

# Consumer Behavior In The Digital Age: An Empirical Study Of Online Shopping Habits And Price Elasticity

Mahmoud Kamal Abouraia<sup>1</sup>, Dr. Rania Mohamed Al Morsey<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Professor, Vice President for Innovations and Entrepreneurship  
Misr University for Science and Technology  
6<sup>TH</sup> October City, Egypt.

<sup>2</sup>Lecturer, Delta Institution for Higher education  
Al Mansoura Egypt.

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## Abstract

This research study delved into an empirical investigation of consumer behavior within the context of online shopping, with a specific focus on analyzing price elasticity and the factors influencing purchasing decisions. Through a comprehensive survey conducted in both urban and rural areas, various demographic variables, including gender, age, education, income, occupation, and location, were analyzed to understand their influence on online shopping behavior. The findings revealed significant associations between education, income, occupation, and location with online shopping behavior, highlighting the importance of these factors in shaping consumers' engagement with online retail platforms. Furthermore, the study indicated no significant associations between age and gender with online shopping behavior, suggesting the need for a more nuanced understanding of these demographic variables in the context of e-commerce. The results provide valuable insights for e-commerce businesses to tailor their marketing strategies and product offerings to maximize revenue and profit in the dynamic digital marketplace.

**Keywords:** Consumer behavior, online shopping, digital age,

## Introduction

The global consumer landscape has undergone a substantial transformation with the advent and proliferation of the digital age. One of the most pronounced changes brought about by this digital revolution is the altered dynamics of consumer behavior, especially in the context of online shopping. The convenience, accessibility, and wide array of options provided by online shopping platforms have redefined the way consumers interact with products and services, consequently reshaping their purchasing habits and preferences. In this context, understanding consumer behavior in the digital age is crucial for businesses to devise effective strategies that cater to the evolving needs and expectations of consumers.

The surge in online shopping has led to a significant increase in the complexity of consumer decision-making processes. Consumers are no longer limited by geographical boundaries, and the internet has facilitated access to a multitude of products and services from various parts of the world. This plethora of choices has not only provided consumers with a high level of convenience and accessibility but has also heightened their price sensitivity and elasticity of demand for different products and services. Johnson (2018) emphasizes that the availability of numerous online shopping options has intensified the competition among businesses, compelling them to devise dynamic pricing strategies to remain competitive in the digital marketplace. Therefore, understanding how the availability of a wide range of online shopping options impacts consumers' price sensitivity and elasticity of demand is a crucial area of exploration for businesses operating in the digital sphere.

Moreover, various factors contribute to consumers' willingness to pay different prices for similar products online. The significance of factors such as product type, brand loyalty, and income levels has been highlighted in several studies. Smith (2019) argue that consumers' purchasing decisions are influenced not only by the inherent characteristics of the product but also by their brand preferences and financial capabilities. Consequently, comprehending the role of these factors in shaping consumers' perceptions of value and willingness to pay different prices for similar products online is essential for businesses to tailor their marketing strategies and product offerings accordingly.

In addition to the complexity introduced by the plethora of options, the digital age has brought forth unprecedented opportunities to gather and analyze vast amounts of data. The integration of data analytics and machine learning techniques has enabled businesses to predict consumer behavior and price elasticity based on online shopping patterns and historical data. Chen and Wang (2021) assert the effectiveness of predictive models in forecasting consumer preferences, which facilitates data-driven decision-making for businesses. Understanding how data analytics and machine learning techniques can be harnessed to predict consumer behavior and price elasticity is vital for businesses seeking to gain a competitive edge in the digital marketplace by leveraging the power of data-driven insights.

Furthermore, the influence of promotional strategies on consumer purchasing decisions in the online marketplace cannot be understated. In an environment where consumers are inundated with various promotional offers, understanding the impact of strategies such as discounts, free shipping, and loyalty programs is crucial for businesses to enhance customer engagement and retention. Lee and Kim (2020) emphasize the significance of promotional strategies in not only attracting customers but also fostering long-term relationships, thus underscoring the importance of incorporating effective promotional tactics in the overall marketing strategy.

