Impact Of Online Vs. Offline Customer Experience With Special Reference To Apparels

Mithilesh Vijayakumar , Muhammad Shazwan, Sibhi Ganeshkumar, Muhammad Dilshad, Thobith Rahul

Student, Student, Student, Student, Student

School of Business and Management

Christ University, Bengaluru, India

INTRODUCTION FOR THE PROPOSED STUDY:

The retail sector has experienced significant changes in recent years due to rapid technological advancement, increased internet penetration, and changing consumer lifestyles. The growth of e-commerce platforms has transformed the way consumers search for information, evaluate alternatives, and make purchase decisions. At the same time, traditional brick-and-mortar stores continue to remain relevant by offering physical interaction, personalised service, and experiential value. As a result, consumers today actively engage with both online and offline channels rather than relying on a single mode of shopping.

In the Indian market, this shift is particularly evident. Increased smartphone usage, affordable internet access, and exposure to global retail platforms have encouraged consumers to adopt online shopping. However, cultural factors such as trust, habit, family influence, and preference for physical verification ensure that offline shopping continues to play a crucial role. Indian consumers often combine both channels during their purchase journey, using online platforms for research and comparison while preferring offline stores for final purchase, especially for high-involvement products.

Watches represent a unique product category that combines functional utility with symbolic and emotional value. Beyond timekeeping, watches reflect personal identity, social status, lifestyle, and self-expression. Similarly, apparel purchases are influenced by fit, comfort, aesthetics, and brand perception. Due to these characteristics, the purchase of watches and apparel involves higher consumer involvement, making the shopping experience and channel choice especially important.

Online shopping platforms provide advantages such as convenience, time efficiency, wider product assortment, and easy access to product information and reviews. However, consumers may experience concerns related to product authenticity, quality uncertainty, and lack of physical inspection. Offline

shopping, on the other hand, allows consumers to touch, try, and evaluate products, interact with sales personnel, and gain immediate possession, which enhances trust and reduces perceived risk.

This study focuses on examining how consumers perceive and evaluate online and offline customer experiences while purchasing watches, and how these experiences influence overall purchase behaviour. The research analyses general purchase behaviour factors, online shopping experience, offline shopping experience, and factors influencing watch purchase, based entirely on primary data collected through a structured questionnaire.

By understanding how cultural, psychological, and experiential factors shape consumer attitudes toward online and offline shopping in the Indian context, the study aims to provide meaningful insights for retailers and brands. The findings can support the development of effective omnichannel strategies that align with consumer expectations and enhance purchase satisfaction.

LITERATURE REVIEW:

Existing literature highlights that consumer shopping behaviour differs significantly between online and offline environments, particularly for high-involvement and experiential products. Liu, Burns, and Hou (2013) point out that in-store shoppers, especially luxury consumers, are more risk-averse toward online purchases. These consumers place high importance on the ability to physically see and touch products, interact with store personnel, and experience the shopping environment, which enhances trust and reduces uncertainty.

Zamfirache et al. (2024) observe that online and offline commerce are evolving concurrently rather than competitively. Their study indicates that both channels are influenced by technological advancements, changing consumer expectations, and market dynamics. This suggests that consumers increasingly evaluate both modes before making purchase decisions.

Shi, Zhou, and Jiang (2019) argue that hybrid retailers do not always dominate the market. Their findings reveal that the success of an online–offline combination depends on the nature of the product and the strength of the offline value proposition. This insight is particularly relevant for watches, where physical inspection and authenticity assurance play a crucial role.

Thakur (2024) explores multiple factors influencing consumer preferences between online and offline shopping, including convenience, price sensitivity, assortment, trust, social interaction, and experiential elements. The study reinforces that channel choice is influenced by a complex interplay of rational and emotional considerations.

Kang, Majer, and Kim (2019) demonstrate that omnichannel consumers exhibit significantly higher purchase frequency and total spending compared to single-channel consumers. This highlights the growing importance of integrated retail strategies that allow consumers to move seamlessly between online and offline channels.

Tewari and Raikar (2023), based on data from Bengaluru, identify convenience, price, and time constraints as key drivers of online purchases, while quality perception and in-store experience remain dominant factors for offline buyers. This reflects the dual nature of consumer behaviour in urban Indian markets.

