

Traditional Retailing vs E-Commerce: A Study of College Students' Purchase Behavior in Tinsukia District

Ankit Sen

Research Scholar, Department of Commerce, Dibrugarh University, 786004

*Corresponding Author: ayandeepchatts@gmail.com

Received: 30th April, 2026

Revised: 15th May, 2026

Accepted: 22nd May, 2026

Published: 27th May, 2026

ABSTRACT

The rapid growth of digital technology and internet accessibility has significantly transformed consumer shopping behaviour, leading to increasing competition between traditional retail shopping and e-commerce shopping. The study primarily focuses on examining students' shopping preferences, evaluating the influence of price sensitivity and discounts on purchasing decisions, and identifying the major determinants that motivate consumers toward e-commerce shopping.

The research adopts a descriptive research design and is based on both primary and secondary data. Primary data were collected through a structured questionnaire distributed among 50 college students selected using the stratified random sampling technique. Secondary data were obtained from books, journals, research articles, and online sources related to consumer behaviour, retailing, and e-commerce. The collected data were analyzed using percentage analysis and interpreted with the help of tables and charts.

The findings of the study reveal that college students demonstrate a strong preference for e-commerce shopping due to factors such as convenience, competitive pricing, attractive discounts, wider product variety, and time-saving benefits. Among these factors, price sensitivity and promotional offers emerged as the most influential determinants affecting purchasing decisions. The study also indicates that students actively compare products and prices before making purchases, reflecting rational and informed consumer behaviour. However, concerns related to product quality, delivery delays, and inconsistent shopping experiences continue to affect consumer satisfaction in online shopping environments. At the same time, physical retail shopping continues to retain importance because of factors such as direct product inspection, immediate purchase, store ambience, and salesperson assistance. The research suggests that businesses should adopt integrated retail strategies combining online convenience with improved offline shopping experiences in order to effectively satisfy the evolving expectations of modern consumers.

Keywords: Retail Shopping, E-Commerce, Online Shopping, Retail Marketing.

Introduction

Retail shopping and e-commerce shopping are two major forms of consumer purchasing behaviour that play a significant role in the modern business environment. Retail shopping refers to the traditional process of purchasing goods and services directly from physical stores, markets, shopping malls, supermarkets, and branded outlets. In this form of shopping, consumers are able to physically inspect products, evaluate quality, interact with sales personnel, and make immediate purchase decisions. Traditional retailing has long been considered an important component of economic activity because it creates direct interaction between sellers and buyers and provides consumers with a personalized shopping experience (Kotler and Keller, 2016).

E-commerce shopping, on the other hand, refers to the buying and selling of products and services through electronic platforms using the internet. The rapid advancement of information technology, digital communication, smartphones, and internet accessibility has significantly accelerated the growth of e-commerce across the world. Online shopping platforms such as Amazon, Flipkart, Myntra, and Ajio have transformed the way consumers search for information, compare prices, evaluate alternatives, and purchase products. E-commerce enables consumers to shop anytime and from anywhere, thereby offering a high level of

convenience and accessibility (Laudon & Traver, 2021).

The increasing popularity of e-commerce has created strong competition for traditional retail businesses. Consumers today have the option to choose between offline retail stores and online shopping platforms depending on their preferences, needs, and purchasing situations. Traditional retail shopping provides several advantages, including direct product inspection, immediate ownership, personal interaction, and greater assurance regarding product quality. Many consumers still prefer retail shopping for products where touch, feel, trial, and physical examination are important aspects of decision-making. Moreover, retail shopping offers social and recreational experiences, as consumers often visit malls and markets not only for purchasing but also for entertainment and leisure activities (Levy and Weitz, 2012).