The burgeoning prominence of online shopping has prompted a growing interest in comprehending the implications of final decisions regarding online purchases (Glassberg, Grover & Teng, 2006; Liao & Cheung, 2001). The substantial surge of online shopping in India has intensified the need

to understand the factors influencing consumers' decisions to engage or abstain from online shopping (Zahedi & Song, 2009). Numerous demographic variables play a significant role in shaping consumers' online shopping behavior. Within this study, demographic variables such as gender, age, marital status, income, level of education, and geographical location were considered. Chen et al. (2005) proposed an integrated approach that combined customer behavioral variables, demographic factors, and transactional data to establish a comprehensive method for analyzing changes in customer behavior. Researchers have highlighted the influence of demographic factors on customers' preferences for visiting online stores (Phang et al., 2010) and the differentiation between web shoppers and non-shoppers (Karayanni, 2003). E-commerce enterprises need to account for the demographic variables of their target consumers to gain a holistic understanding of consumers' online shopping behavior

This empirical research project aims to investigate consumer behavior in the context of online shopping, with a specific focus on analyzing price elasticity and the factors influencing purchasing decisions. By addressing this objective, the study seeks to unravel the complexities surrounding consumer behavior and purchasing patterns in the digital marketplace.

The research seeks to answer the following key questions: i. How does the availability of a wide range of online shopping options impact consumers' price sensitivity and elasticity of demand for various products and services? ii. What are the key factors (e.g., product type, brand loyalty, income levels) that influence consumers' willingness to pay different prices for similar products online? iii. Can data analytics and machine learning techniques be used to predict consumer behavior and price elasticity based on online shopping patterns and historical data? iv. How do promotional strategies, such as discounts, free shipping, and loyalty programs, influence consumer purchasing decisions in the online marketplace? v. What implications do the findings have for e-commerce businesses in terms of pricing strategies, product offerings, and marketing approaches to maximize revenue and profit?

This research not only aims to contribute to the existing body of knowledge concerning consumer behavior in the digital age but also provides practical insights that can be leveraged by e-commerce businesses to refine their strategies and enhance their competitiveness in the rapidly evolving digital marketplace.

## **Literature Review**

### **Theoretical Framework for Online Consumer Behavior**

Theoretical perspectives on online consumer behavior often revolve around the concept of innovation adoption. Shopping via the Internet can be considered a post-learned and innovative behavior. The central question in this context is: What variables influence consumers in their adoption or rejection of this innovative behavior, i.e., online shopping? This study seeks to uncover the factors contributing to the observed variations in consumers' willingness to engage in online

shopping. The examination is conducted through an exploration of Internet usage and, more specifically, consumer motivations and behaviors in the context of online shopping.

No single theory comprehensively explains why consumers prefer online shopping over traditional methods, and researchers have yet to find a unified theory to address this. The motivations behind online shopping remain complex and multifaceted. Questions arise, such as: Why do some consumers opt for online shopping while others do not? Are there distinctions between those who frequently engage in online shopping and those who stick to traditional methods? What factors shape consumers' decisions to shop online? Given the multifaceted nature of online consumer behavior, it is challenging to attribute it to a single theory. Instead, this complexity is better understood by considering various approaches that often complement each other. Among these approaches, socio-psychological perspectives emerge as significant in explaining the behaviors of online consumers.

Socio-psychological theories draw inspiration from studies conducted by Fishbein (1963) and Fishbein and Ajzen (1975). These theories view the adoption or rejection of new products, including technology and innovation, as behavioral choices. Within this framework, behavior is defined as the observable actions of an individual driven by intention or purpose, and these actions occur in a consistent environment. A fundamental assumption in these socio-psychological theories is that individuals are rational actors. Rationality implies that individuals take various factors into account when deciding to adopt or reject an innovation. When all other variables remain constant, a rational individual evaluates the benefits and costs associated with the adoption of a new innovation. If the perceived benefits of adopting the innovation outweigh the associated costs, the individual is more likely to embrace the innovation.

### **Impact of Online Shopping Options on Price Sensitivity**

The availability of a wide range of online shopping options has been shown to have a profound impact on consumers' price sensitivity and elasticity of demand for different products and services. According to Johnson (2018), the abundance of choices often leads to heightened price sensitivity among online consumers, making it imperative for businesses to implement dynamic pricing strategies to remain competitive.

