



Factors That Influence Retail Store Preference and Impact of in-Store Digitization

Sunetra Saha, Ashok Sharma, Anita Kumar

Abstract: This paper tries to understand various in-store digitization techniques being adopted by retailers around the world and to determine whether these in-store digitisation techniques have an influence towards retail store selection along with a study to understand various factors that influence the retail store preference of consumers. The study was conducted by preparing a questionnaire and taking survey from a sample of 117 people. The data was analyzed and findings were documented accordingly. The various factors that influence the store preference were identified and reduced into 5 factors which are named store ambience, services, convenience, merchandise options and sales promotion. Store ambience was found to be the most important factor that influences store preference. The study also revealed that convenience, degree of modernization and use of virtual Reality in stores would have a significant impact towards store preference and selection.

Keywords: Consumer Behavior, Retailing, in-store digitization, store preference.

I. INTRODUCTION

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study is to find out the significance of various factors that influence the retail store preference of consumers, also to gain insights on various in-store digitization techniques being adopted by retailers and to study the possible influence of these in-store digitization techniques on Indian shoppers.

In-Store Digitization

Consumers who shop for apparel believe that in a consumer's decision-making process, online touch points play a very important role. Incorporating in-store online approaches can have many positive effects on retailers' topline. There are several features that a retailer can provide such as visual navigation in their brick and mortar retail stores that online retailers can't replicate. Once customers enter the store, they come with great expectations from the retailer, by offering a compelling experience for buyers, retailers can rely on this opportunity. There are several ways that physical retailers can do this by supplying them with personalized promotional offers, helping them move through the shop,

providing information on products in the store, etc. Some internationally implemented in-store digitization technologies include tablet devices, in-store touch screens, digital signage, interactive hangers, augmented reality, QR codes, smart phone coded labels, outdoor location-based services, indoor location-based services, and in-store pick-up.

Significance of the Study

For greater emphasis on digitization, as more and more people consume digital content on a daily basis, on their mobile phones, tablets, desktop computers at work, and more – and thus businesses realize the important role digital strategies can play in their business. These days people carry their mobile phones wherever they go, the retail stores can use this as an opportunity to engage customers when inside the retail store, thus creating a great user experience and building customer loyalty.

Objectives of the Study

1. To find out the factors that influence a customer when choosing a store.
2. To find out whether in store digitization techniques have an impact on customer store preference.

Review of Literature:

Store Preference

Vidushi Handa & Navneet Grover, 2012-

The paper explores various factors for the evolution of retailing in India and its growth. The growing brand consciousness and awareness across people of different socio-economic classes in India are the major contributors to the growth of retail sector in India.

The paper explores the role of Indian Government in the growth of retail industry and the need for further reforms. It throws light on various challenges the retail industry will face in near future. It concludes that politics in India is a major hindrance to organized retailing in India. It talks about the possible liberalization organized retail, that can increase the number of jobs in the country in the name of logistics etc. With increasing organized retail will bring technology to the country as major retail giants are using their information technology capabilities to work closely with their vendors to predict the consumer demand, also reducing the inventory holding and thereby saving costs.

Sunil Atulkar & Bikrant Kesari, 2014 -

Un-organized retailing has been prevalent in India in the form of kirana stores. Now the organized retailing is growing than ever before, the organized sector consists of supermarket, hypermarket, malls etc. They tried to find out various factors that influence customer's preference towards organized retail stores. Based on the extensive review of literature performed by the authors, they found few factors which affect the preference of consumer,

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which are quality of merchandise, wider availability of products, retail space, and brand communication. They examine the role of specific elements like product information, customer involvement, atmosphere, customer attributions and choices which play an important role in customer store preference. They opine that quest of consumer's for convenience and shopping experience in terms of ambience and entertainment are the main reasons behind customer's preference for shopping malls. The reasons behind increasing demand for organized retail stores are the availability of variety of merchandise, cleanliness, entertainment for children, convenient parking facility and availability of food courts etc. Their study has found out that irrespective of age many customers prefer visiting the organized retail stores owing to the wide variety of facilities provided to them. But families with lower income are an exception, who still prefer unorganized retail stores. They investigated that organized retail is facing with both challenges and opportunities, to stay competitive in the organized retail sector it is important for retailers to design a value proposition, engage customers and strive to serve customers better. Che Aniza Che Wel, Siti Rahayu Hussin, Nor Asiah Omar & Sallehuddin Mohd Nor, 2012 -

There are several choices available to consumers in selecting a retail store to make a particular purchase. The authors aimed to show that the types of goods purchased influence the factors that influence the preference of a retail store. The findings of this study suggest that many factors influence the consumer choice of a retail store, the results also show that based on the types of goods purchased the retail selection decision differs.

