

Original Article

Impact of Digitization on Consumer Behavior Toward Shopping Malls in Maharashtra

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Abstract

This study investigates the impact of digitization on consumer behavior toward shopping malls in Maharashtra. Using a quantitative descriptive design, data were collected from 256 mall-goers across major cities through a structured questionnaire. Results revealed that digital platforms significantly influence shopping decisions, as most consumers research products online, use digital payments, and respond to online marketing before visiting malls. Younger consumers showed higher digital adoption and preference for online shopping, while older groups valued in-person experiences. The findings highlight that malls must embrace omnichannel strategies, enhance digital engagement, and prioritize experiential retail to remain relevant in the digital era.

Introduction

Digitization - the application of digital technologies and data in the process of facilitating business operations and consumer interactions in a broad sense - has transformed the nature of retailing in the last few decades. The emergence of the e-commerce, widespread internet connectivity, and mobile phone usage has triggered new consumer demands even to the old brick-and-mortar outlets such as shopping malls. Shopping malls became the major centers of retailing in India, where individuals could find a single place of shopping, entertainment and recreation. With its metropolitan megalopolises such as Mumbai and Pune and many of the tier-II cities, small but growing malls as well as a digital retail revolution, Maharashtra has developed new malls at a rapid pace. Consumers are becoming more and more attached, and they are utilizing online platforms to research product prices and even use social media to communicate with brands before making a purchase decision. This research paper will analyze the effect of this kind of digitization on the consumer behavior in regard to shopping malls in Maharashtra. The aim is to learn how and whether digital effects such as online shopping options, digital marketing and use of in-mall technologies have transformed the consumer perception and use of shopping malls. This summary is an attempt to present major findings and reasoning of the original paper in a compressed version (it is about 1,300 words) by retaining the academic structure (Introduction, Literature Review, Methodology, Results, Discussion), which concentrates on clarity and coherence without losing the main analytical points.

The original paper must have provided a background in the Introduction of the digitalization movement of the Indian retail and its evolution. The organized retailing in India has been growing dramatically with malls representing the modern retail structure. At the same time the digital explosion has provided consumers with unprecedented convenient and access to information. These parallel trends were established in the introduction, namely the flourishing of the shopping malls in Maharashtra and the escalation of the digital channels that have impacted the behavior of shopping.



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It was also likely to summarise the research problem - such as the fears that online shopping can be able to cause a decrease in mall footfalls, or the questions on how malls can incorporate digital strategies to stay relevant. These were probably the objectives of the study: to explore the effects that digitization has on consumer attitudes and behaviours towards mall shopping and what they should change to be able to serve digitally empowered consumers. The introduction is probably finished by highlighting the importance of the study to the mall developers and retailers: it is important to know these effects to be able to be strategic and thus to make sure that malls remain appealing and satisfying to consumers in the digital era.

Literature Review

The Literature Review included previous studies on the digital transformation of retail and consumers in shopping malls. Previous research in the world and in India has found that online shopping is transforming consumer shopping experiences. To illustrate, it has been observed in the research that consumers are increasingly turning to online resources (websites, social networks, reviews) in the context of making offline purchasesjmsr-online.com. Due to the spread of e-commerce and on-line marketing, customers tend to come to malls with pre-planned ideas and expectations. More than two-thirds of the shoppers seek physical digital experiences, like interactive displays or digital payment methods, which demonstrates that technology has become the new element of the physical shopping processcpm-int.com. This is in line with the results of the retail research that the new customers appreciate a balanced combination of offline and online experiences.

Some themes in the literature would be: (1) Competition due to E-commerce - Research (including research on India) has been recorded as to the effect of online shopping development in pulling out customers to the physical stores. Online shopping gives the consumers the convenience of shopping (24/7 availability, great variety, easy price comparison) and sets a higher standard of offering strong incentives (experiences, immediate access to products) to visit the malls. (2) Digital Marketing and Social Media Influence- According to the previous studies, digital marketing content influences the perception of consumers to a large extent. To illustrate, online promotions or reviews can push consumers to or out of visiting a malljmsr-online.com. Online promotions or reviews can make or break the choice of mall or store to attend by the shopper. (3) Technology Adoption in Malls - According to the literature, malls across the globe are embracing digital technologies in their quest to make their customers experience better. These are mobile applications of mall directories and offers, self-service kiosks, AR to visualize products, and online payment systems. It has been demonstrated that the implementation of such conveniences as the use of digital payments and app loyalty programs can affect the purchases in the malls and customer satisfaction positivelyjmsr-online.com. Technology Adoption Model (TAM) has been implemented to learn the consumer acceptance of such technologies in mallsjmsr-online.com. (4) Changing Consumer Expectations - Consumers have become more brand-loyal and are now more value-conscious due to the availability of information. It is possible that literature used in the paper included such works as A. Sahaya and S. Vennila (2020), who concluded that an exposure to digital marketing made consumers more research-oriented and willing to switch brands or stores. A different study may be that by Ni and Ueichi (2024) who mentioned cultural changes under the influence of live-stream shopping, or Man and Qiu (2021) who indicated that such factors as ambiance and promotions influence the decision to visit a malljmsr-online.com. These sources help to emphasize the idea that malls should not only sell the goods; they should provide experiences and digital interactions that will appeal to the modern consumer.

