

Study on Consumer Buying Behavior and Experience at Reliance Retail Stores in Pune, India

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ABSTRACT

This study explores consumer buying behavior and shopping experiences at Reliance Retail stores in Pune, India. With the rapid expansion of organized retail, Reliance Retail has established itself as a key player, offering diverse formats such as supermarkets, hypermarkets, and convenience stores. By synthesizing insights from existing literature, this research provides a comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing customer satisfaction and loyalty across different retail formats. Key determinants such as product quality, pricing, store ambience, customer service, and promotional offers are examined for their impact on consumer behavior. While prior studies have addressed various aspects of customer interactions, there remains a gap in understanding online shopping behavior and the role of technology in enhancing the retail experience. To bridge this gap, the study proposes future research directions focusing on consumer engagement with digital retail channels and the impact of technology-driven shopping enhancements. Using statistical tools such as regression analysis and correlation matrices, this research uncovers relationships between factors like product variety, pricing strategies, staff assistance, parking facilities, and overall store ambience. Additionally, it introduces a framework of hypotheses related to product quality, customer service, store convenience, and shopping atmosphere to guide further empirical research. The study also outlines key research objectives, including segmenting customer demographics, evaluating the effectiveness of marketing strategies, and identifying areas for improvement in comparison to competitors. These insights aim to help Reliance Retail refine its strategies to enhance customer satisfaction, foster brand loyalty, and strengthen its market position in an increasingly competitive retail landscape.

Keywords: Consumer Behavior, Retail Shopping Experience, Organized Retail, Supermarkets, Hypermarkets, Customer Satisfaction, Loyalty, Store Ambience, Customer Service, Promotional Offers, Online Shopping, Digital Retail Engagement

INTRODUCTION

The Indian retail sector has witnessed a significant transformation with the emergence of organized retail formats, shifting consumer preferences from traditional stores to modern retail environments. Reliance Retail has played a crucial role in this transformation by offering a variety of shopping formats, including supermarkets, hypermarkets, and convenience stores. This study aims to investigate the factors influencing consumer buying behavior and shopping experiences at Reliance Retail stores in Pune, India.

Building upon existing research, this study synthesizes findings from multiple sources to identify common trends and differences in consumer preferences. Key factors such as product quality, competitive pricing, store ambience, customer service, and promotional offers are analyzed to assess their impact on purchasing decisions and overall customer satisfaction. Despite extensive research on consumer interactions within physical retail stores, there remains a limited understanding of online shopping behavior and technology's role in reshaping the retail experience. Given the rapid rise of e-commerce and digital retail solutions, this study emphasizes the importance of examining how consumers engage with online shopping platforms and technological interventions in the retail sector.

To address this gap, the research introduces hypotheses focused on product quality, customer service, store convenience, and shopping atmosphere, laying the foundation for empirical studies. Additionally, the study outlines research objectives aimed at identifying customer segments, assessing the influence of marketing strategies, and comparing consumer experiences at Reliance Retail with those at competing brands. Methodologically, the study employs statistical techniques such as regression analysis and correlation matrices to uncover complex relationships between factors such as product assortment, pricing strategies, staff engagement, parking availability, and store ambience. These insights contribute to a more nuanced understanding of the consumer-retailer dynamic, ultimately

offering actionable recommendations for enhancing customer experience and business performance in the organized retail sector.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Reliance Retail is one of India's leading retail chains, operating across multiple formats, including supermarkets, hypermarkets, and convenience stores. The shift in consumer preferences toward organized retail has positioned Reliance Retail as a key player in the sector. Various studies have explored consumer behavior concerning Reliance Retail stores, highlighting factors that influence shopping decisions, customer satisfaction, and brand loyalty.

Key Studies on Consumer Behavior in Organized Retail

Jain and Kumar (2019) examined consumer behavior at Reliance Fresh and Big Bazaar in India, identifying convenience, product availability, pricing, and promotional offers as primary influences on purchase decisions. Additionally, customer service, store ambience, and brand reputation played crucial roles in enhancing customer satisfaction.