Their study analysed the important determinants of retail store selection in Malaysia which are reduced into seven major categories or factors such as (1) Store salespersons and Layout of the Store; (2) Store advertisement and promotion; (3) Store ease & kind of Merchandise; (4) Store Location; (5) influence of peer group; (6) Product Quality and Variety; and (7) Services offered by Store.

Ergun Eroglu (2013) -

In this paper, different factors have been established that affect consumer preferences in relation to shopping in organized retail stores, and analyse the main criteria specific to the stores. Different store preference determinants are listed as seven key factors, namely value, cost, venue, variety of goods, storage climate, facilities, shop personnel and brand image. The results showed that "product quality" is the preferred criterion; on the other hand, "store personnel" is an irrelevant criterion for the customer.

Norshamliza Chamhuri & Peter J. Batt, (2013) -

The factors that influence the preference of customers varies according to the category of goods or products purchased. Their research focuses on exploring the various factors that influence preference of consumer in terms of the location for Malaysian consumers to purchase fresh meat. On the basis of focus group discussions conducted, the authors concluded that there are five main variables found by the participants regarding the location, namely Halal assurance, a good relationship with retailers, a competitive price and an enjoyable shopping atmosphere.

Role of Digital Technology in Retail

Retailers need to consider how customers are going to use e-shopping technology. Large supermarkets like Target, Tesco and Walmart have established a competitive advantage by building a business model around them.

Hagberg, Johan & Sundström, Malin & Egels-Zandén, Niklas. (2016), This paper aimed at explaining the transition brought about by consumer digitalization. The paper introduces a retail-consumer design model that takes into account the four elements of trade, participants, offers and settings. The results conclude that Digitalization affects retail exchanges (in many respects and in different facets of trade including communications, purchases and distribution); the essence of retail offers (blurred distinctions between products and services, what constitutes the actual offering and how it is priced); retail settings (i.e. where and when retailing takes place); and the actors involved in retailing (including retailers and consumers).

Innovation, in the hands of clients, encourages access to item data and item audits that clients can tap in a matter of a few moments to settle on educated buy choices and impart their experience to a large number of different clients.

In like manner, conventional bricks-and-mortar retailers are confronted with circumstances that range past the dividers of their stores to the on-line circle.

The paper also assesses the effect on technology of Online Promotions, Location-Based Applications and Mobile Promotions, Mobile Sales Point, Mobile Payments and Virtual Wallets, Personal Shopping Assistants, Electronic Price Tags and RFID.

Hagberg, Johan & Sundström, Malin & Egels-Zandén, Niklas. (2014). "Digitalization" is one of the greatest transformation of contemporary society. In the retail sector, continuous changes due to digitalisation are not least important, impacting and influencing growth. Digitalization and the Internet have been addressed primarily in terms of an increased presence of e-commerce so far in retailing. The Internet is rapidly embedded in all aspects of retailing, however, and the influence of digitalization goes far beyond e-commerce phenomena. These examples of far wider and more robust effects include the conversion of previously physical products into digital services, the use of digital instruments during various steps of the procurement procedure and customer feedback and communications through social media. Digital mobile devices with the internet have become increasingly popular with customers over the years, including in terms of shopping behaviour. This paper aims to examine the transformation of retailing through digitalisation and to create ideas for research into the effects of these transformations. This article analyzes digitisation of the retail sector from the exchange interface between retailers and customers to three different facets of the interchange: interaction, payment and delivery (Peterson et al. 1997). Communication relates to information access and sharing. Transactions include the transfer of ownership and the actual acquisition, including monetary transactions. Distribution means physical and measurable material exchanges. Such three facets of the exchange are divided into sub-categories,

further illustrated by examples from Swedish retail, so that we understand more thoroughly how digitalism changes the retail sector in various sectors. Research proposals are based on three different "sections" of retail; micro, meso and macro, from individual retail employees to societal changes are defined and research proposals created. One of the main implications is for retailers to adapt and build new business models that take digitization challenges and opportunities into account, and the transition will affect retail skills, and the need to improve the digital literacy process. theme of the workforce The changes introduced by digitisation may not only transform retailing in several ways, but also have consequences for the role of retailers in society.