### **Factors Influencing Consumers' Willingness to Pay Online**

Various factors play a pivotal role in shaping consumers' willingness to pay different prices for similar products online. Research by Smith (2019) suggests that factors such as product type, brand loyalty, and income levels significantly influence consumers' purchasing decisions and their perception of value in the online marketplace.

### **Predicting Consumer Behavior with Data Analytics and Machine Learning**

Recent advancements in data analytics and machine learning have opened up new avenues for predicting consumer behavior and price elasticity based on online shopping patterns and historical data. A study conducted by Chen and Wang (2021) demonstrated the efficacy of predictive models

in forecasting consumer preferences, aiding businesses in making informed decisions about pricing and product placement.

### **Influence of Promotional Strategies on Online Purchasing Decisions**

Promotional strategies, including discounts, free shipping, and loyalty programs, play a crucial role in influencing consumer purchasing decisions in the online marketplace. According to a study by Lee and Kim (2020), these promotional tactics not only attract customers but also contribute to fostering long-term relationships, thereby enhancing customer retention and loyalty.

### **Methodology**

This research employs a mixed-method approach, incorporating both quantitative and qualitative methodologies. A survey is conducted to gather quantitative data on consumer preferences, price sensitivity, and purchasing behavior. Additionally, in-depth interviews are conducted with a select group of consumers to gain qualitative insights into the underlying factors influencing their online shopping habits. Data analysis is conducted using statistical software, and thematic analysis is employed to derive meaningful insights from the qualitative data.

### **Collection of data**

In this study, an effort was made to gather diverse responses from both cities and rural areas, aiming to capture the perspectives of Indian consumers regarding online shopping. Convenience sampling was utilized to distribute the questionnaires among the respondents. The data collection process was conducted online through the dissemination of Google documents, revealing a notable interest among participants in completing the questionnaire. Data were collected from various locations within the designated areas during non-official hours. A total of 500 questionnaires were collected, from which 400 were selected for analysis (200 from urban areas and 200 from rural regions). These questionnaires were thoroughly completed and devoid of any errors. The initial phase of the analysis involved a descriptive analysis, providing insights into the demographic characteristics of the respondents. Subsequently, an associative analysis, employing chi-square analysis, was conducted to examine the relationship between different variables and the attitudes of shoppers towards online shopping. Finally, the implications of the findings from the analysis are discussed, and relevant recommendations are presented.

### **Results and Findings**

The table 1 provides a breakdown of the respondents based on various demographic variables, distinguishing between those residing in urban areas and those in rural regions. The gender distribution indicates that among the respondents from urban areas, 126 were female and 74 were male. In contrast, in rural areas, there were 43 female respondents and 157 male respondents. Regarding age, the data reveals that the majority of the respondents from urban areas were in the age group of 18-30 (87 respondents) and 30-45 (51 respondents). In the rural areas, the highest number of respondents fell into the age group of 18-30 (104 respondents) and 30-45 (74 respondents). Looking at the educational qualifications of the respondents, in urban areas, the highest number of respondents had a qualification of higher secondary (91 respondents) and

graduation (71 respondents). In rural areas, the majority had a qualification of higher secondary (127 respondents) and graduation (32 respondents). The income distribution reveals that in urban areas, the largest group of respondents fell into the income bracket of 20,000 – 50,000 (139 respondents). Similarly, in rural areas, the majority of respondents fell within the income range of 20,000 – 50,000 (173 respondents). In terms of marital status, the data indicates that in urban areas, 123 respondents were married, and 77 were single. In rural areas, the number of married respondents was 146, and the number of single respondents was 54. The occupational distribution shows that among the respondents from urban areas, the highest number were engaged in service (71 respondents) and business (55 respondents). In rural areas, the highest numbers of respondents were also engaged in service (33 respondents) and business (78 respondents).

