

Analyzing Consumer Purchase Behavior in the Context of Mobile Phones: Webrooming vs. Showrooming

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ABSTRACT

In the era of Omni channel retailing, consumers are spoilt for choices. They may adopt different channels for information search and purchase. Webrooming is searching for information online and ending up purchasing the product offline whereas Showrooming is searching for information offline and ending up with the purchase online. Showrooming will benefit the online sellers while Webrooming benefits the offline stores. Many retailers are going Omni channel in order to take benefit of these shopping behaviours. This research paper focuses on identifying whether the consumer exhibits Webrooming or Showrooming behaviour in the context of mobile phone purchase. The study also compares the purchase behaviour across the age and gender. Empirical study is carried out in Karnataka with a sample of 200 consumers spanning Gen Y and Gen Z. Data collection is both secondary and primary. Quota sampling is used to get primary data from both the Gen Y & Gen Z responses equally. The findings of the study will help the mobile phone manufacturers to plan their retail strategy. Also, this study will help in identifying whether the behaviour of the consumers varies between the different generations and this insight may be used for promoting the products among the different generations.

Keywords: Webrooming, Showrooming, Gen Y, Gen Z, Mobile Phones, Omni Channel

1. Introduction:

The focus in retailing today is to provide the consumers personalized shopping experiences through omni channel strategies. Omni channel retailing is integrating all the physical channels (Offline) with virtual channels (online) to provide the consumers with a unified shopping experience. The size of Indian retail market was INR 91,891 billion in 2022 as per the data from globaldata.com survey. According to Counterpoint Research's Global Online Smartphone Market Growth and Trends, H2 2020, report, online sales share in the global mobile phone market comprised 26% whereas in India it was 45% in 2020. It increased further in the coming years and in 2022 the shipments to online channels were at 53%. This may be attributed to multiple factors like the promotions done by online channels, pricing, convenience, etc. Wide range of options are now available to consumers which allows them to compare prices, go through the reviews, buy through mobile phones from the convenience of their homes. Additional factors like the user-friendly interface design, security in the payment, navigational ease, improved customer service may have also tilted the consumers in favor of online purchasing. However, currently the offline retailers are bullish about them overtaking the online sellers in this segment. The growth in the premium segment, finance options availability etc. are few factors on which the offline stores are optimistic in them overtaking the online sellers.

However, the convenience of moving across the channels is leading to different types of shopping behaviour in terms of the channel for information search and channel for purchase. They are searching online and buying offline or vice versa. This trend is webrooming and showrooming respectively. This paper attempts to identify the nature of consumer buying behaviour when it comes to purchase of mobile phones.

2. Literature Review:

2.1 Omni Channel Consumer Purchase Behaviour:

Online retailers were found to free ride on the brick-and-mortar stores to reduce online search costs specially in the case of branded goods. (Carlton & Chevalier, 2001). In the case of grocery retail, the online seller providing last mile fulfilment and distribution in omni channel environment to grow their sales. (Santos & Escanciano, 2002).

The consumers are found to move across the channels in a very straight forward way. Though the factors that influence their movement are very dynamic and complex. (van Dijk, Geke; Laing, Angus and Minocha, 2005). Multi-channel

retailers were found to be losing more customers across channels than they retain but if a business decided not to engage multiple channels, then it will lose more business to cross channel shoppers. (Van Baal & Dach, 2005)

The consumers' engaging in cross channel free riding behaviour is attributed to perceived service quality of the stores and reduced risk in the offline channel. This may be reduced by lock-in levels within the firms.(Chiu et al., 2011). The tendency to free ride across cross channel differs across the products but not across consumer socio demographics. (Heitz-Spahn, 2013).

Technology enabled omni channel retailers is affecting both the consumers and businesses in many ways. Omni channel offers seamless shopping experiences to their customers. (Lazaris & Vrechopoulos, 2014). Technology has proved to facilitate the consumer's decision making and retailers have embraced a variety of technologies in order to engage with their customers. (Grewal et al., 2017).

Omni channel consumers have the advantage of easy access to information on their mobiles which may not necessarily be accurate. The salesman play a role in selling to such omni channel customers through their adaptive selling techniques. (Yurova et al., 2017). Omni channel strategy is found to offer holistic shopping experience and so the stores are introducing technology as an essential factor. (Mosquera et al., 2018).