Dr. J. Venkatesh (Jan,2014)

Retailing is an industry that operates on slender margins, thereby increasing the importance of optimizing logistics, procurement, etc. processes. Retailers want the technology to be leveraged to improve their overall customer offer. Unlike a decade ago, innovation has become an offensive tool in the retailer's hands. The paper concentrated on the retail sector's technical developments. Upon reviewing various technologies available for retail, the researcher concluded that the importance of package solutions, the emphasis on supply chain management and the current restriction on IT in store operations are three major trends in retail IT consumption.

In-Store Digitization

Hewlett Packard Enterprise

Consumers nowadays are browsing, shopping and buying products from different devices.

Hence the focus has shifted to multichannel marketing, the challenge in the future would be to target all-channel customers often called omni consumers. It is expected that the digital channels and brick and mortar stores will have a consistent relationship. With increasing number of people using digital channels to purchase products, it is important to engage their customers while in the store for brick and mortar stores. To serve these omni consumers better retailers need to work on developing business models that are adaptive, competitive and driven by customers. Successful brick and mortar retailers are using new technology to reduce the difference between digital and physical environments.

The retail sector is currently undergoing a transition, laying the foundation and shaping the future shop layout. The forward-looking retailers are working to build their online capabilities to better serve customers. The advantage of the new business model that relies on the growth of virtual technologies is very important for physical retailers.

A lot of research is being carried out to find out the impact of digital technology. A study conducted by Gartner showing that 22 percent of corporate leaders say they are actually doing some form of digital business. Half want to be in the digital business in two years, and 83% intend to be in the digital business in three to five years. These key trends are confirmed by the findings of a Deloitte report. According to this report, digital technologies today have an effect on in-store retail sales of 36 million, or \$1.1 trillion.

Research Methodology

This research is based on the survey method. A questionnaire was used to collect relevant data for the study in order to

achieve the research goals set out above.

Primary data collection as well secondary data collection techniques were used for the study. The secondary data include research papers, data from e-commerce websites, articles from newspapers and magazines. A standardized questionnaire with close-ended questions was used to collect relevant primary data. The scale used in this research is Likert Scale. Descriptive research design was used as this study aims at quantifying the store preference of consumers and whether in store digitization techniques have an impact on customer store preference. The sample size for the survey is 117 respondents.

Convenience sampling technique was used for taking the survey. The questionnaire was filled by people who have visited retail store based on their willingness to spend their time on filling the questionnaire.

Data Analysis

Demographic Profile

The frequency and percentage demographic profile of respondents is listed in Table-1. The highest number of respondents were aged 18-25 years of age, representing 40.2% of the total respondents. Rs.5 lakhs – Rs.10 lakhs with the highest number of respondents account for 31.6 percent of respondents' earnings. 43.6% of the respondents are students. The gender-based differences among respondents were 46.2% male and 53.8% female.

Table – 1: Analysis of Demographic Profile

Characteristics	Distribution	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Men	54	46.2%
	Women	63	53.8%
Age	18-25 years	47	40.2%
	26-35 years	45	38.5%
	36-45 years	12	10.3%
	46 and above	13	11.1%
Annual Income	<Rs. 5 lakhs	29	24.8%
	Rs. 5 lakhs – Rs. 10 lakhs	37	31.6%
	Rs. 10 lakhs – Rs. 15 lakhs	19	16.2%
	Rs. 15 lakhs and above	32	27.4%
Occupation	Student	51	43.6%
	Business	4	3.4%
	Service	56	47.9%



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	Unemployed	6	5.1%
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Reliability Analysis

Case Processing Summary

		N	%
Cases	Valid	117	100.0
	Excluded ^a	0	.0
	Total	117	100.0

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

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.808	19

For the study to find out the various factors affecting the store preference of consumers, a reliability analysis was

KMO and Bartlett's Test

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.	.648
Approx. Chi-Square	884.236
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	df
	171
	Sig.
	.000

performed. The Cronbach alpha value was 0.808 which is greater than 0.7 and is considered to be reliable.

Factor Analysis

The factor loading value establishes relationship between each variable and the underlying factor. It is essential to assess the suitability of respondent data before conducting factor analysis to extract factors. The sphericity test of Bartlett and the sampling adequacy criterion of Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin are used to assess the suitability of the data of the respondent.

Measure of Sampling Adequacy is used to calculate the degree of intercorrelations between variables and the adequacy of factor analysis (Hair et.al 2013).