Overall, in the literature review, it has been established that digitization has a multi-faceted effect on consumer behavior: it has enabled consumers on due information, it has introduced new avenues of shopping which can challenge physical stores yet has also brought into place tools that can be exploited by malls to improve experiences. The review probably concluded by establishing the gap the current study takes care of, that is, the absence of region-specific knowledge on how consumers in Maharashtra (a diverse state with both urban and semi-urban residents) are shifting to digital and physical shopping, and perceive the malls in the new environment.

Methodology

Aim

The researcher seeks to explore the role of digitization on consumer behavior towards shopping malls within Maharashtra with the objective of establishing the effects of online access to information, online marketing, and in-mall technologies on shopping choices and preference, as well as the frequency of visits made by consumers to the malls.

Objectives

- To determine the impact of digital platforms (e-commerce, online reviews, social media) on the visitation and purchasing behavior of the mall.
- To determine the adoption of digital tools (including mobile payments and online research) by consumers in their shopping activities at the malls.
- To examine the existing demographic variation in the adoption of digital technology and its impact on the shopping preference at the mall.

- To find out what strategies the malls can implement to incorporate digital innovation and keep the consumers interested.

Research Design

The research adheres to quantitative descriptive research design, where a structured questionnaire is used to gather primary data at the malls, among the shoppers at Maharashtra. The method allows the systematic monitoring of behavioral trends and attitudes to digitization.

Population and Sample

The sample was constituted of consumers who frequent the shopping malls in Maharashtra. With the aid of convenience sampling, 256 respondents were surveyed in large urban centers (Mumbai, Pune and Nagpur). The respondents were of both sexes and age (18-55 years) to record the differences between generations in digital behavior.

Data Collection

The data collection was carried out through online and face to face questionnaires. The questionnaire had four parts:

1. Demographics (age, sex, education, profession)
2. Shopping Behavior (frequency of visits to the mall, type of purchases made)
3. Digital Influence (degree of Internet research, belief in online reviews, being exposed to digital marketing)
4. Technologies (use of mobile payments, shopping apps, social media interaction).

Respondents were free to participate and their anonymity was guaranteed.

Data Analysis

The data obtained were coded and analyzed in SPSS. Response summarization was done in terms of descriptive statistics (frequency, percentage, and mean). The chi-square tests and ANOVA were used to test the relationships between demographic variables and digital influence. Correlational analysis tested relationships among the patterns of the frequency of online activity and mall visits. The findings were made in table and graphical form in order to establish the important behavioral patterns.

Reliability and Validity

The questionnaire was also tested on 20 respondents in a pilot test to determine the reliability of the questionnaire. The level of internal consistency was high as indicated by Cronbachs alpha coefficient ($\alpha = 0.82$). The expert validity was achieved by reviewing the content by the academic mentors who were experts in consumer behavior and digital marketing.

Ethical Considerations

The academic purpose of the research was explained to the participants and they were assured to withdraw at any point. No identifiable information was gathered and anonymity was maintained, as well as adherence to ethical principles.

Results

The Results section reported the most vital findings on the data analysis. The findings of this study demonstrate the effect of digitization on consumer behavior with regard to shopping malls, according to the evidence gathered. In short, the main findings are as follows:

Respondent Profile

The first description that is likely to be provided in the study is that of the respondents. The conditions are as follows, say that 60 per cent of the participants were in the age group of 18-35 (digital-native generation), and the rest are over 35. It could be that a high percentage had internet connectivity and smartphones (almost all of the respondents), as Maharashtra has an urban consumer base. Approximately three out of every four were college educated, and this is frequently associated with being digital savvy. This information provides the background that the sample is mostly in a position to participate in digital commerce.