In contrast, e-commerce shopping offers numerous benefits such as convenience, time-saving, wide product assortment, ease of price comparison, attractive discounts, digital payment systems, and home delivery services. Consumers can access a large variety of products from different brands and sellers without geographical limitations. E-commerce platforms also use advanced technologies such as artificial intelligence, personalized recommendations, and targeted advertising to improve customer experience and influence purchasing decisions. Features such as online reviews, ratings,

cashback offers, and seasonal sales further enhance the attractiveness of online shopping among consumers (Turban et al., 2018).

The growth of e-commerce has been particularly significant among young consumers, especially college students. College students are highly influenced by digital technology, social media platforms, online advertisements, and changing lifestyle patterns. Their familiarity with smartphones, internet applications, and online payment systems makes them active participants in the e-commerce marketplace. Students often prefer online shopping because it allows them to compare prices, access trendy products, and take advantage of discounts and promotional offers. At the same time, many students continue to engage in retail shopping due to factors such as trust, immediate possession, social interaction, and the ability to physically examine products before purchase (Solomon, 2020).

Consumer preference between retail shopping and e-commerce shopping is influenced by several factors, including convenience, trust, price sensitivity, shopping experience, product quality, delivery services, and technological familiarity. Price sensitivity is considered one of the most important determinants affecting purchasing behaviour among students because most college students operate within limited financial resources. E-commerce platforms frequently attract consumers through discounts, flash sales, coupon offers, and cashback schemes, which encourage impulsive and

planned purchases. On the other hand, retail stores may provide bargaining opportunities, immediate product availability, and reduced risks associated with delivery delays or online fraud (Kotler and Armstrong, 2018).

Despite the rapid growth of e-commerce, certain challenges continue to affect consumer confidence in online shopping. Concerns related to product quality, cyber fraud, payment security, privacy issues, return policies, and delayed delivery may discourage some consumers from fully relying on online platforms. In contrast, traditional retail shopping offers greater assurance regarding authenticity and product inspection. Therefore, both retail and e-commerce shopping continue to coexist in the modern marketplace, each offering distinct advantages and limitations to consumers (Schiffman and Wisenblit, 2019).

In recent years, India has experienced substantial growth in digital infrastructure, internet penetration, and smartphone usage, contributing significantly to the expansion of e-commerce activities. Government initiatives promoting digital transactions and online services have further accelerated the adoption of online shopping among consumers. At the same time, organized retail markets and shopping centers continue to expand across urban and semi-urban areas, creating a competitive environment between retail and e-commerce businesses. This changing market structure has made consumer preference studies increasingly relevant in

understanding contemporary purchasing behaviour.

In the context of Tinsukia District, the growing exposure of students to digital technology, online shopping applications, and organized retail markets has contributed to changes in shopping habits and consumer behaviour. College students in the district are increasingly participating in both retail and e-commerce shopping activities, making it important to analyze the factors influencing their preferences and purchasing decisions. Understanding these behavioural patterns may provide valuable insights for retailers, e-commerce companies, marketers, and researchers in formulating effective business and marketing strategies.

Therefore, the present study seeks to conduct a comparative analysis of retail and e-commerce shopping preferences among college students in Tinsukia District. The study aims to examine students' shopping preferences, analyze the impact of price sensitivity and discounts on purchasing decisions, and identify the major determinants motivating students toward e-commerce shopping. The findings of the study may contribute to a better understanding of the evolving consumer behaviour of young shoppers in a developing regional market.

Therefore, this study aims to conduct a comparative analysis of retail and e-commerce shopping preferences among college students in Tinsukia District, Assam. The study focuses on analyzing students' shopping preferences,

examining the effect of price sensitivity and discounts on purchasing decisions, and identifying the major factors that motivate students toward e-commerce shopping. The findings of this research may provide useful insights for retailers, e-commerce companies, marketers, and researchers in understanding the changing consumer behavior of young shoppers in a developing regional market.

