Evolving Consumer Trust Towards Online Shopping Platforms In Rural Odisha: "A Post Digitalization Analysis"

Miss Manisha Mukherjee[1], Mr. Ajaya Kumar Sahoo[2]
Lecturer in Commerce, Lecturer in Commerce, Department of Commerce
Orchid id: 0009-0005-2185-6048
Orchid id: 0009-0004-8232-3299
Govt Women's College, Keonjhar, Odisha, India

Abstract

Digitalization has significantly transformed consumer behaviour across India, including rural regions. This study examines the evolving consumer trust toward online shopping platforms in rural Odisha in the post-digitalization era. With increased internet penetration, smartphone usage, and digital payment adoption, rural consumers are gradually shifting from traditional retail to online platforms such as Amazon India and Flipkart. However, trust remains a critical factor influencing adoption. The study investigates key determinants of trust including payment security, product authenticity, delivery reliability, digital literacy, and social influence. Using survey-based primary data collected from rural consumers in selected districts of Odisha, the research analyses behavioural changes and trust patterns. The findings indicate that while trust has improved due to positive user experiences and digital awareness, concerns regarding fraud, return policies, and digital skills still persist. The study concludes that strengthening digital education, ensuring secure payment systems, and improving last-mile delivery services are essential for enhancing consumer trust in rural Odisha's e-commerce ecosystem.

Keywords: Transformed, Digitalization, Authenticity, Awareness, Strengthening

1. Introduction

The rapid growth of digital technology has significantly transformed the commercial landscape of India over the last decade. With the launch of initiatives such as Digital India in 2015, the government aimed to improve digital infrastructure, promote digital literacy, and enhance online service delivery across urban and rural regions. As a result, internet penetration and smartphone usage have increased substantially, even in remote areas. This digital expansion has created new opportunities for online shopping platforms to penetrate rural markets, which were previously underserved by organized retail systems.

Odisha, traditionally characterized by agrarian livelihoods and geographically dispersed populations, has witnessed noticeable digital growth in recent years. Affordable smartphones, low-cost data plans introduced by telecom providers like Reliance Jio, and the expansion of digital payment systems have enabled rural consumers to access online marketplaces more conveniently. Platforms such as Amazon and Flipkart have expanded their delivery networks to semi-urban and rural areas, offering a wide range of products including groceries, electronics, clothing, and agricultural tools.

However, while access to online platforms has improved, consumer trust remains a critical factor influencing the adoption and sustained use of e-commerce services in rural areas. Trust in online shopping is shaped by multiple factors such as perceived security of digital payments, product quality assurance, reliability of delivery services, transparency in pricing, return policies, and customer service responsiveness. In rural Odisha, where traditional buying practices are deeply rooted in face-to-face

interactions and local vendor relationships, shifting to digital transactions requires overcoming psychological and technological barriers.

Post-digitalization, especially after the widespread adoption of Unified Payments Interface (UPI) systems and digital wallets, rural consumers have gradually developed greater familiarity with online transactions. Government campaigns promoting cashless transactions, financial inclusion programs, and the spread of banking services have further strengthened confidence in digital commerce. Nevertheless, issues such as cyber fraud, lack of digital literacy, limited awareness about consumer rights, and logistical challenges in remote villages continue to influence the level of trust.

The evolution of consumer trust in rural Odisha is therefore not merely a technological phenomenon but a socio-economic transformation. It reflects changing consumer attitudes, risk perceptions, and behavioural patterns influenced by education, income levels, peer recommendations, and past online shopping experiences. Understanding this evolving trust dynamic is essential for policymakers, marketers, and e-commerce companies aiming to expand sustainably in rural markets.

1.1 "Trust" Means in Rural Online Shopping

Trust in e-commerce is multi-dimensional for rural consumers, generally comprising:

1. **Security and reliability** of transactions (fear of fraud, payment security)
2. **Product authenticity and delivery performance**
3. **Familiarity and ease of platform use**
4. **Peer/community recommendations and word-of-mouth cues**

In rural contexts, especially where digital skills and infrastructure are nascent, trust often hinges on **perceived risk** and **tangible reassurance** (e.g., COD options, returns, local language support).

1.2 Post-digitalization

It means studying consumer behaviour after the spread of digital services such as internet access, digital payments, and online shopping platforms in rural Odisha.