Since the KMO value is 0.626 which is mediocre and acceptable.

The statistical test should be significant ($p < .05$) for the factor analysis to be considered appropriate (Bartlett, 1954). The table below shows the sig value for the data set which is less than 0.05 which is considered acceptable.

Pattern Matrix^a

Factors	Items	Factor				
		1	2	3	4	5
Store ambience	Store design and layout	.872				
	Refreshment / Entertainment facilities are available	.673				
	Store ambience (lighting, scent, sound)	.506				
	Ease of driving trolleys	.406				
Merchandise Options	Quality of merchandise		.895			
	Availability of well-known branded merchandise		.751			
	Availability of wider choice / selection of merchandise		.510			
	Display of merchandise (visual merchandising)		.479			
Services	Availability of merchandise at reasonable prices			.769		
	Exchange Guarantee			.716		
	Responsive sales personnel			.508		
	Convenient payment options			.406		
Sales Promotions	Promotional Offers and Coupons				.855	
	Frequency of special sales				.586	
	Parking facilities are available				.519	

Convenience	Queue for billing					.777
	Express checkout and prompt service					.724

Extraction Method: Principal Axis Factoring.
Rotation Method: Promax with Kaiser Normalization.^a
a. Rotation converged in 7 iterations.

.716	12
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For the study to find out whether the in store digitization techniques have an impact on customer store preference., a reliability analysis was performed on the factors. The Cronbach alpha value was 0.716 which is greater than 0.7 and is considered to be reliable.

**Reliability Analysis
Case Processing Summary**

		N	%
Cases	Valid	117	100.0
	Excluded ^a	0	.0
	Total	117	100.0

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

Factor Analysis

KMO and Bartlett's Test

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		.613
Approx. Chi-Square		379.787
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	df	66
	Sig.	.000

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items

Pattern Matrix^a

		Factor			
		1	2	3	4
Convenience	I like to receive a message of invitation, promotional offer or coupon from a retail store when I come to the shop.	.644			
	I decide to go for a picnic and my app recommends the best products for my needs based on qualitative information about the location to which I want to travel to.	.609			
	Instead of waiting for delivery, I will pick up my online orders in a retail location.	.567			
	By tapping my mobile on a reader connected to the cash register, I can quickly pay for the things I want to purchase.	.511			
	While searching the brand ranges in "kiosks" available at the retail store, I can order items while in store.	.476			
Modernization	To order to capture my desires, apps should be made available to shops and should lead me to the right product at the right price.		.836		
	I would like to receive wish lists of items that I may be interested in when in a retail store via SMS or email.		.573		
	The app helps me to see how a piece of furniture will work in my house (such as my bedroom, living room, etc.).		.505		
Advanced Technology	I find the apparel I want to wear in a dressing room ready by simply selecting the right size and color by scanning a coded label on the apparel.			.737	
	If the apps will recommend recipes that use the condiment by detecting RFID tags on the items inside the carts.			.651	

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VirtualReality	To help to ensure the correct fit of apparel for me, a 3-D body scanner can be used in the retail store				.865
	I may easily actually try different colors or types of clothing and accessories without trying them on physically through an App.				.650

Extraction Method: Principal Axis Factoring.

Rotation Method: Promax with Kaiser Normalization.

a. Rotation converged in 6 iterations.

Regression

Ho: all independent variables are equal

H1: Not all independent variables are equal

Model Summary^b

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.453 ^a	.205	.177	.77059

a. Predictors: (Constant), Modernization, Technology, VirtualReality, Convenience

b. Dependent Variable: Technological Advocacy

ANOVA^a

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	17.074	4	4.268	7.180	.000 ^b
	Residual	66.584	112	.595		
	Total	83.658	116			

a. Dependent Variable: Tech Advocacy

b. Predictors: (Constant), VirtualReality, Modernization, AdvancedTechnology, Convenience

Coefficients^a

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	1.380	.342		4.036	.000
	Convenience	.214	.103	.194	2.079	.040
	Modernization	.197	.100	.185	1.964	.052
	AdvancedTechnology	-.096	.072	-.117	-1.330	.186
	VirtualReality	.207	.059	.305	3.519	.001

a. Dependent Variable: Tech Advocacy

The regression equation can be summarized as

$$\text{Technological Advocacy} = 1.380 + (\text{Convenience})(0.214) + (\text{Modernization})(0.197) - (\text{Advanced Technology})(0.096) + (\text{Virtual Reality})(0.207)$$

For one unit change in convenience there will be 0.214 unit change in Technological Advocacy.