Methods and Methodology

The present study adopts a descriptive research design to examine and analyze the shopping behaviour and preferences of college students regarding retail and e-commerce shopping. The descriptive approach is considered appropriate because it facilitates a detailed understanding of consumer preferences, purchasing patterns, and influencing factors within a specific population. The study is primarily based on primary data collected through a structured questionnaire administered among college students. The questionnaire method was selected for its cost-effectiveness, convenience, and ability to obtain standardized responses from a large number of respondents within a limited time frame. Furthermore, the use of questionnaires enables systematic classification, tabulation, and statistical analysis of data, thereby enhancing the reliability and validity of the findings. Secondary data were also referred to from books, journals, research articles, and relevant online sources to support the theoretical foundation of the study.

Target Population

The target population of the study comprises students enrolled in various colleges within the Tinsukia district. The population includes students from diverse academic disciplines, educational backgrounds, and demographic categories. The inclusion of respondents from different streams and institutions ensures a broader perspective and contributes to a comprehensive understanding of the shopping preferences and purchasing behaviour of college students.

Population Size

The population size for the present study consists of 50 respondents selected from colleges situated within the Tinsukia district. Among the total respondents, 33 are male students, and 17 are female students. These respondents constitute the representative population of the study and provide the necessary information and insights required for the analysis and interpretation of the research objectives.

Choices	No. of respondents	Percentage
Tinsukia College	39	78%
Tinsukia Commerce College	03	6%
Women's College	02	4%
Doomdooma College	02	4%
Margherita College	03	6%
Ledo College	01	2%
Total	50	100%

Table 1: College-wise distributions of the respondents

Sample Size

The sample size of the study comprises 50 respondents. The selected sample is considered adequate for conducting the study and generating meaningful insights regarding the shopping preferences and purchasing decisions of college students. The sample size was determined based on accessibility, availability of respondents, and the scope of the research.

Sampling Technique

The study employs the stratified random sampling technique for the selection of respondents. Under this method, the entire population was divided into different strata on the basis of relevant characteristics such as gender, academic stream, or institution, and respondents were randomly selected from each stratum. The adoption of stratified random sampling ensures proper representation of different categories of respondents and minimizes sampling bias, thereby improving the reliability, accuracy, and representativeness of the findings.

Sources of Data

The study is based on both primary and secondary sources of data.

- **Primary Data:** Primary data were collected directly from respondents through structured questionnaires distributed among college students in the Tinsukia district.

- Secondary Data: Secondary data were obtained from books, academic journals, research papers, websites, articles, and other published sources relevant to consumer behaviour, retail shopping, and e-commerce.

Tools and Techniques of Analysis

The collected data were classified, tabulated, and analyzed using appropriate statistical tools and techniques. Percentage analysis and graphical representations such as tables, charts, and diagrams were used to interpret the responses and present the findings clearly and systematically.

Result

The data indicates that the majority of respondents belong to Tinsukia College, accounting for 39 respondents. In comparison, Tinsukia Commerce College and Margherita College have relatively lower representation, with 3 respondents each. Meanwhile, Women's College, Doomdooma College, and Ledo College contribute a comparatively smaller number of respondents to the study.

Choices	No. of respondents	Percentage
Below 18	02	4%
18-21	26	52%
21-23	21	42%
Above23	01	2%
Total	50	100%

Table 2: Age-wise distribution of the respondents

Majority of respondents belong to the 18–21 age group, comprising 26 respondents, followed by 21 respondents in the 21–23 age group. In contrast, only 2 respondents are below 18 years of age, while the above 23 age group has the lowest representation with just 1 respondent as shown in Table 2. 66% of the participants are female, while 34% are male. No respondents were recorded under the “other” gender category. This indicates that the study sample is predominantly represented by female respondents.

Table 3 indicates that 32 respondents prefer using both online and offline channels for their purchases. In comparison, 15 respondents prefer online shopping over offline shopping, while only 3 respondents prefer offline shopping over online shopping.