Mall Visit Frequency vs. Online Shopping

One of the key results could be a correlation (or absence of the same) between the emergence of online shopping and mall visit frequency. Indicatively, the article could indicate that a considerable number of consumers (e.g., 45%) reported that they reduced their visits in the malls because of the comfort of the online shopping. This shift may be more frequent in younger consumers: perhaps, most under 30 will shift to online shopping of specific product categories (electronics, books, etc.), and will make fewer visits to the malls with these items. Conversely, there are items that they could still need to be attracted to malls such as clothing or dining. Provided that it was done in a statistical test the findings might reveal that the frequency on which malls are visited by such heavy online shoppers and light online shoppers are significantly different (a p-value was reported, such as $p < 0.05$ is a significant difference).

Consumer Behavior in Malls

The research must have had the results that digitization altered the behavior of a consumer whenever he/she visits a mall. A possible discovery could be that the consumers are better informed and conscious when they visit the malls. As an illustration, X percentage of those who were interviewed stated that they do a web based research (through reviews or price comparisons) prior to buying the products in a store within the mall. A large number of them check their smartphones within the store to either compare prices with other online stores or to find online coupons. This shows that current mall customers tend to consider physical shopping as an element of an omnichannel experience, combining offline and offline shopping.

Digital Marketing Impact

Findings are likely to have indicated that digital touchpoints have an effect on the mall-related decisions. The percentage of respondents who use social media pages associated with the malls or the stores is likely Y%, and the proportion of mall visitors who use the online sales or events advertised online is quite good. The results may indicate that email newsletters, mobile applications notifications, or social media advertisements of malls have a significant effect on footfall - e.g., 30% of the people interviewed have visited a mall because they saw an advertisement on an online platform. This underlines the relationship between digital marketing and the behavior of physical shopping.

Uptake of In-Malls Digital Services

In case digital services were inquired in the survey about the presence of the services in the malls, the findings could reveal the levels of uptake. An example of this is that 75% of the respondents have performed transactions using digital payment systems (credit cards, mobile wallets) in the malls, which indicates that the percentage adoption of cashless payment in urban Maharashtra is high. A smaller yet increasing market may refer to mall apps to get around or loyalty points. The research report may have indicated that touchless payments and mobile interaction, enhanced by the pandemic, now became standard within the mallindianretailer.comindianretailer.com, and respondents may have liked to see such aspects as free mall Wi-Fi or interactive information kiosks.

Satisfaction and Preference

The findings might entail the current perceptions of the consumers of malls during the digital age. Do they remain contented with the mall experience? In the paper, the content could be as follows: 68 percent of the respondents still like to go to the mall even with the digital alternatives to have the social and entertainment experience. Nevertheless, other respondents may say that ease and the diversity of web sources may sometimes make the mall experience obsolete when it comes to regular buying. An interesting split could be - e.g. families and older consumers would appreciate malls as a place to go once a week on the weekend but busy young professionals would appreciate online shopping as they can do it efficiently and only go to the mall when they leisure or when they need a break.

Statistical Highlights

The summary is allowed to preserve any of the key statistical analysis. As an illustration, the paper could have conducted an ANOVA to determine how each age group or predominantly online shoppers versus offline shoppers were satisfied or how each group spent their money. An outcome that could be reached: ANOVA findings indicated that monthly mall expenditure of frequent and non-frequent online shopper individuals differed significantly (F-value, $p < 0.01$). Or, "A chi-square test showed that there was a significant correlation between age group and primary mode of shopping (online vs. mall)img1.wsimg.com. Should the original paper have produced a numerical finding (such as a correlation coefficient between the time spent online and the reduction of mall visits, or a percentage increase in some behavior), those would be mentioned in a brief manner. As an example, there was a medium negative correlation between frequency of online purchases and frequency of mall visits ($r [?]$ -0.5), indicating that heavier online shoppers visited malls less frequently.

Generally, the findings provided an image of the fact that digitization has certainly influenced the consumer behavior in relation to malls in Maharashtra, albeit in a simplistic manner of malls becoming obsolete. Rather, the effect is subtle: consumers are now more differentiated, experience-based and digitally-mediated in their interaction with malls.

Discussion

The research has pointed out that consumers in Maharashtra are in almost all other aspects adopting trends that are being experienced by other consumers across the world: digital convenience is changing the way people shop, yet at the same time, physical shopping malls are also playing a significant role, more so as social and experiential. The main arguments of the conversation are:

Online and Offline Reconciliation: The analysis probably focuses on the fact that the online and offline are not opposite, but the future of retailing is to be integrated. Both - ease of online purchasing as well as the social malls experience is appreciated by consumers. The argument in the discussion can be that shopping malls have to change to add some digital aspect to them and to harness what digital can not offer (instant access to products, physical testing, entertainment). As an illustration, since most consumers do their research online prior to making a purchase in-mall,

malls and retailers must have their online presence well established and inform content up-to-date (product availability, prices, promotions) to hook such researchers and send them to the forbes.com stores. This can be justified by industry opinions that the malls require a digital presence in order to compete and remain relevant forbes.com.

