technological advancement and changing lifestyles, underscoring the need for marketers to adapt strategies to evolving rural consumer expectations.

OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

1. To identify the factors that influence the purchase behaviour of rural customers engaged in online shopping.
2. To examine the influence of demographic variables that influence the online purchase behaviour in rural areas.

HYPOTHESIS OF THE STUDY

H₀1: There is no significant influence of demographic variables on online purchase behaviour in rural areas.

METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

This study examines the factors influencing rural consumers' purchase behaviour toward online shopping in the Tiruvallur district. A total of 142 respondents were selected using a convenience sampling method. Data were collected through a structured questionnaire consisting of two sections: demographic details and scales measuring online purchase behaviour. Exploratory factor analysis was employed to identify key influencing factors, while one-way ANOVA was used to examine the impact of demographic variables. Reliability was tested using Cronbach's alpha, and data analysis was carried out using SPSS v25.

ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

The reliability analysis yielded a Cronbach's alpha value of 0.831, indicating good internal

consistency (83.1%). Among respondents, 60.8% were male and 39.2% were female. The

majority were aged 31–40 years (41.8%), followed by 21–30 years (28%), 41–50 years (21.3%), and above 50 years (9%). Most respondents were married (67.7%). In terms of occupation, 42.3% were private employees, with others engaged in business, government service, homemaking, and studies. Regarding education, 37.5% were graduates, and a significant portion had school-level education. Income distribution shows that most

respondents earned between ₹20,001–30,000 per month, followed by those earning below ₹20,000.

Factors influencing rural consumer online purchase behaviour

This section identifies the factors influencing the online purchasing behaviour of rural consumers in the Tiruvallur district. Sixteen variables were analysed using principal component analysis with varimax rotation to group them based on respondents' agreement levels. The KMO value of 0.836 confirms sampling adequacy, and Bartlett's test of sphericity ($\chi^2 = 338.214$, $p < .001$) indicates that the data are suitable for factor analysis. The results of the factor analysis are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Eigen values for factors of rural consumer online purchase behaviour

Factors	Eigen value	Variance explored (in %)	Cumulative Variance explored (in %)
1	4.322	30.16	30.16
2	2.226	18.25	48.41
3	1.813	8.63	57.04
4	1.265	6.12	63.16
5	1.049	5.26	68.42

Factor analysis of the sixteen items resulted in the extraction of five factors, supported by Eigenvalues of 4.322, 2.226, 1.813, 1.265, and 1.049, all exceeding the threshold value of one. These five factors explain a substantial portion of the original data, contributing variances of 30.16%, 18.25%, 8.63%, 6.12%, and 5.26%, respectively. Collectively, the extracted factors account for 68.42% of the total variance, indicating a strong factor structure. Table 2 presents the five identified factors along with their respective components.

Table 2: Factor scores for rural consumer online purchase behaviour

Factor	Components	Factor Scores
Factor 1: Convenience and Accessibility	Online purchasing saves me time over traditional shopping	0.807
	Online platforms are easy to access in my area	0.743
	Shopping online allows me to compare things easily	0.622
	Online purchasing is convenient for me because it can be done at any time	0.522
Factor 2: Trust and Security Issues	I feel comfortable revealing my personal information on internet buying websites	0.783
	I trust online sellers to deliver their things as stated	0.716
	Online payment mechanisms are secure and reliable	0.672
	I'm concerned about fraud when shopping online	0.536
Factor 3:	When ordering online, I prefer cash on delivery (COD)	0.762

Preferred Payment Method	The availability of my preferred payment option influences my online purchasing decisions	0.637
	I find digital wallets (such as PhonePe and Paytm) simple to use for online payments	0.566
Factor 4: High Shipping Costs and Delayed Deliveries	High delivery fees keep me away from shopping online	0.704
	Delayed delivery diminishes my desire to buy things online	0.525
Factor 5: Digital Literacy	I am OK with utilizing mobile apps for internet buying	0.793
	I can easily track my orders online	0.622
	I understand how to fix common technological issues when purchasing online	0.524

Table 2 indicates that rural consumers' online purchase behaviour is influenced by factors such as convenience and accessibility, trust and security issues, preferred payment method, high shipping costs and delivery delays, and digital literacy. Key aspects include time-saving benefits compared to traditional shopping, comfort in sharing personal information on trusted platforms, preference for cash on delivery (COD), sensitivity to high delivery charges, and willingness to use mobile applications for online purchases.

Influence of demographic variables on rural consumer purchase behaviour

This section identifies the impact of demographic factors on the internet buying habits of rural consumers in the Tiruvallur district.

H₀1: There is no significant influence of demographic variables on online purchase behaviour in rural areas.

Table 3: Influence of demographic variables on rural consumer purchase behaviour

Variable	Category	Mean	SD	F-value
Gender	Male	3.49	1.024	1.792 (p=.097)
	Female	3.58	1.069	
Age (in years)	21- 30	3.32	1.126	8.489** (p=.000)
	31 to 40	3.54	1.022	
	41 to 50	3.53	1.016	
	Above 50	3.88	0.979	
Marital Status	Unmarried	3.49	1.088	1.045 (p=.165)
	Married	3.57	1.023	
Occupation	Government Employee	3.62	1.106	9.426** (p=.000)
	Private Employee	3.56	0.967	
	Business	3.47	0.986	
	Housewife	3.54	1.171	
	Student	3.37	1.158	
	Others	2.87	0.827	
Education	Up to Schooling	3.62	1.079	10.974** (p=.000)
	Graduate	3.59	1.016	
	Postgraduate	3.31	1.062	

	Others	3.37	0.992	
Monthly Income	Nil income	3.15	1.092	8.763**
	Less than Rs.20,000	3.88	0.948	(p=.000)
	Rs.20,001 to 30,000	3.59	0.916	
	Rs.30,001 to 40,000	3.45	1.215	
	More than Rs.40,000	3.37	1.048	

**Significant at 1% level

At the 5% significance level, null hypothesis H01 is rejected for age, occupation, education, and monthly income, as these variables significantly influence online shopping behaviour, while it is accepted for marital status and gender due to their non-significant impact. Respondents above 50 years show the highest level of online purchasing behaviour, whereas those aged 21–30 show comparatively moderate levels. Government employees demonstrate stronger online buying behaviour, while respondents in other occupations show lower engagement. Consumers with school-level education and those earning below ₹20,000 per month exhibit higher online purchasing behaviour, whereas respondents with no income display the lowest level of engagement.

CONCLUSION

The analysis reveals a significant shift among rural consumers toward e-commerce, driven by improved internet access, smartphone penetration, and increasing digital familiarity. Convenience, product variety, and competitive pricing encourage adoption, while socio- economic factors such as age, income, education, and digital literacy significantly influence participation, with younger and more digitally skilled consumers showing higher engagement. However, challenges including concerns about product quality, delivery reliability, payment security, limited digital literacy, and infrastructural constraints continue to hinder full adoption.

The study identifies convenience and accessibility, trust and security issues, preferred payment methods, high shipping costs and delayed deliveries, and digital literacy as the key factors influencing rural online purchase behaviour. Overall, strengthening trust, improving delivery systems, offering secure and flexible payment options, and implementing localized digital literacy initiatives are essential for promoting sustainable e-commerce growth and inclusive digital development in rural markets.

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