Mohan and Yadav (2018) focused on Reliance Fresh stores in Delhi NCR and found that consumers preferred shopping at these outlets due to fresh and high-quality products, convenience, and competitive pricing. The study further emphasized that store layout and customer service significantly impacted the overall shopping experience.

Srivastava and Trivedi (2018) analysed consumer preferences at Reliance Fresh and More Megastores, revealing that product quality, store ambience, and customer service were pivotal in shaping consumer behavior. They also noted that promotional offers and product availability were influential factors.

Das and Biswas (2017) conducted a comparative study on consumer behavior at Reliance Fresh and Big Bazaar in Kolkata, highlighting that product availability, promotional offers, and store ambience were primary drivers of consumer decisions. Customer service and store layout were also identified as key contributors to consumer satisfaction.

Priyanka and SenthilKumar (2016) explored consumer perceptions of private label brands at Reliance Fresh. The findings indicated that customers valued private label brands for their affordability and quality. Trust in the Reliance brand further influenced consumer preference for private-label products over national brands.

Insights from Regional Studies

Patil et al. (2020) assessed the impact of store atmosphere and shopping experience on consumer behavior at Reliance Fresh stores in Pune. Their study found a strong correlation between store atmosphere, shopping experience, and customer satisfaction, with factors such as product quality, price, and convenience significantly influencing purchase decisions.

Jain and Jain (2019) explored consumer perception and preferences at Reliance Fresh stores in Pune, identifying product quality, store ambience, convenience, and pricing as major determinants of shopping behavior. Customer service, promotional offers, and product availability further enhanced consumer experiences.

Ranade and Pandey (2019) also examined Reliance Fresh stores in Pune, corroborating previous findings that product quality, store ambience, and pricing significantly impact consumer choices. Their study reinforced the importance of promotional offers and customer service in driving customer engagement.

Srivastava et al. (2019) analyzed the role of store attributes in shaping consumer preferences at Reliance Fresh in Pune. They concluded that store ambience, product quality, and convenience were paramount, with promotional offers and customer service enhancing overall satisfaction.

Karthik et al. (2020) assessed the influence of brand image and store layout on consumer loyalty at Reliance Fresh stores in Chennai. Their findings indicated that brand perception and store design were crucial in fostering consumer trust, with price, convenience, and product quality playing supporting roles.

Influence of Store Attributes on Consumer Behavior

Shukla and Kumar (2020) investigated factors affecting consumer behavior at Reliance Digital stores in Pune, identifying store atmosphere, product variety, pricing, and promotional offers as key drivers. Store layout and customer service also played vital roles in shaping customer experiences.

Kaushik and Khandelwal (2019) analyzed consumer preferences at Reliance Trends in Jaipur, highlighting product quality, store ambience, and convenience as major determinants of shopping decisions. Promotional offers and customer service significantly enhanced consumer engagement.

Jadhav et al. (2019) studied Reliance Trends stores in Mumbai, reaffirming the importance of store ambience, product quality, and pricing in influencing customer choices. Promotional offers and customer service also emerged as critical factors for customer retention.

Singh and Singh (2019) focused on the impact of store atmosphere on consumer buying behavior at Reliance Trends in Delhi. Their findings demonstrated that store atmosphere, coupled with product quality, pricing, and convenience, significantly influenced shopping preferences.

Role of Promotional Strategies and Customer Service

Jha et al. (2020) assessed the effect of customer service on consumer loyalty at Reliance Digital stores in Mumbai. The study found that excellent customer service fostered brand loyalty, with pricing, product quality, and convenience reinforcing positive consumer experiences.

Patil et al. (2019) examined the influence of store atmosphere on customer retention at Reliance Fresh stores in Pune. The results indicated that store ambience significantly impacted customer loyalty, with pricing, product quality, and convenience playing essential roles.