Example: Before digitalization: People mostly used cash and visited physical shops.

After digitalization (Post-digitalization): People use UPI, online banking, and shopping apps like Amazon or Flipkart.

1.3 Merits of Digitalization

1. Easy Access to Products - Rural consumers can purchase goods from platforms like Amazon and Flipkart without traveling to cities.
2. Time Saving - Online shopping reduces travel time and waiting in markets.
3. Better Price Comparison - Consumers can compare prices easily and choose affordable options.
4. Digital Payment Convenience - Systems like UPI allow fast and cashless transactions.
5. Wider Product Variety - Access to national and international brands.
6. Financial Inclusion - More people use bank accounts and digital payments.
7. Home Delivery Facility - Products are delivered directly to villages.
8. Transparency - Reviews and ratings help consumers make informed decisions.

1.4 Demerits of Digitalization

1. Risk of Cyber Fraud - Online scams and payment frauds reduce trust.
2. Low Digital Literacy - Many rural people lack proper knowledge of using apps and websites.
3. Poor Internet Connectivity - Network issues affect smooth transactions.
4. Delayed Deliveries - Remote villages may face logistic problems.
5. No Physical Inspection - Consumers cannot physically check products before buying.
6. Data Privacy Concerns - Personal and financial data may be misused.
7. Dependence on Technology - Technical errors or server problems can stop transactions

2. Literature Review

Karam Kamal Younis and Subhi R. M. Zeebaree (2025) examines how digital strategies influence trust and long-term customer loyalty in online markets. Existing literature highlights trust as a multidimensional construct shaped by website quality, data security, privacy protection, and transparent communication. The study synthesizes prior research on personalization, AI-driven recommendations, social proof, and secure payment systems as key trust-building mechanisms. It concludes that consistent digital engagement, user experience optimization, and ethical data practices significantly enhance consumer confidence and repeat purchase intentions in e-commerce platforms.

Ashok Kumar Meena and Pradeep Kushwaha (2026) study on trust as a critical determinant of online consumer behavior. Prior studies identify trust as a multidimensional construct influenced by perceived security, privacy protection, platform reputation, and seller credibility. Literature also emphasizes the role of reviews, ratings, and transparent communication in reducing perceived risk. The authors synthesize research indicating that higher trust enhances purchase intention, customer satisfaction, and loyalty, while lack of trust increases hesitation and cart abandonment in digital marketplaces.

Kajal Sharma and Chanchal Chawla (2024) examines how trust and security perceptions influence online shopping behavior among consumers in Haryana. Literature on online shopping consistently highlights trust as a fundamental determinant of consumer attitudes and purchase intentions, shaped by factors such as perceived security, platform reliability, and user experience. By surveying local consumers, Sharma and Chawla build on this body of research to show that trust concerns and platform preferences significantly affect attitudes and adoption of e-commerce, enriching regional insights into digital consumer behavior.

Abdullah Balli (2025) study *"The Impact of Consumer Trust on Purchase, Satisfaction and Loyalty in Online Shopping"* synthesizes existing research showing trust as a central driver of online consumer behavior. Prior literature emphasizes that trust is shaped by security, privacy safeguards, website interface quality, and brand image, which jointly reduce perceived risk and foster confidence in digital platforms. Trust not only increases purchase intentions but also enhances overall satisfaction by aligning expectations with actual experiences. Satisfied consumers are more likely to exhibit loyalty through repeat purchases and advocacy, underscoring trust's foundational role in long-term e-commerce relationships.

Raghav Chandana and Shiva Rani and M. Singh and E. Binodini Devi (2024) study *"Consumer's Perceptions Towards Online Shopping with Special Reference to Srinagar, Garhwal, Uttarakhand"* reviews key literature on online consumer behavior, emphasizing perceived benefits and electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) as influential factors. Prior research highlights that convenience, wide product variety, competitive pricing, and trust shape online shopping perceptions, while social influences and risk considerations also play roles in decision making. The literature underscores that perceived benefits such as ease of use and value significantly enhance positive perceptions, and that eWOM through reviews and recommendations affects attitudes, though to a lesser extent than benefit perceptions in regional consumer contexts.