For one unit change in Modernization there will be 0.197 unit change in Technological Advocacy.

For one unit change in Advanced Technology there will be 0.096 unit negative change in Technological Advocacy.

For one unit change in Virtual Reality there will be 0.207 unit change in Technological Advocacy.

Findings

Factor Discussion

Store Preference

1. Store ambience: With a total variance of 25.102 points, this variable was the most important determinant. Important elements of this factor included Store design and layout (.872), Availability of Refreshment / Entertainment facilities (.673) etc.

2. Merchandise Options: This variable has emerged with a total variance of 13.914 percent as the second most important determinant of the study. Major elements of this factor include Quality of merchandise (.895), Availability of well-known branded merchandise (0.751) etc.

3. Services: One of the important determinants was this factor with a variance of 8.598%. Major elements consisting this factor include Availability of merchandise at reasonable prices (.769), Exchange Guarantee (.716). This study shows that the guarantee for exchange or return affects the customer's store preference.

4. Sales Promotions: This factor too came as one of the effective determinants with a variance of 8.104%. The elements here include Promotional Offers and Coupons (.855) and Frequency of special sales (.586). This study reveals that promotional offers, coupons, discounts and special sales will affect the store preference of shoppers.

5. Convenience: With a total variance of 7.119 percent, this factor also became relevant. Major elements of this factor are the billing queue (.777), Express checkout and prompt service (.724).

Effect of technology

1. Convenience: This factor was considered the most important determinant with a total variance of 26.405%. Major elements of this factor include Location Based Services (.644), Contextual suggestions (.609) etc.

2. Modernization: This factor was the second most important determinant with a total variance of 16.146%. Major elements of this factor include Lead to right product at right price (.836), send wish lists via SMS or e-mail (0.573) etc.

3. Advanced Technology: This factor too was one of the important determinants with a variance of 12.707%. Major elements consisting this factor include item scanning for trial (.737), RFID tagging for grocery including recipe display (.651).

4. Virtual Reality: This factor was one of the effective determinants with a variance of 10.458%. The elements consisting this factor include 3D scanners for trial and fitting of apparel (.865) as well as virtual trial rooms (.586).

Objective based conclusions:

Objective 1: “ To find out the factors that influence a customer when choosing a store.”

The various factors that influence the store preference were identified and reduced into 5 factors which are named store ambience, services, convenience, merchandise options and sales promotion.

- It is found that store ambience is the major determinant of the store preference, which includes Store design and layout, availability of Refreshment / Entertainment facilities, Store ambience (lighting, scent, sound) and Ease of driving trolleys.
- Followed by the component Merchandise Options, which includes Quality of merchandise, Availability of well-known branded merchandise, Availability of wider choice/selection of merchandise and Display of merchandise.

- Then is the component Services which includes factors Availability of merchandise at reasonable prices, Exchange Guarantee, Responsive sales personnel and Convenient payment options.
- And then is the component Sales Promotions which includes factors Promotional Offers and Coupons, Frequency of special sales and Availability of Parking facilities.
- The last component Convenience includes Queue for billing and Express checkout and prompt service.

Objective 2: “To find out whether in store digitization techniques have an impact on customer store preference.”

- The independent variables obtained by performing factor analysis are related to the dependent variable which is tech advocacy. Most people think that they would like to shop in stores which adopt new technology.
- The respondents believe that comfort, modernisation and virtual reality are three variables that will affect their store choice dramatically in the future.

Scope for future research

- However, due to its small-scale nature, the generalization of results from this research is minimal. More representative results may be generated by a larger-scale study involving customers from different demographic and geographic areas.
- In addition, a larger sample size can lead to different set of determinant factors in the exploratory factor study.
- The determination of the relationship between social class and retail selection decisions is another factor that may contribute to further enriching this research area. Consumers from different social classes can prefer to shop at different retail establishment types, as can be seen in India.

II. CONCLUSION

The paper highlights the importance of factors that influence Store selection including store ambience, merchandise options, level of services provided, sales promotion and convenience. The paper also studied the importance of Tech Advocacy and found that comfort, modernization and virtual reality are three variables that will affect their store choice dramatically in the future. It is important for offline retailers to integrate technology within the store experience to ensure better customer connect and overcome the threat of online retailing.

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