Singh et al. (2024) emphasise the importance of information integrity and confidentiality in building trust toward e-commerce platforms. Their findings suggest that trust remains a critical determinant of online purchase intention despite technological advancements.

Sharma, Karnani, and Saxena (2022) find that consumers purchasing high-touch products value sensory experience such as touch and trial, which strongly influences their preference for offline shopping. Watches, being sensory and symbolic products, align closely with this observation.

Dhawan and Garga (2025) reveal demographic differences in channel preference, noting that younger consumers with higher disposable income prefer online shopping, while older and lower-income consumers rely more on offline stores due to trust and familiarity.

Lokhande and Kale (2024) similarly identify convenience, price, and product variety as drivers of online shopping, whereas personal interaction and sensory evaluation motivate offline purchases.

Zhang et al. (2023) highlight that environmental stimuli such as live streaming and product demonstrations positively influence trust and purchase intention toward offline stores.

Bahl (2025) concludes that omnichannel capabilities significantly influence consumer satisfaction, loyalty, and purchasing frequency, reinforcing the importance of integrating online and offline experiences.

The concept of Research Online Purchase Offline (ROPO), as described by Wikipedia (2025), further illustrates how consumers increasingly combine channels during their purchase journey.

Overall, while existing literature provides extensive insights into online and offline shopping behaviour, limited attention has been given to watches as symbolic products within the Indian context, creating scope for the present study.

RESEARCH PROBLEM:

This study examines how cultural and market-specific factors in India influence consumer attitudes and behaviours toward online and offline watch shopping. With the rapid expansion of e-commerce platforms alongside the continued relevance of physical retail stores, consumers today are exposed to multiple purchase channels. Traditional buying habits rooted in trust, physical inspection, and interpersonal interaction coexist with emerging digital preferences such as convenience, accessibility, and information availability.

The research explores how these contrasting yet complementary factors shape consumer channel choices during the watch purchase journey. Key drivers such as trust, brand perception, perceived authenticity, and socio-cultural norms are analysed to understand how consumers evaluate online and offline shopping experiences. Watches, being both functional and symbolic products, involve higher levels of involvement and emotional attachment, making channel choice particularly significant.

By understanding the motivations behind consumers' preference for online or offline channels, this study aims to provide insights into contemporary consumer behaviour within the Indian market. The findings are expected to assist watch brands and retailers in designing more effective, culturally aligned omnichannel strategies that enhance customer experience and purchase satisfaction.

RESEARCH GAP:

Most existing studies focus on electronics or general consumer goods, which are primarily functional and involve lower emotional attachment. Prior research largely emphasises demographic variables, price, convenience, and technology usage, while psychological and symbolic factors receive limited attention.

Additionally, many studies treat online and offline shopping as separate choices, assuming uniform consumer behaviour, rather than examining how consumers integrate both channels. Furthermore, a majority of studies are conducted in Western or single-category markets, leaving a gap in understanding Indian consumer behaviour for symbolic products like watches.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS:

1. How do consumers utilise both online and offline channels in their watch purchasing journey?
2. What are the key factors influencing consumers' choice between online and offline while purchasing a watch?
3. How do consumers utilise both their online and offline channels in their watch purchase journey
4. What are the key factors influencing consumers' choice between online and offline channels while purchasing a watch?

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:

1. To examine how consumers engage with both online and offline channels throughout the watch-purchase journey.
2. To identify and evaluate the key factors influencing consumers' choice between online and offline platforms when buying watches.
3. To analyse the role of psychological, emotional, and symbolic factors—such as brand prestige, perceived authenticity, and emotional value—in shaping online and offline shopping preferences for watches.
4. To investigate how sensory, experiential, and in-store brand-interaction elements influence offline purchase decisions for watches compared to digital experiences online.
5. To explore how cultural and market-specific factors within the Indian context impact consumer attitudes and behaviours toward online and offline watch shopping.

SCOPE OF THE STUDY:

The study focuses on consumers who have experience purchasing watches through online and/or offline channels. It analyses consumer behaviour with respect to factors influencing watch purchases, general buying behaviour, and offline shopping experience. The findings of the study are useful for watch retailers, marketers, and e-commerce platforms in understanding consumer expectations and designing effective omnichannel strategies.