Customers indulge in combining channels to make smart purchases. Cross channel consumers are driven by different motivations. (Flavián et al., 2020). Consumers channel integration is found to significantly affect preferences Providing Augmented Reality will not only excite the consumers but provide them with more valuable choices specially when shopping for apparels. (Shakir Goraya et al., 2022).

2.2 Webrooming:

The consumers are found to research before their shopping and it is learnt that the research is done online whereas purchase is done offline. The reasons ascribed to this phenomenon are attribute based decision making, lack of channel lock in and cross channel synergy (Verhoef et al., 2007).

Information processing and uncertainty reduction theories propose that consumers are found to indulge in online search and offline purchase to gain more confidence in their purchase. (Carlos Flavian, 2008). Consumers prefer to search online to narrow down their choices before buying at physical stores to make better informed decisions. (Wolny & Charoensuksai, 2014).

Webrooming leads to loss of profits for the online retailers which may be avoided by offering 3D and Audio visual products along with online reviews and money back guarantee to reduce psychological risks. (Arora & Sahney, 2017).

Consumers' psychographic characteristics' was found to impact the webrooming behaviour which influenced consumers in creation of user generated content creation on social media (Kang, 2018). E distrust and perceived risk related to online purchase made the consumers to move to physical stores for purchase. The benefit of immediate possession, better after sales service and the satisfaction of touch and feel the product also led to webrooming. (Arora & Sahney, 2018).

Webrooming is also found to make the consumers feel more confident and feel smart shoppers leading to customer satisfaction. The consumers derive time saving and convenience by indulging in webrooming. (Flavián et al., 2019). Consumers' involvement with the product also influenced the relationship between the consumer's intention to webroom and their actual webrooming behaviour. (Arora & Sahney, 2019).

Online review was found to be a necessary causal condition among the consumers who webroomed. Three factors identified for webrooming were high involvement products, high perceived usefulness of online reviews, and low need for interaction. (Aw, 2020)

The same phenomenon was observed in a study in Indonesia among the millennials during the purchase of smart phones. It was easy access to online reviews and lower search cost and availability of salespersons and opportunity to touch and feel the product made them to webroom.(Arsyad, 2023).

2.3 Showrooming:

The increasing popularity of online retailing is a concern for brick-and-mortar stores where uncertain consumers visit the stores initially to examine the product and avail the services of stores but finally end up purchasing online. (Balakrishnan et al., 2014).

The increasing showrooming phenomenon has led to physical stores being used for product examination without being able to convert into sales. This negative impact may be addressed through specific salesperson behaviour and strategies. (Rapp et al., 2015)

Perceived control, website compatibility and subjective norms are found to be the antecedents for showrooming behaviour. The consumer's prior experience and reasons against purchasing online had a direct association with their intention to purchase on retailer's website. (Rejón-Guardia & Luna-Nevarez, 2017). The retailers to combat showrooming should focus on the shopper's purchase orientation and focus on one or two segments instead of trying to target all. (Burns et al., 2018).

Showrooming is generally viewed with a negative lens. When retailers consider the experiential aspects such as decision activities and emotions, then they can appreciate the potential opportunities of showrooming. (Kokho Sit et al., 2018) To combat showrooming in the short run, price matching strategy may work but in the long term, exclusivity of product assortments is recommended. (Mehra et al., 2018).

Though showrooming is not associated with gender orientation, it is found that female young adults could be more easily dissuaded from showrooming and online retailers found it easy to attract male consumers to make their purchases online. (Burns et al., 2019).

Influence of showrooming is more prevalent where e commerce is widespread. In industries where e commerce is not so prevalent, showroom visit experience is found to be more influencing than product information alone. (Kato, 2019).

3. Research Gap

Many studies are done in the sphere of omni channel retailing and its implication on the consumers and retailers. There are few studies on showrooming and webrooming too. Though a few studies have been done on electronic products in general, it is not specific with respect to mobile phones. Moreover, these studies have not compared the impact of such behaviour on different age groups and gender. Hence this study attempts to analyze the purchase behaviour of consumers while making mobile phone purchase with respect to channel preferences for information search and purchase & compare the responses across Gen Y & Gen Z and Male and female respondents.

4. Objectives

4.1 Research Questions:

- Do consumers use single channel for their purchase of mobiles?
- Do consumers exhibit webrooming or showrooming behaviour for mobiles? What are the reasons for the same?
- Does the purchase behaviour differ across the Age group or gender?