Goyal et al. (2019) explored the impact of promotional offers at Reliance Smart stores in Bangalore, finding that discounts and special deals were instrumental in driving consumer purchases. Pricing, product quality, and convenience further strengthened consumer engagement.

Dhamija et al. (2021) studied Reliance Retail stores in Mumbai, revealing that store ambience, convenience, product quality, and customer service were pivotal in shaping consumer loyalty. Promotional offers and product availability also played a significant role in enhancing customer satisfaction.

Roy et al. (2021) assessed the influence of store layout on consumer behavior at Reliance Trends in Kolkata. Their findings highlighted the importance of visual merchandising and store design, with product quality, pricing, and promotional offers further driving purchase decisions.

Sharma and Kumar (2019) investigated the impact of brand image and store atmosphere on consumer loyalty at Reliance Trends in Chandigarh. They found that a strong brand image and a well-maintained store atmosphere significantly enhanced customer retention. Product quality, price, and convenience also contributed to consumer loyalty.

Patel et al. (2019) analyzed the role of promotional offers at Reliance Fresh in Ahmedabad, concluding that attractive discounts and promotional schemes positively influenced consumer purchases. Product quality, pricing, and convenience were additional factors impacting buying decisions.

RESEARCH GAP

1) Inadequate Exploration of Online Shopping Behavior

Existing research primarily focuses on consumer behavior in physical Reliance Retail stores, with limited attention given to online shopping experiences. As e-commerce platforms continue to expand, it is crucial to understand how consumer preferences and decision-making differ between brick-and-mortar stores and online channels. Future studies should examine how customers perceive online retail platforms, the key factors influencing their purchasing decisions, and the differences in expectations between digital and in-store experiences. Additionally, there is a need to investigate the challenges Reliance Retail faces in developing a seamless and engaging online shopping experience that fosters customer satisfaction and loyalty.

2) Insufficient Research on the Role of Technology in Retail Experiences

With rapid technological advancements transforming the retail landscape, the impact of digital innovations on consumer behavior at Reliance Retail remains an underexplored area. There is limited research on how emerging technologies—such as digital signage, virtual reality, mobile applications, and AI-driven customer support—shape consumer perceptions and influence shopping decisions. For example, virtual reality could create immersive product experiences, digital signage might enhance product discovery, and AI-powered chatbots could streamline customer interactions. Future research should examine how consumers respond to such technological interventions and their impact on overall shopping satisfaction and brand loyalty. Understanding these dynamics can help retailers strategically integrate technology to improve customer engagement while optimizing operational efficiency.

Hypothesis

H1:

The diversity and quality of products available at Reliance Retail stores in Pune positively impact customers' purchasing decisions and their willingness to pay a premium.

H2:

The quality of customer service and assistance provided by sales staff at Reliance Retail stores in Pune influences customers' overall shopping experience and their likelihood of making repeat purchases.

H3:

The convenience of location and ease of access to Reliance Retail stores in Pune affect customers' store preferences and frequency of visits.

H4:

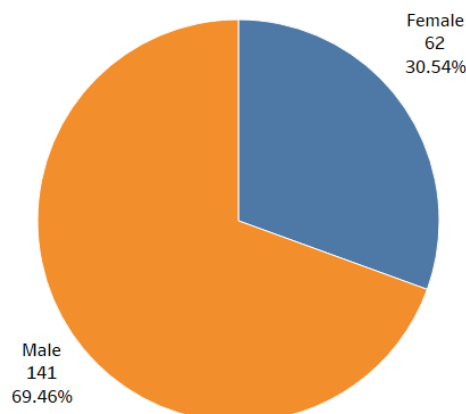
The overall store ambiance at Reliance Retail stores in Pune—including lighting, music, and cleanliness—significantly influences customers' emotional responses to the shopping experience and their likelihood of returning.