Anupreet Kaur Mokha and Jasdeep Kaur (2023) study *"An Empirical Study on Factors Affecting Online Shopping Behavior and Intentions of Consumers"* reviews key literature on online consumer behavior, highlighting several dominant determinants identified in prior research. Foundational studies emphasize convenience, perceived usefulness, enjoyment, price and value consciousness, impulse buying, and perceived risk as core influences on online shopping decisions. The literature also draws on established theoretical models like Technology Acceptance and consumer behavior frameworks to explain how these factors shape intentions and actions. This study extends previous work by quantifying how these predictors collectively drive online purchase intentions in the Indian e-commerce context.

Arun Mishra (2023) synthesizes existing research on how digital environments shape shopping patterns. Prior literature highlights convenience, wide product selection, competitive pricing, and personalization as key drivers of online purchase decisions. Studies also emphasize the roles of perceived ease of use, trust in technology, and secure payment mechanisms in reducing risk and increasing adoption. Additionally, social influence through reviews and recommendations significantly affects consumer choices. Mishra's review situates these findings within broader digital trends, showing that evolving technology and consumer expectations jointly transform shopping habits, reinforcing the importance of user-centric design and trust in e-commerce platforms.

3.Objectives of the Study

1. To examine the level of awareness about online shopping platforms among rural consumers in Odisha.
2. To analyse the level of consumer trust toward online shopping platforms in the post-digitalization period.
3. To identify the key factors influencing consumer trust, such as payment security, product quality, delivery services, and digital literacy.
4. To study the impact of digital payment systems like Unified Payments Interface (UPI) on rural consumers' trust in online transactions.
5. To evaluate the role of social influence and past online shopping experiences in building consumer confidence.
6. To examine the challenges faced by rural consumers while using online shopping platforms.
7. To suggest suitable measures for improving consumer trust toward e-commerce platforms in rural Odisha.

4. Research Methodology

Research Design

The study is descriptive and analytical in nature.

Data Collection

- **Primary Data**: Collected through structured questionnaires from rural consumers in selected districts of Odisha.
- **Secondary Data**: Journals, government reports, and online sources.

Sample Size

- 120 rural respondents
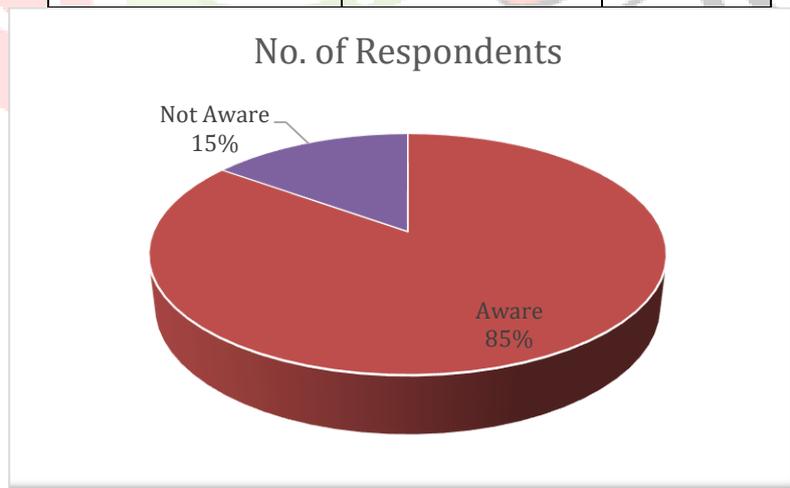- Age group: 18–55 years
- Sampling Method: Convenience sampling

Tools Used for Analysis

- Percentage analysis
- Tabular representation
- Simple statistical interpretation