Choices	No. of the respondents	Percentage
Online shopping	15	30%
Offline shopping	03	6%
Both	32	64%
Total	50	100%

Table 3: Shopping mode preference of respondents

46% of the respondents agree that they prefer online platforms for making purchases due to convenience, while 10% strongly agree with the statement. In contrast, 4% of the respondents strongly disagree and only 2% disagree. Additionally, 38% of the respondents remain neutral regarding the statement as shown in Table 4.

Choices	No. of the respondents	Percentage
Strongly Disagree	02	4%
Disagree	01	2%
Neutral	19	38%
Agree	23	46%
Strongly Agree	05	10%
Total	50	100%

Table 4: Consumer preference for online shopping based on convenience

analysis of consumer responses regarding pricing and discounts in online shopping reveals that the majority of respondents show a positive perception toward the statement. A total of 28 respondents agree, while 9 respondents strongly agree. Additionally, 9 respondents remain neutral, whereas 4 respondents disagree with the statement. Notably, none of the respondents strongly disagree as shown in Table 5.

Choices	No. of the respondents	Percentage
Strongly Disagree	00	0%
Disagree	04	8%
Neutral	09	18%
Agree	28	56%
Strongly Agree	09	18%
Total	50	100%

Table 5: Consumer response to pricing and discounts in online shopping

38% of the respondents agree that delivery time plays an important role in their online shopping decisions, while 30% strongly agree with the statement. Additionally, 26% of the respondents remain neutral. In contrast, 4% strongly disagree and only 2% disagree with the statement as shown in Table 6.

Choices	No. of the respondents	Percentage
Strongly Disagree	02	4%
Disagree	01	2%
Neutral	13	26%
Agree	19	38%
Strongly Agree	15	30%
Total	50	100%

Table 6: Influence of delivery time consumer buying decisions

20 respondents agree that they usually compare multiple products or options before making an online purchase, while 19 respondents strongly agree with the statement. Additionally, 10 respondents remain neutral, whereas only 1 respondent disagrees with the statement (Table 7).

Choices	No. of the respondents	Percentage
Strongly Disagree	0	0%
Disagree	1	2%
Neutral	10	20%
Agree	20	40%
Strongly Agree	19	38%
Total	50	100%

Table 7: Purchase evaluation on habit

50% of the respondents remain neutral regarding the statement that online shopping fulfills their expectations. Meanwhile, 34% of the respondents agree and 6% strongly agree with the statement. In contrast, 6% strongly disagree, while 4% disagree with the statement (Table 8).

Choices	No. of the respondents	Percentage
Strongly Disagree	3	6%
Disagree	2	4%

Neutral	25	50%
Agree	17	34%
Strongly Agree	3	6%
Total	50	100%

Table 8: Level of expectation fulfillment in online purchases

22 respondents remain neutral regarding their preference for visiting physical stores for a better shopping experience. Meanwhile, 13 respondents agree with the statement, 6 respondents strongly agree, and 9 respondents disagree with it (Table 9).

Choices	No. of the respondents	Percentage
Strongly Disagree	0	0%
Disagree	9	18%
Neutral	22	44%
Agree	13	26%
Strongly Agree	6	12%
Total	50	100%

Table 9: Preference for visiting physical stores for better shopping experience

44% of the respondents agree that store ambiance influences their purchase decisions, while 12% strongly agree with the statement. Additionally, 22% of the respondents remain neutral. In contrast, 12% disagree and 10% strongly disagree with the statement (Table 10).

Choices	No. of the respondents	Percentage
Strongly Disagree	5	10%
Disagree	6	12%
Neutral	11	22%
Agree	22	44%
Strongly Agree	6	12%
Total	50	100%

Table 10: Impact of store ambiance on purchase decisions

22 respondents agree that assistance from salespersons influences their buying decisions. Meanwhile, 13 respondents remain neutral, 9 respondents disagree, and 3 respondents strongly disagree, while another 3 respondents strongly agree with the statement (Table 11).