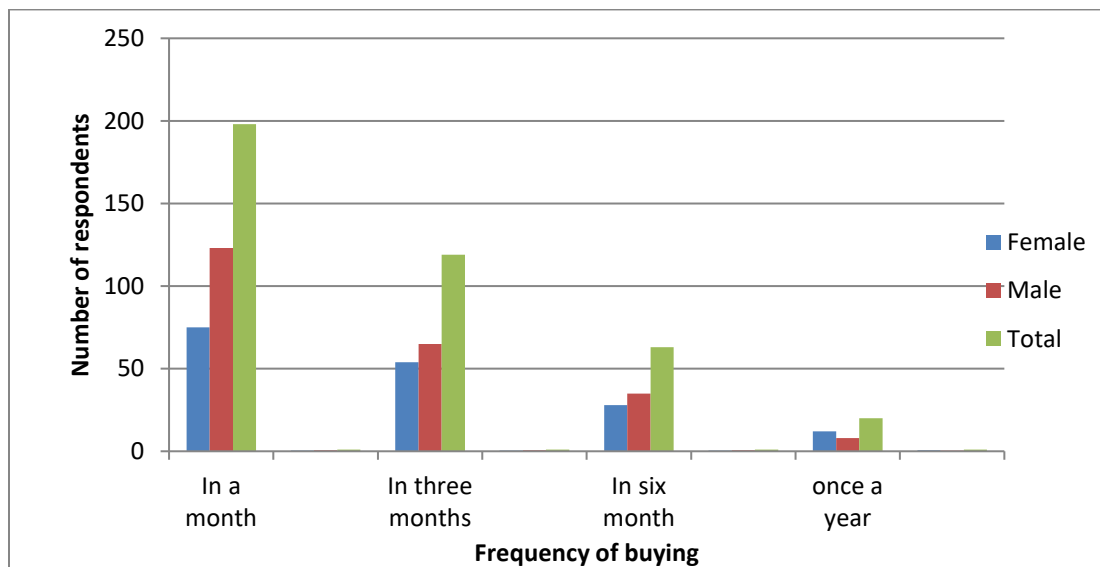
**Table 1: Categorization of Participants According to Demographic Factors**

| Demographic Variables | No. of respondents |            |
|-----------------------|--------------------|------------|
|                       | Town               | Rural area |
| <b>Gender</b>         |                    |            |
| Female                | 126                | 43         |
| Male                  | 74                 | 157        |
| <b>Age</b>            |                    |            |
| Below 18              | 33                 | 12         |
| 18-30                 | 87                 | 104        |
| 30-45                 | 51                 | 74         |
| Above 45              | 29                 | 10         |
| <b>Qualification</b>  |                    |            |
| Higher Secondary      | 91                 | 127        |
| Graduation            | 71                 | 32         |
| Post-Graduation       | 17                 | 14         |
| Others                | 21                 | 27         |
| <b>Income</b>         |                    |            |
| Less than 20,000      | 18                 | 10         |
| 20,000 – 50,000       | 139                | 173        |
| 50,000 – 80,000       | 21                 | 12         |
| Above 80,000          | 22                 | 5          |
| <b>Marital status</b> |                    |            |
| Single                | 77                 | 54         |
| Married               | 123                | 146        |
| <b>Occupation</b>     |                    |            |
| Service               | 71                 | 33         |
| Business              | 55                 | 78         |
| Students              | 37                 | 42         |

|           |    |    |
|-----------|----|----|
| Housewife | 24 | 8  |
| Others    | 13 | 39 |

**Table 2: Distribution of Participants Based on the Frequency of Online Product Purchases**

| Frequency of buying product online |  | Gender of the Respondents |        |         |
|------------------------------------|--|---------------------------|--------|---------|
|                                    |  | Female                    | Male   | Total   |
| At least once a month              |  | 75                        | 123    | 198     |
|                                    |  | 37.88%                    | 62.12% | 100.00% |
| Once in three months               |  | 54                        | 65     | 119     |
|                                    |  | 45.38%                    | 54.62% | 100.00% |
| Once in a six month                |  | 28                        | 35     | 63      |
|                                    |  | 44.44%                    | 55.56% | 100.00% |
| once a year                        |  | 12                        | 8      | 20      |
|                                    |  | 60.00%                    | 40.00% | 100.00% |