5.Data Analysis

Table: 1 Awareness of Online Shopping Platforms

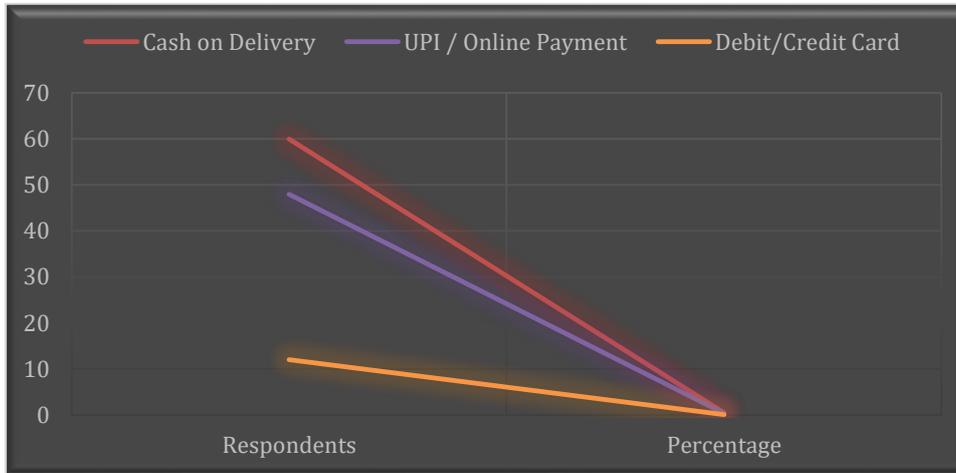| Awareness Level	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Aware	102	85%
Not Aware	18	15%

(figure: 1 no. of respondents)

Interpretation: Majority of rural respondents are aware of online shopping platforms.

Table 2: Preferred Payment Mode

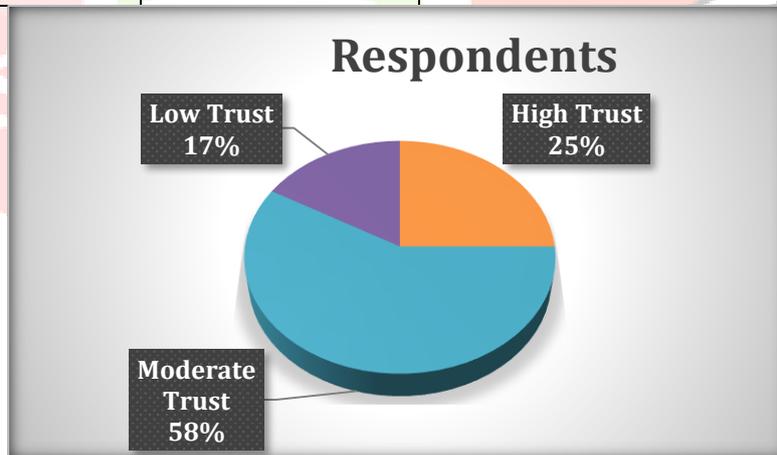| Payment Mode	Respondents	Percentage
Cash on Delivery	60	50%
UPI / Online Payment	48	40%
Debit/Credit Card	12	10%

(figure: 2 preferred payment mode)

Interpretation: COD remains the most trusted payment method, though digital payments are increasing.

Table 3: Level of Trust in Online Shopping

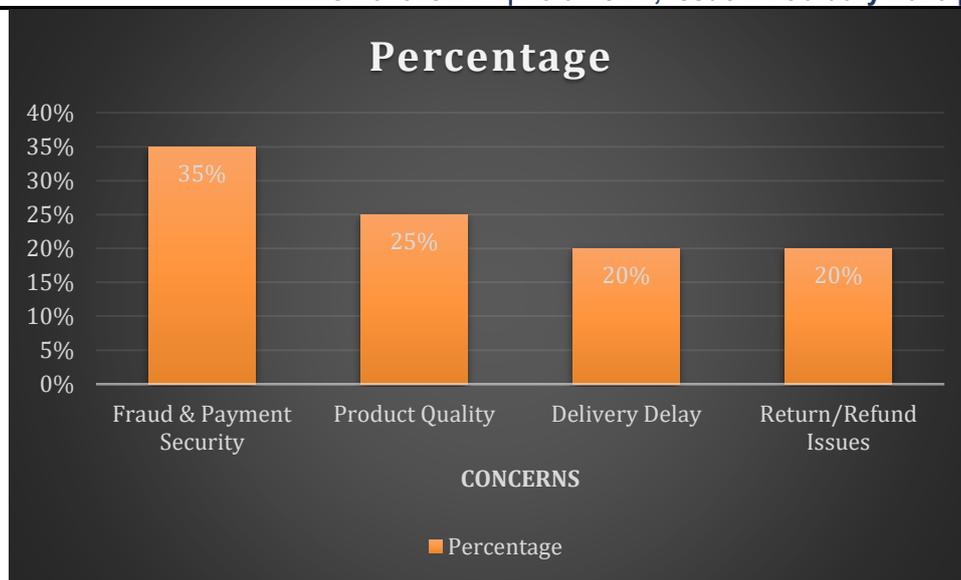| Trust Level	Respondents	Percentage
High Trust	30	25%
Moderate Trust	70	58%
Low Trust	20	17%

(figure: 3 respondent level of trust in online shopping)

Interpretation: Most respondents show moderate trust, indicating gradual acceptance.