VARIABLES OF THE STUDY:

Dependent Variable:
• Purchase Behaviour / Buying Decision
Independent Variables:
• General Purchase Behaviour (GPB)
• Offline Shopping Experience (OFSE)
• Factors Influencing Watch Purchase (FIWP)
• Purchase Behaviour Factors (PBF)

HYPOTHESIS:

H1: There is a significant relationship between general purchase behaviour factors (GPB) and consumers' purchase behaviour towards watches.

H2: There is a significant relationship between offline shopping experience (OFSE) and consumers' purchase behaviour towards watches.

H3: There is a significant relationship between factors influencing watch purchase (FIWP) and consumers' purchase behaviour towards watches.

H4: There is no significant relationship between Purchase Behaviour Factors (PBF) **and** consumer purchase behaviour**.**

METHODOLOGY:

- Type of Study:

The study follows a descriptive research design and is quantitative in nature, focusing on analysing consumer preference towards online and offline watch purchase behaviour.

- Area of Study:

The area of study includes consumers who have experience purchasing watches through online and/or offline retail channels.

- Universe and Sample:

The universe of the study consists of consumers who purchase watches. A sample of 56 respondents was selected using the convenience sampling technique, based on accessibility and willingness to participate.

- Data Collection & Proposed Tools:

Primary data was collected through a structured questionnaire designed to measure general purchase behaviour, factors influencing watch purchase, offline shopping experience, and purchase behaviour factors. A five-point Likert scale was used to record responses. Secondary data was sourced from academic journals, books, research articles, and relevant online sources.

- Data Analysis & Techniques to be Applied:

The collected data was coded and analysed using IBM SPSS Statistics. Percentage analysis was applied to examine response distribution, and reliability analysis using Cronbach's Alpha was conducted to test the internal consistency of the measurement scales. Descriptive statistical techniques were used to interpret the data.

PILOT STUDY:

A pilot study was conducted to examine the reliability and internal consistency of the questionnaire items used in the study. Reliability analysis was performed using Cronbach's Alpha, which is widely accepted as a measure of internal consistency for Likert-scale instruments. The analysis was carried out using SPSS on data collected from 56 respondents, and separate reliability tests were conducted for each construct.

The construct Factors Influencing Watch Purchase (FIWP), measured using five items (FIWP1–FIWP5), yielded a Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.844, indicating good reliability. This suggests that the items measuring factors such as price, brand image, design, quality, and features are highly consistent in capturing consumers' perceptions related to watch purchase decisions.

The construct Purchase Behaviour Factors (PBF), consisting of five items (PBF1–PBF5), recorded a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.709, which falls within the acceptable reliability range. This indicates that the scale used to measure purchase behaviour demonstrates satisfactory internal consistency and is suitable for further statistical analysis.

The construct General Purchase Behaviour (GPB), measured using four items (GPB1–GPB4), showed a Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.832, reflecting good reliability. This confirms that the items included under general purchase behaviour are well correlated and consistently represent consumer buying tendencies.

The construct Offline Shopping Experience (OFSE), assessed using five items (OFSE1–OFSE5), achieved a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.844, indicating good internal consistency. This suggests that the items effectively measure consumers' experiences related to physical store shopping, including product inspection, service quality, trust, and in-store ambience.

Overall, all constructs achieved Cronbach's Alpha values above the recommended threshold of 0.70, confirming that the questionnaire is reliable and suitable for further inferential analysis. Hence, no items were deleted from the scale, and the instrument was retained in its original form for the main study.

variables in the procedure.

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.844	5

```
RELIABILITY
  /VARIABLES=FIWP1 FIWP2 FIWP3 FIWP4 FIWP5
  /SCALE('ALL VARIABLES') ALL
  /MODEL=ALPHA.
```

➜ **Reliability**

[DataSet1] C:\Users\SHAZWAN\Downloads\Untitled2.sav

Scale: ALL VARIABLES

Case Processing Summary

		N	%
Cases	Valid	56	100.0
	Excluded[a]	0	.0
	Total	56	100.0

a. Listwise deletion based on all variables in the procedure.

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.843	5

---

variables in the procedure.