To answer these questions, the researcher has framed the following objectives:

4.2 Research Objectives:

- Investigate if the respondents exhibit single channel or omni channel behaviour.
- Identify the Channel preferred for Searching information.
- Discover the Channel preferred to purchase and the factors influencing it.
- Compare shopping behaviour among Gen Y & Gen Z and among male and female

4.3 Research Hypothesis:

- H1: There is an Association between Age and respondent's online product information search behaviour
- H2: There is an Association between Age and respondent's offline product information search behaviour
- H3: There is an Association between Gender and respondent's online product information search behaviour
- H4: There is an Association between Gender and respondent's offline product information search behaviour
- H5: There is an Association between Age and respondent's Preferred channel for purchasing mobile phones
- H6: There is an Association between Gender and respondent's Preferred channel for purchasing mobile phones

5. Methodology

An empirical study is undertaken for this paper. A survey was undertaken to learn the consumer purchase behaviour. Primary data was collected by designing a structured questionnaire and circulated among the respondents through Google form. The population for the study comprised of respondents who have purchased mobile phones in the last five years and belonged to either Gen Y or Gen Z. This age group was chosen as majority of mobile phone users in India belonged to this age group as per the survey conducted by the Mobile Ecosystem Forum between Nov to December 2019. Given the size of the population, it was decided to select only one southern state as the sampling unit for the present study.

Karnataka is selected for this study based on the size of the state. Currently, it is the largest southern state in India after the split of Andhra Pradesh. The samples were selected through Quota sampling. Responses from 200 respondents of which 100 belonged to Gen Y and 100 Gen Z were collected which is the Sample size of this study. To reduce sampling error, the google form was circulated through contacts in academic institutions across the state and students currently pursuing the courses belonging to GEN Z were collected and the Alumni groups and their contacts comprised the Gen Y. The data collected were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics through SPSS V26. Chi square test was used to study the association among the preference of purchase channel and gender and Age group. One Way ANOVA was used to compare the responses across the gender and age group to check if there were any differences in their shopping behaviour.

6. Analysis & Results

Based on the responses collected from 200 respondents, the data collected were analyzed and the results are given below.

Profile of the Respondents The behaviour of the consumers is determined by the demographic profile of the consumers and so before analyzing the behaviour of the consumers in this study, their brief demographic profile is presented here.

Table 6.1: Respondent's Profile

S. No	Particulars	Frequency	Percentage
1	Gender		
	Male	101	50.5
	Female	99	49.5
2	Age		
	Gen Y (Millennials)	100	50
	Gen Z	100	50
3	Educational Qualification		
	Higher Secondary School Education	9	4.5
	Bachelor's Degree	55	27.5
	Master's Degree	124	62
	Professional Degree	6	3
	Doctorate Degree	3	1.5
	Diploma	2	1
	Others	1	0.5
4	Occupation		
	Student	77	38.5
	Professional	58	29
	Private Service	42	21
	Government Service	3	1.5
	Academician	10	5
	Entrepreneur	6	3
	Housewife	3	1.5
	Others	1	0.5
5	Family Annual Income		
	Up to Rs.5,00,000	88	44
	Rs.5,00,001 – Rs.10,00,000	54	27
	Rs.10,00,001 – Rs.15,00,000	23	11.5
	Rs.15,00,001 – Rs.20,00,000	13	6.5
	Rs.20,00,001 – Rs.25,00,000	5	2.5
	Above Rs.25,00,000	17	8.5

The profile of the respondents was analyzed and it was found that among the respondents, 101 were men whereas the remaining 99 were women. Age wise both Gen Y and Gen Z were equal in the study. Most of the respondents had

master's degree followed by bachelor's degree. The occupation of respondents were mostly students followed by professionals and private service. The family annual income was up to five lakhs followed by between 10 -15 lakhs.

Channel used for information search and Purchase of mobile phones: The consumers were asked the channel they used for information search and the channel they used for purchase to know if they exhibited single channel or omni channel behaviour.

Table 6.2: Channels used for information search and Purchase of mobile phones

S. No	Particulars	Single channel		Omni channel	
		Online	Offline	Webrooming	Showrooming
1	Preference in shopping for mobile phones	87(43.5)	14 (7)	90(45)	9 (4.5)

It is seen here that out of 200 respondents, 50.5 percent have exhibited single channel behavior in searching for information and purchasing mobile phones while the remaining 49.5 percent respondents have exhibited omnichannel behaviour. Among the single channel users, 86 percent have used online while the remaining 14 percent have used offline channel in their purchase journey. Thus, it can be concluded that online seems to be the preferred channel when consumers use single channel.