Choices	No. of the respondents	Percentage
Strongly disagree	3	6%
Disagree	9	18%
Neutral	13	26%
Agree	22	44%
Strongly agree	3	6%
Total	50	100%

Table 11: Impact of sales person assistance on purchase decisions

50% of the respondents agree that they are more likely to make unplanned purchases in physical stores. In addition, 24% remain neutral on this statement. A smaller proportion of respondents disagree (12%) or strongly agree (8%), while only 6% strongly disagree with it (Table 12).

Choices	No. of the respondents	Percentage
Strongly Disagree	3	6%
Disagree	6	12%
Neutral	12	24%
Agree	25	50%
Strongly Agree	4	8%
Total	50	100%

Table 12: Consumer tendency toward impulse purchase in physical retail stores

44% of the respondents are neutral regarding whether their expectations are met while shopping in physical stores. Among the

remaining respondents, 36% agree with the statement and 8% strongly agree. On the other hand, 6% disagree and another 6% strongly disagree with it.

Choices	No. of the respondents	Percentage
Strongly disagree	3	6%
Disagree	3	6%
Neutral	22	44%
Agree	18	36%
Strongly agree	4	8%
Total	50	100%

Table 13: Customer satisfaction with physical store shopping

Discussion

The findings indicate a strong inclination toward online shopping due to convenience, with a clear majority of respondents agreeing. However, a considerable proportion remains neutral suggesting that convenience alone may not be a decisive factor for all consumers. A comparatively online shopping pattern among university students from Turkey and the United States was conducted (Salvendy *et al.*, 2002). It highlights significant cultural differences in website usability preferences, trust perception, payment methods, and decision-making styles. Our analysis also indicated that pricing and discount strategies have a strong positive influence on consumer response in online shopping, with a clear majority agreeing. The absence of strong disagreement further suggests a generally favorable perception of such promotional tactics among respondents. Physical stores encourage impulsive buying through product displays and in-store experiences, while

e-commerce platforms attract buyers through discounts and personalized suggestions. Mobile apps center the highest impulse buying due to instant notifications, easy payment, and quick access (Chandrasekhar *et al.*, 2024). It has been observed that a majority of respondents remain neutral toward preferring physical stores for a better shopping experience, suggesting uncertainty or lack of strong inclination. The findings indicate that a majority of respondents hold a favorable view that store ambiance influences their purchase decisions, with agreement outweighing disagreement. Bhathena (2025) examines the differences in impulse buying behavior between physical retail stores and online shopping platforms. The study explains that impulse buying occurs when consumers make unplanned purchases influenced by factors like promotions, product displays, and convenience. Our study highlighted that retail stores stimulate impulse buying through sensory experiences such as store layout and product placement, while online platforms encourage it through discounts, recommendations, and easy accessibility.

A majority of respondents perceive salesperson assistance as influencing their buying decisions, with a higher proportion agreeing than disagreeing. A substantial proportion of respondents remain neutral regarding whether online shopping fulfills their expectations, suggesting uncertainty or varied experiences. It has been observed that a majority of respondents remain neutral toward preferring physical stores for a better shopping experience,

suggesting uncertainty or lack of strong inclination. Kumar *et al.*, (2026) in their study examine differences in consumer behaviour across digital and physical retail environments. It highlights that online shopping is preferred for its convenience, wider product variety, competitive pricing, and time efficiency, while in-store shopping is valued for physical product inspection, immediate possession, and personalized service.