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.843	5

```
RELIABILITY
  /VARIABLES=PBF1 PBF2 PBF3 PBF4 PBF5
  /SCALE('ALL VARIABLES') ALL
  /MODEL=ALPHA.
```

➜ **Reliability**

[DataSet1] C:\Users\SHAZWAN\Downloads\Untitled2.sav

Scale: ALL VARIABLES

Case Processing Summary

		N	%
Cases	Valid	56	100.0
	Excluded[a]	0	.0
	Total	56	100.0

a. Listwise deletion based on all variables in the procedure.

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.709	5

```
Edit  View  Data  Transform  Insert  Format  Analyze  Direct Marketing  Graphs  Utilities  Add-ons  Window  Help
```

```
RELIABILITY
  /VARIABLES=GPB1 GPB2 GPB3 GPB4
  /SCALE('ALL VARIABLES') ALL
  /MODEL=ALPHA.
```

→ Reliability

[DataSet1] C:\Users\SHAZWAN\Downloads\Untitled2.sav

Scale: ALL VARIABLES

Case Processing Summary

		N	%
Cases	Valid	56	100.0
	Excluded^a	0	.0
	Total	56	100.0

a. Listwise deletion based on all variables in the procedure.

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.832	4

```
Output
  Log
  Reliability
    Title
    Notes
    Active Dataset
    Scale: ALL VARIAE
      Title
      Case Proces
      Reliability Sta
```

variables in the procedure.

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.832	4

```
RELIABILITY
  /VARIABLES=OFSE1 OFSE2 OFSE3 OFSE4 OFSE5
  /SCALE('ALL VARIABLES') ALL
  /MODEL=ALPHA.
```

→ Reliability

[DataSet1] C:\Users\SHAZWAN\Downloads\Untitled2.sav

Scale: ALL VARIABLES

Case Processing Summary

		N	%
Cases	Valid	56	100.0
	Excluded^a	0	.0
	Total	56	100.0

a. Listwise deletion based on all variables in the procedure.

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.844	5

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY :

Despite careful design and systematic execution, the present study is subject to certain limitations that should be considered while interpreting the findings. First, the study adopts a quantitative research approach using a structured questionnaire. While quantitative methods are effective for identifying patterns, relationships, and trends, they may not fully capture the deeper psychological meanings, emotions, and symbolic interpretations associated with consumer behaviour. Watches, being symbolic and identity-driven products, involve emotional and experiential dimensions that are often difficult to measure through structured survey instruments alone. The inclusion of qualitative methods such as in-depth interviews or focus group discussions could have provided richer insights into these aspects.

Second, the study relies on self-reported data, which may be influenced by recall bias and social desirability bias. Respondents may unintentionally misrepresent their actual purchasing behaviour or provide responses they believe to be socially acceptable, particularly when answering questions related to brand preference, trust, or spending behaviour. As a result, the expressed attitudes and intentions may not always accurately reflect actual purchase behaviour in real-world settings.

Third, the use of convenience sampling represents a limitation in terms of generalisability. Although this sampling method is practical and commonly used in consumer research, it may not adequately represent the broader population. Consumer behaviour related to watch purchases can vary significantly across different income groups, age segments, cultural backgrounds, and geographic regions, which may not be fully captured through the chosen sample.

Another limitation arises from the predominantly urban focus of the study. Urban consumers generally have greater exposure to digital platforms, e-commerce websites, and organised retail outlets, which may influence their online and offline shopping preferences differently compared to consumers in semi-urban or rural areas. Consequently, the findings may not be fully generalisable to the entire population.

Additionally, the study follows a cross-sectional research design, capturing consumer perceptions and behaviour at a single point in time. Consumer preferences, attitudes, and channel usage are dynamic and may change due to technological advancements, economic fluctuations, and evolving lifestyle patterns. A longitudinal research design could have provided deeper insights into how consumer behaviour changes over time, particularly in an increasingly omnichannel retail environment.

The measurement of online and offline shopping experiences through predefined Likert-scale items also presents a limitation. While such scales enhance reliability and consistency, they may oversimplify complex experiential constructs such as trust, enjoyment, emotional engagement, and perceived authenticity. These multifaceted constructs could have been explored in greater depth through qualitative approaches.

Furthermore, the study does not explicitly account for the influence of emerging retail technologies such as personalised digital recommendations, interactive online content, or virtual product trial features. These technological elements are increasingly shaping consumer perceptions, engagement levels, and trust in online retail environments and may influence watch purchase behaviour in ways not fully reflected in the present study.