Among the 49.5 percent respondents who exhibited omni channel behaviour it was found that 91 percent exhibited webrooming behaviour in response to 9 percent showrooming.

Channel Preferred for Information search Vs channel used for Purchase: The journey of the respondents was studied in order to identify the channel preferred for information search and the channel used for purchase

Table 6.3 Channel Preferred for Information search Vs Purchase

S. No	Particulars	Information Search		Purchase	
		Online	Offline	Online	Offline
1	Appropriate channel	168(84)	32(16)	91(45.5)	109(54.5)
2	Attractive channel	174(87)	26(13)	122(61)	78(39)
3	Satisfactory channel	157(78.5)	43(21.5)	81(40.5)	119(59.5)

From the above table, it can be inferred that Online is the preferred channel for information search in terms of appropriateness, attractiveness and satisfaction. Physical stores or offline channel is found to be appropriate and satisfactory but not attractive channel for purchase.

Channel Used for Information search: To identify the frequency of channel used by the respondents for information search, Likert's scale was used and the results are presented below.

Table 6.4: Channel usage for Information Search

S. No	Particulars	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Weighted score
1	I often search for product information online	27	2	26	57	88	3.89
2	I Search for product information in physical stores	33	43	72	34	18	2.81

From the above table it can be inferred that respondents are searching for information online in comparison to offline physical stores.

Actual Purchase Channel: The respondents' preference for information search was clearly online while it is investigated here if the same is the case with their actual purchase behaviour.

Table 6.5: Purchase Channel

S. No	Particulars	Online	Offline
1	Purchase behaviour in shopping for mobile phones	96 (48)	104 (52)

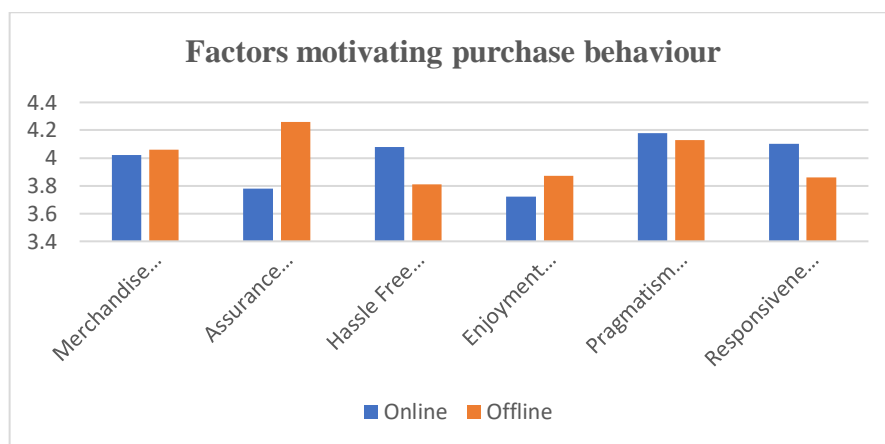
It can be said from the above table that most of the respondents have purchased mobile phones offline rather than online.

Factors motivating the Purchase Behaviour:

The study found that the factors that motivated the respondents to purchase online were different from those that motivated them to purchase offline.

Table 6.6: Factors Motivating Purchase Behaviour

Factors	Online	Offline
Merchandise Motivation	4.02	4.06
Assurance Motivation	3.78	4.26
Hassle Free Motivation	4.08	3.81
Enjoyment Motivation	3.72	3.87
Pragmatism motivation	4.18	4.13
Responsiveness Motivation	4.1	3.86

**Figure 6.1: Factors Motivating Purchase Behaviour**

Factors like attractive prices, choice of brands, comparison and information about the brand were classified under pragmatism motivation which was the highest factor that motivated respondents to purchase online followed by Hassle free motivation like convenience of shopping from home, stress free easy shopping with no travelling or parking issues, all product varieties at one location.

For respondents to shop offline the major factor was assurance motivation like ability to interact with the seller, customer service, complaint resolution, after sale service, etc. followed by pragmatism motivation like attractive prices, choice of brands, comparison and information about the brand.

Offline shopping scored higher than online on Merchandise motivation like the availability, quality and variety of merchandise, Assurance motivation like ability to interact with the seller, customer service, complaint resolution, after sale service, etc. and enjoyment motivation like shopping with family and friends, shopping environment, search process and fun of shopping.

Online shopping scored higher on Hassle free motivation like convenience of shopping from home, stress free easy shopping with no travelling or parking issues, all product varieties at one location, pragmatism motivation and responsiveness motivation.