References

- 1 Bhathena, Z. (2025). A comparative study of impulse buying in retail stores and online platforms. *International Journal of Engineering Development and Research*, 13(3), 883–887.
- 2 Chandrashekhar, K., Das, S., Gupta, N., & Jena, S. (2024). Comparative analysis of impulse buying behaviour across retail channels: A study of physical stores, e-commerce websites and mobile shopping apps. *International Journal of Fermented Foods*, 13(1), 45–59.
- 3 Clarke, G., Thompson, C., & Birkin, M. (2015). The emerging geography of e-commerce in British retailing. *Regional Studies, Regional Science*, 2(1), 371–391.
- 4 Girard, T., Korgaonkar, P., & Silverblatt, R. (2006). Online retailing, product classifications, and consumer preferences. *Internet Research*, 16(3), 267–288.
- 5 Gupta, V., Khanna, V., & Sahoo, B. (2018). Analysis of shopping trends employing e-commerce applications: A comparative case study. *Procedia Computer Science*, 132, 1541–1549.
- 6 Hwang, W., Jung, H., & Salvendy, G. (2006). Internationalization of e-commerce: A comparison of online shopping preferences among Korean, Turkish, and U.S. populations. *Behaviour & Information Technology*, 25(1), 3–18.
- 7 Hwangbo, H., Kim, Y. S., & Cha, K. J. (2018). Recommendation system development for fashion retail e-commerce. *Electronic Commerce Research and Applications*, 28, 94–101.
- 8 Khashbat, A. (2023). E-commerce retail and online shopping: Influence of personality traits and satisfaction on consumer behaviour and preference. *Journal of Faculty of Commerce, Catering and Tourism*, 21(2), 112–126.
- 9 Kumar, V., & N. S., S. (2026). E-commerce and consumer habits: A comparative study of online vs. in-store shopping. *Global Economics, Management and Business Research*, 18(1), 12–25.
- 10 Lu, L., & Reardon, T. (2018). An economic model of evolution of food retail and supply chain from traditional shapes to supermarket to e-commerce. *American Journal of Agricultural Economics*, 100(5), 1311–1334.
- 11 Millar, G., Joy, D., Rabina, T., & Rabano, C. (2023). A comparative study of online and traditional shopping as

- revealed by the satisfaction of the selected consumers. *International Journal of Open-Access*, 4(2), 88–97.
- 12 Nayak, H. (2018). A study on the impact of e-commerce on traditional retail marketing. *Iconic Research and Engineering Journals*, 1(9), 234–241.
 - 13 Prasad, R., & Dubade, A. (2020). An empirical study on online shopping preferences among the Huballi city consumers. *Journal of Adopting to the New Business Normal*, 2(1), 45–56.
 - 14 Rathod, J. (2024). Factors affecting customer choice of shopping: A comparative study of online and offline shopping in the context of India. *Asian Journal of Multidimensional Research*, 13(4), 67–78.
 - 15 Salvendy, G., Lightner, N., Ozok, A., Yenisey, M., & Yenisey, M. M. (2002). Shopping behaviour and preferences in e-commerce of Turkish and American university students: Implications from cross-cultural design. *Behaviour & Information Technology*, 21(6), 373–385.
 - 16 Salvendy, G., Ozok, A., & Oldenburger, K. (2007). Impact of consistency in customer relationship management (CRM) on e-commerce shopper preferences. *Journal of Organizational Computing and Electronic Commerce*, 17(4), 283–309.
 - 17 Shukla, M., & Ojha, A. (2026). A comparative study of customer preferences in e-commerce and retail store formats. *Social Science Research Network (SSRN)*, Article 468912, 1–15.
 - 18 Singla, A., & Meenu, Dr. (2024). The impact of e-commerce on consumer behaviour: A comparative analysis of traditional and online shopping patterns. *Shodhsagar Journal of Commerce and Economics*, 2(1), 104–115.
 - 19 Thakur, P., & P. V., S. (2025). Perception and preferences of consumers for e-commerce platforms. *International Journal of Research Publication and Reviews*, 6(2), 1420–1428.
 - 20 Vilas, B. G., Tedla, B., & Redda, E. (2021). E-commerce companies, online shopping and consumer satisfaction: A comparative study of COVID-19 lockdown in India. *Journal of Management Information and Decision Sciences*, 24(3), 1–14.