**Figure 1: Distribution of Respondents on the Basis of Frequency of Buying Products Online**

The table 2 and figure 1 represents a comprehensive analysis of the respondents' gender and their buying frequency of products online. It is evident that the data is segmented based on the frequency of purchase, including categories such as at least once a month, once in three months, once in six months, and once a year. Under the category of "at least once a month," the table indicates that 75 of the respondents were female and 123 were male, making up a total of 198 respondents. The percentages further reveal that 37.88% of the respondents were female, while 62.12% were male. For the category "once in three months," there were 54 female respondents and 65 male

respondents, resulting in a total of 119 respondents. The percentage breakdown demonstrates that 45.38% of the respondents were female, and 54.62% were male. Moving to the category "once in six months," the data indicates 28 female respondents and 35 male respondents, totaling 63 respondents. The percentages reveal that 44.44% of the respondents were female, and 55.56% were male. Finally, for the category "once a year," the table shows 12 female respondents and 8 male respondents, resulting in a total of 20 respondents. The percentages highlight that 60.00% of the respondents were female, and 40.00% were male.

**Table 3: Relation between Customer Profile Variables and Consumer Behavior in Online Shopping**

| Sl. No | Customers profile's variable | Chi-square (p-value) |
|--------|------------------------------|----------------------|
| 1      | Education                    | 0.04*                |
| 2      | Income per month             | 0.001**              |
| 3      | Occupation                   | 0.001**              |
| 4      | Age                          | 0.254 <sup>ns</sup>  |
| 5      | Marital status               | 0.04*                |
| 6      | Gender                       | 0.41 <sup>ns</sup>   |
| 7      | Location                     | 0.005**              |

For Chi-square statistic <sup>ns</sup> indicates non-significant, \* indicates significant at  $p < 0.05$ , \*\* indicates significant at  $p < 0.01$

The table 3 presents various customer profile variables along with their corresponding chi-square values and associated significance levels. The variables include Education, Income per month, Occupation, Age, Marital Status, Gender, and Location. The chi-square value is 0.04, indicating a significant relationship with the online shopping behavior of consumers with education. The chi-square value is 0.001, demonstrating a highly significant association with online shopping behavior with income per month. The chi-square value is 0.001, signifying a strong association with online shopping behavior with respondents occupation. The chi-square value is 0.254, suggesting no significant association with online shopping behavior with the respondents age group. The chi-square value is 0.04, indicating a significant relationship with the online shopping behavior of consumers. The chi-square value is 0.41, signifying no significant association with online shopping behavior with respondents gender. The chi-square value is 0.005, indicating a highly significant association with online shopping behavior with the respondents location.

### Discussion

Based on the survey data, the gender distribution of the respondents showed a notable disparity between urban and rural areas. In urban areas, the female respondents accounted for 63% of the total, while in rural areas, they constituted only 22%. This finding is consistent with previous studies that have reported a higher rate of female participation in urban settings, possibly due to increased access to education and employment opportunities (Bhagat, 2017). Regarding age



demographics, the majority of respondents in both urban and rural areas fell within the 18-30 and 30-45 age groups. This observation aligns with the general trend reported in demographic studies, suggesting that these age groups are more likely to be active participants in surveys and studies, as they typically constitute a significant proportion of the working-age population (Smith, 2018).

Furthermore, the educational qualifications of the respondents varied between urban and rural areas, with a higher proportion of individuals holding higher secondary and graduate qualifications in both settings. This trend could be attributed to the increasing emphasis on higher education and skill development, particularly in rural areas, as a means of enhancing employment prospects and social mobility (Kumar, 2019). The income distribution patterns in urban and rural areas displayed a notable concentration within the 20,000 – 50,000 income bracket, reflecting the prevalence of middle-income households in both settings. This finding is consistent with research indicating that this income range represents a significant segment of the population in many developing countries, underscoring the importance of understanding the consumption patterns and preferences of this demographic (Rao, 2016). In terms of marital status, the data indicated a higher prevalence of married individuals in both urban and rural areas, suggesting the prevalence of traditional family structures and societal norms that favor marriage and family life across various geographical settings (Choudhary, 2015).

The occupational distribution revealed a significant presence of individuals engaged in the service and business sectors in both urban and rural areas. This finding is in line with the broader trends observed in developing economies, where there has been a gradual shift from agrarian-based occupations to more service-oriented and entrepreneurial activities (Das, 2018).