Finally, cultural and symbolic dimensions of watch consumption—such as gifting practices, social signalling, and emotional attachment—are inherently subjective and context-specific. Although the study attempts to address these factors through structured variables, a qualitative exploration would have enabled a more nuanced understanding of how consumers attach meaning to watch ownership and usage.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY:

The present study holds substantial significance for both academic researchers and industry practitioners. From an academic perspective, it contributes to the growing body of knowledge on consumer behaviour in omnichannel retail environments, with a specific focus on high-involvement products such as watches. Unlike frequently studied product categories like electronics or fast-moving consumer goods, watches represent symbolic, experiential, and emotionally driven purchases. By examining this category, the study addresses an important gap in existing research and expands understanding of how consumers navigate online and offline channels for products that carry both functional and prestige value.

From a managerial standpoint, the study offers valuable and actionable insights for watch brands, retailers, and marketers. By analysing the interaction between online research and offline purchase behaviour, the findings help organisations design integrated omnichannel strategies that align digital touchpoints with physical store experiences. Insights into consumer reliance on online platforms for information search, comparison, and evaluation—followed by offline purchase decisions—enable firms to optimise channel coordination, enhance customer trust, and improve overall shopping satisfaction. These insights can be leveraged to refine marketing communication, strengthen in-store engagement, and improve the quality and consistency of online product information and reviews.

Furthermore, the study highlights the importance of psychological and emotional factors such as trust, brand image, perceived authenticity, and sensory experience in shaping consumer purchase decisions. By examining how these factors influence consumer preferences across channels, the research provides a framework for firms to develop experiential retail strategies, build long-term brand loyalty, and create differentiated value propositions in a competitive marketplace.

The study also holds relevance for policymakers and consumer advocacy groups, as it sheds light on consumer concerns related to trust, perceived risk, and security in both digital and physical retail environments. Understanding these dynamics can support the development of effective consumer protection policies, transparency initiatives, and digital literacy programs that enhance consumer confidence and informed decision-making.

Additionally, the research offers insights into market-specific and cultural factors within the Indian context, including social influence, family involvement, and urban consumption patterns, which play a crucial role in shaping channel preferences and purchasing behaviour. These insights enable retailers and marketers to adopt culturally responsive strategies that resonate with Indian consumers and address the diverse needs of different market segments.

In conclusion, the study is significant as it provides a comprehensive and multidimensional understanding of consumer purchase behaviour for watches by integrating online and offline experiences, emotional and psychological influences, and cultural context. It contributes to academic literature on omnichannel consumer behaviour while offering practical implications for retail strategy, marketing effectiveness, and customer experience management.

BIBLIOGRAPHY:

1. https://www.emerald.com/ijrdm/article/41/11-12/885/151736/Comparing-online-and-in-store-shopping-behavior

2. https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s10660-024-09879-6#Sec7

3. https://fbr.springeropen.com/articles/10.1186/s11782-019-0059-9?utm_source=chatgpt.com

4. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/381295622_A_study_of_consumer_online_and_offline_shopping_preference

5. https://www.mdpi.com/2071-1050/11/24/7185?utm_source=chatgpt.com

6. https://www.abacademies.org/abstract/an-analysis-of-online-and-offline-shopping-behaviour-with-respect-to-buying-decisions-of-urban-families-towards-electron-16043.html?utm_source=chatgpt.com

7. https://www.proquest.com/docview/2108023914?pq-origsite=gscholar&fromopenview=true&sourcetype=Scholarly%20Journals

8. https://www.sifisheriessciences.com/index.php/journal/article/view/2426?utm_source=chatgpt.com

9. https://ijefm.co.in/v8i4/47.php?utm_source=chatgpt.com

10. https://rsisinternational.org/journals/ijrsi/articles/factors-affecting-while-online-and-offline-buying-behaviour/?utm_source=chatgpt.com

11. https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0969698923000097?utm_source=chatgpt.com

12. https://cdn.jagannathuniversityncr.ac.in/docs/papers_for_second_issue/09-megha_behl_%2842-46%29.pdf?utm_source=chatgpt.com

13. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Research_online%2C_purchase_offline?utm_source=chatgpt.com

14. https://arxiv.org/abs/2008.10282?utm_source=chatgpt.com

15. https://arxiv.org/abs/2301.01277?utm_source=chatgpt.com