Table:4 Major Concerns

Concern	Percentage
Fraud & Payment Security	35%
Product Quality	25%
Delivery Delay	20%
Return/Refund Issues	20%

(figure: 4 major concerns in percentage)

Interpretation: Security concerns remain the biggest barrier to full trust development.

6.Findings

1. Digital awareness in rural Odisha has significantly increased post-digitalization.
2. Trust in online shopping is growing but remains moderate.
3. Cash on Delivery is still preferred due to fear of online fraud.
4. Younger consumers show higher trust compared to older age groups.
5. Positive past experiences increase repeat purchases.
6. Social influence (friends, family) plays an important role in trust formation.
7. Security concerns and delivery issues still hinder complete trust.

7. Suggestions

1. Enhance Digital Literacy Programs in rural areas.
2. Provide secure and transparent payment systems.
3. Improve last-mile delivery services.
4. Offer easy and clear return/refund policies.
5. Use local language interfaces (Odia language support).
6. Conduct awareness campaigns about safe online transactions.
7. Encourage community-based digital ambassadors to build confidence.

8.Conclusion

The study on evolving consumer trust towards online shopping platforms in rural Odisha highlights that digitalization has significantly transformed purchasing behaviour and consumer perception. With the expansion of internet connectivity, smartphone usage, and digital payment systems, rural consumers are gradually adopting e-commerce platforms. Trust, which was initially low due to concerns about product quality, payment security, and delivery reliability, has improved over time as platforms introduced secure payment gateways, easy return policies, and transparent customer reviews. However, challenges such as limited digital literacy, network issues, fear of online fraud, and lack of awareness still affect the complete adoption of online shopping in rural areas. The findings suggest that consumer trust is strongly influenced by positive past experiences, word-of-mouth communication, and government initiatives promoting digital transactions.

To strengthen rural e-commerce growth, companies should focus on awareness programs, regional language support, secure transactions, and efficient logistics. Overall, post-digitalization has created new opportunities for rural consumers, and with continuous improvements in infrastructure and digital education, consumer trust in online shopping platforms is expected to grow further in the coming years.

9.References

1. Karam Kamal Younis and Subhi R. M. Zeebaree [2025], "The Evolution of Consumer Trust in E-Commerce: Exploring Digital Strategies for Enhanced Loyalty", Asian Journal of Research in Computer Science, Volume 18, ISSN: 2581-8260.
2. Ashok Kumar Meena and Pradeep Kushwaha [2026] "The Role of Trust in Shaping Consumer Behavior on Digital Marketplaces", International Journal of Innovation Research in Technology, Volume 12, ISSN: 2349-6002.
3. Kajal Sharma and Chanchal Chawla [2024], "Exploring Consumer Trust and Attitudes Towards Online Shopping in Haryana: A Study on Perception and Preferences", SSRN Electronic Journal DOI: 10.2139/ssrn.4835983
4. Abdullah BALLI 1, [2025]"The Impact of Consumer Trust on Purchase, Satisfaction and Loyalty in Online Shopping ", COMPUTER RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT, Volume 25, ISSN:1000-1239.
5. Raghav Chandna and Shiva Rani [2024], Consumer's Perception Towards Online Shopping with Special Reference to Srinagar-Garhwal, Uttarakhand, Himalayan Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities ,19(1) DOI:10.51220/hjssh. v19i1.7.
6. Anupreet Kaur Mokha and Jasdeep Kaur [2023], An Empirical Study on Factors Affecting online Shopping Behaviour And intentions of consumers, Volume 11, ISSN :2393-9451.
7. Arun K. Mishra [2023], UNDERSTANDING CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR IN THE DIGITAL AGE: A STUDY OF ONLINE SHOPPING HABITS, Shodha Prabha (UGC CARE Journal), Volume 48, ISSN: 0974-8946.