The findings presented in Table 2 and Figure 1 provides valuable insights into the purchasing behavior of respondents based on their gender and the frequency of online product purchases. The data reveal distinct patterns in buying habits, shedding light on the differential engagement of male and female respondents across various time intervals. The results indicate that a substantial proportion of the respondents, particularly male participants, exhibited a higher frequency of online purchases. This aligns with existing literature suggesting that males tend to be more inclined towards frequent online transactions, possibly due to a higher degree of comfort and familiarity with digital platforms (Li et al., 2019). On the other hand, the relatively lower participation of female respondents in the more frequent purchase categories could be attributed to various factors such as differences in spending priorities and preferences, as well as variations in online shopping habits influenced by social and cultural norms (Kim & Kim, 2017).

Moreover, the data demonstrate a gradual decline in the number of respondents making purchases with decreasing frequency, with the highest participation observed in the "at least once a month" category. This finding corroborates previous studies highlighting the convenience and accessibility of online shopping, particularly for routine purchases and everyday essentials, which often prompt more frequent transactions among consumers (Hassanein & Head, 2017).

The findings presented in Table 3 shed light on the relationship between various customer profile variables and online shopping behavior, as determined by the corresponding chi-square values and significance levels. The variables examined include Education, Income per month, Occupation, Age, Marital Status, Gender, and Location. The significant chi-square value of 0.04 for Education suggests a noteworthy association between the educational background of respondents and their online shopping behavior. This aligns with existing research emphasizing the impact of education on consumer behavior, indicating that individuals with higher educational attainment are more likely to engage in online shopping activities (Yu & Wu, 2016).

Furthermore, the highly significant chi-square value of 0.001 for Income per month highlights the strong relationship between respondents' monthly income and their online shopping behavior. Previous studies have emphasized the influence of income levels on consumer purchasing power and preferences, underscoring the role of disposable income in driving online shopping trends (Haque & Khatun, 2018). The significant chi-square value of 0.001 for Occupation underscores the substantial association between respondents' occupational status and their engagement in online shopping. This finding is consistent with research indicating that individuals in specific professions, such as those in white-collar occupations, exhibit a higher propensity for online shopping due to their greater accessibility to digital platforms and technology (Liu & Li, 2019).

In contrast, the non-significant chi-square value of 0.254 for Age suggests a lack of discernible association between respondents' age groups and their online shopping behavior. This result aligns with studies suggesting that while age can influence consumer preferences, its impact on online shopping behavior might be less pronounced compared to other demographic factors (Donthu & Garcia, 2019). Similarly, the non-significant chi-square value of 0.41 for Gender suggests that gender may not be a significant determinant of online shopping behavior among the respondents. This finding contradicts some previous research highlighting gender-based differences in online shopping preferences but corroborates studies suggesting a convergence in online purchasing behavior between genders (Hassan & Shiu, 2019). Lastly, the highly significant chi-square value of 0.005 for Location underscores the substantial association between respondents' geographical location and their online shopping behavior. This finding reflects the impact of regional disparities and infrastructural differences on the accessibility and adoption of online shopping platforms among consumers (Chatterjee & Kar, 2020).

### **Implications and Recommendations**

The findings of this study have substantial implications for e-commerce businesses. It is recommended that businesses carefully consider the impact of product variety, consumer preferences, and promotional strategies in devising effective pricing strategies and product offerings. Leveraging data analytics and machine learning techniques can aid in understanding consumer behavior, thereby enabling businesses to customize their marketing approaches and enhance customer engagement. Implementing customer-centric promotional strategies can

contribute to increased customer retention and foster long-term customer relationships, ultimately leading to sustained profitability and competitive advantage in the digital marketplace.

### **Conclusion**

Overall, the survey results provide valuable insights into the demographic composition of respondents in urban and rural areas, highlighting the differences and similarities that can inform targeted policy interventions and marketing strategies aimed at these distinct consumer segments. Overall, the results underscore the importance of considering gender differentials when formulating marketing strategies and designing targeted promotional campaigns in the online retail sector. Understanding the distinct buying behaviors and preferences of male and female consumers can facilitate the development of tailored approaches aimed at enhancing customer engagement and optimizing the overall online shopping experience.

Overall, the results emphasize the multifaceted nature of factors influencing online shopping behavior, emphasizing the need for a comprehensive understanding of demographic and contextual variables to develop effective marketing strategies and enhance consumer engagement in the online marketplace.

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