Compare shopping behaviour among Gen Y & Gen Z

H1: There is an Association between Age and respondent's online product information search behaviour

H2: There is an Association between Age and respondent's offline product information search behaviour

Table 6.7: Comparison of Information search online and at physical stores based on Age

Age	Information search online Weighted score	Information search at physical stores Weighted score
Gen Y	3.83	2.61
Gen Z	3.94	3.00

To investigate if the information search behaviour was consistent across the Gen Y & Gen Z, one way ANOVA was carried out and the results are given below.

Table 6.8: One Way ANOVA to test information search association with Age

S. No	One Way ANOVA	P Value	Remark
1	Search for product information online by Age	.566	Reject
2	Search for product information in physical stores by Age	.018	Accept

From the above table it can be inferred that when it comes for searching information online there is no significant difference among Gen Y and Gen Z. However, there is a significant difference when it came to searching at physical stores among the Gen Y and Gen Z.

Compare shopping behaviour among Men and Women

H3: There is an Association between Gender and respondent's online product information search behaviour

H4: There is an Association between Gender and respondent's offline product information search behaviour

Table 6.9: Comparison of Information search online and at physical stores based on Gender

Gender	Information search online Weighted score	Information search offline Weighted score
Male	3.83	2.77
Female	3.94	2.84

To investigate if the shopping behaviour was consistent across the gender, one way ANOVA was carried out and the results are given below.

Table 6.10: One Way ANOVA to test information search association with Gender

S. No	One Way ANOVA	P Value	Remark
1	Search for product information online by Gender	.574	Reject
2	Search for product information in physical stores by Gender	.691	Reject

From the above table it can be inferred that when it comes for searching information online or in physical stores there is no significant difference among men and women.

Preferred Channel for Purchase of Mobile Phone by Age and Gender

H5: There is an Association between Age and respondent's Preferred channel for purchasing mobile phones

H6: There is an Association between Gender and respondent's Preferred channel for purchasing mobile phones

Table 6.11: Chi Square Test to test association between preferred purchase channel with Age and Gender

S. No	Chi Square Test	P Value	Remark
1	Preferred channel for purchasing mobile phones by Age	.048	Accept
2	Preferred channel for purchasing mobile phones by Gender	.118	Reject

Based on the p value in chi square test, Age and preferred channel for purchase of mobile phones are associated. Thus, it can be concluded that there is difference in the purchase behaviour exhibited by Gen Y & Gen Z in buying mobile phones. However, it can be said that gender and preferred channel for purchase of mobile phones are not associated.

7. Limitations of the Study:

The study was restricted to only two aspects of consumer purchase behaviour which was the channel preferred and used with respect to information search and purchase. Evaluation of alternatives and post purchase response was not covered. The study also covered only one southern state of Karnataka and the sample was restricted to just 200 only.

8. Findings and Implications

The results of the study show that almost 50 percent of the respondents have used single channel behaviour (online) in their purchase journey for mobile phones. Among the remaining 50 percent who have exhibited omni channel behaviour, 91 percent have shown webrooming behaviour in comparison to 9 percent showrooming. Thus, online is the preferred channel for information search whereas physical stores are the preferred channel for purchase of mobile phones.

There is no significant difference among respondents' Gender and age when searching information online or in physical stores. However, there is a significant difference in searching at physical stores among the Gen Y and Gen Z though there is no significant difference among gender in searching information at physical stores.

Channel preference for seeking information online did not differ across age or gender. But the channel preference for searching information at physical stores differed with age however it did not differ with gender. It is found that Channel preference for purchase differed with age however it did not differ with gender.

It can be concluded that webrooming is prevalent in mobile phone purchase. Online shopping was motivated by pragmatism followed by hassle free motivation whereas Offline shopping was motivated by Assurance motivation followed by pragmatism. The online retailers were losing their customers to offline in the case of purchase due to merchandise, assurance and enjoyment factors. Thus, to control webrooming, online retailers can improve on these factors. Physical stores can facilitate hassle free shopping, provide pragmatism and be more responsive to curtail showrooming and attract online consumers to their outlets.

9. Future Research

This study has covered only few aspects of consumer purchase behaviour. The other aspect like evaluation of alternatives, impact of online reviews and word of mouth on the purchase behaviour could be studied. This study covered only mobile phones, the findings of the study could be compared with other product categories in future. The study could also be carried out in the entire India to know if the findings were similar across the country.

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