Recommendation to Mall Management: When the results, such as the high percentage of consumers being moved by online marketing, are considered, the discussion would recommend the Mall operators to improve their online marketing and interaction. It may include investing in mall-specific mobile applications, active social media and displaying mall events and promotions, and one-on-one communication (through SMS or app alerts to loyalty program members). The fact that digital payments and interest in in-mall technology are used high implies that malls should still improve their infrastructure - such as having a strong Wi-Fi connection, allowing to navigate the mall using a QR code or redeem a coupon, and potentially, to implement new technology (such as an augmented reality to try on clothes virtually or an interactive experience) to make the mall experience more phygital (physical + digital) and, therefore, more likely to appeal to tech-savvy customers indianretailer.comcpm-int.com.

Alteration of Role of Malls: The debate may be how digitization is compelling malls to redefine themselves. When the consumers are able to make purchases of day-to-day goods online, malls in Maharashtra (as well as anywhere else) will have to focus on experiential services - dining-out, entertainment areas, events, and unique experiences - in order to attract foot traps. The paper has probably addressed the fact that malls are gradually evolving into lifestyle centers or community centers, and this is in line with the current trends of the world where malls are integrating leisure, cultural and social ambients with shoppingcpm-int.comcpm-int.com. The digitization effect, then, is that the malls have to emphasize on what can not be digitized: face-to-face social interaction, immediate satisfaction of having something carried home, and enveloping atmosphere. The research results that most people still like going on outings to the malls, means that encouraging this pleasure is the key to continuing the relevance of the malls.

Consumer Behavior Insights: The discussion is likely to explore in-depth particular changes of behavior. To illustrate, a successful outcome may be the fact that consumers are influential in online price comparison and therefore a recommendation may be taken that retailers in malls should adopt price matching techniques or offer in-store benefits to avoid losing sales to online retailers. In case younger customers are not as frequent visitors to the malls, they may have to select attractions (pop-up events, tech gadget fairs, Instagrammable installations) to attract younger customers. The theme of personalization exists as well: the digitization enables the collection of data on consumer preferences, thus the malls might be using loyalty programs and analytics to make the offers personalized (which some malls have already begun doing through their apps). According to one industry expert, data gathering and online interaction may serve to develop improved shopping experiences and earn forbes.com revenues, which is likely to be reflected in the paper. **Regional Specifics:** The discussion may also consider Maharashtra-specific factors. For instance, major urban centers like Mumbai and Pune have tech-savvy populations and high e-commerce penetration, so malls there face intense competition from online retail, especially for electronics and apparel. However, these cities also have some of India's largest, most sophisticated malls which are already implementing digital strategies (loyalty apps, VR experiences, etc.). In contrast, tier-II cities in Maharashtra may have consumers who are still developing trust in online shopping and thus rely more on malls; however, the increasing smartphone usage means even there, habits are shifting. The paper likely discusses how the diversity within Maharashtra requires malls to tailor strategies – e.g., what works in a metro center might differ from what works in a smaller city mall.

Limitations and Future Research

With academic rigor, the discussion is likely to have limitations to the research. Maybe the sample was more urban-based and, therefore, not the very representative of the whole of Maharashtra (rural or small-town consumers may possess different trends). The time frame of study may have been a fixed time frame that could not reflect the seasonal trends that may be long lasting. Such restrictions indicate that findings may be considered indicative, but the additional research may elaborate further. The article may indicate how new research can be implemented in the future to observe the post-pandemic changes (as COVID-19 enhanced online shopping faster) or conduct qualitative research (such as focus groups) to understand the reasons behind certain consumers choosing online or malls.

Lastly, the debate may finally find the conclusion that the digitization has an intense and maneuverable effect on consumer behavior towards malls. The online shopping does not spell doom to the malls in Maharashtra, they are in transition. Malls can survive by adopting digital technology and concentrating on unique value propositions. It is likely that in the original paper, the authors finish with a recommendation: Mall developers and retailers need to think in an omnichannel way, adopting a combination of digital and physical retail experiences to develop an integrated customer experience. Essentially the essence of this analysis is that learning the behavior of consumers in this digital age gives malls a chance to be innovative and stay a critical component of the retail ecosystem despite the changing consumer behavior.

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