Objectives

1. To examine the primary factors influencing customer satisfaction and loyalty at Reliance Retail stores in Pune and analyse how these factors differ among various customer demographics, such as age, gender, and income level.
2. To evaluate the effectiveness of marketing and promotional strategies in shaping consumer purchasing behavior and shopping experiences at Reliance Retail stores in Pune, identifying the most impactful promotions for boosting sales and fostering customer loyalty.
3. To assess Reliance Retail’s competitive standing in the market and identify key areas for improvement in comparison to its competitors.

Data Analysis:

Gender	Is today's visit is your first visit to ..	Age	Number of Records	Percentage (%)
Female	First Visit	16-25 yrs	9.0	4.43%
		26-35 yrs	18.0	8.87%
		36-45 yrs	4.0	1.97%
	I have shopped before at this store	16-25 yrs	4.0	1.97%
		26-35 yrs	16.0	7.88%
		36-45 yrs	6.0	2.96%
46-60 yrs		5.0	2.46%	
Male	First visit	16-25 yrs	15.0	7.39%
		26-35 yrs	30.0	14.78%
		36-45 yrs	26.0	12.81%
		46-60 yrs	5.0	2.46%
	I have shopped before at this store	16-25 yrs	11.0	5.42%
		26-35 yrs	34.0	16.75%
		36-45 yrs	12.0	5.91%
		46-60 yrs	6.0	2.96%
	more than 60	2.0	0.99%	
Grand Total			203.0	100.00%



Correlation Matrix:

variety and range of products	0.387	Availability of products	0.348
Prices of products in the store	0.376	variety and range of products	0.312
store staff helpfulness	0.383	Prices of products in the store	0.336
time taken for billing	0.104	store staff helpfulness	0.313
Cleanliness inside the store	0.396	time taken for billing	0.439
Space for movement inside the store	0.276	Cleanliness inside the store	0.28
Lighting/Illumination inside the store	0.399	Space for movement inside the store	0.421
Promotions, Offers and Discount	0.404	Lighting/illumination inside the store	0.414
Overall Checkout Experience	0.344	Promotions, Offers and Discount	0.321
Reliance One loyalty programme	0.25	Overall Checkout Experience	0.401
Parking facility for the store	0.385	Reliance One loyalty programme	0.42
Signboards and directions to easily locate sections and products	0.313	Parking facility for the store	0.275
Air Conditioning inside the store	0.398	Signboards and directions to easily locate sections and products	0.497
Product quality	0.332	Air Conditioning inside the store	0.324
Toilet/Washroom facilities	0.23	Product quality	0.462
Visible and easy to understand	0.364	Toilet/Washroom facilities	0.415
Variety of payment options available	0.178	Visible and easy to understand	0.418
Availability of latest products	0.349	Variety of payment options available	0.411
Assistance, Information to avail finance / EMI facilities	0.406	Availability of latest products	0.471
Store staff's knowledge about product	0.387	Assistance, Information to avail finance / EMI facilities	0.334
Product demonstration provided by store staff	0.3	Store staff's knowledge about product	0.323
Assistance/ Information on quick home delivery/ Installation	0.33	Product demonstration provided by store staff	0.348
Assistance/ Information on extended warranty through ResQ	0.348	Assistance/ Information on quick home delivery/ Installation	0.397

Variety and Range of Products:

- **Correlation with Cleanliness Inside the Store (0.48):** A positive correlation of 0.48 suggests that there is a moderately strong relationship between the variety and range of products available in the store and the cleanliness inside the store. In practical terms, this means that stores offering a broader selection of products tend to maintain a cleaner shopping environment. Customers may perceive such stores as well-organized and appealing.
- **Correlation with Signboards and Directions (0.453):** This strong positive correlation indicates that stores with a greater variety of products are more likely to have effective signboards and directions. It's possible that larger stores with a wide range of offerings recognize the importance of clear signage to help customers navigate through the different product categories.

Prices of Products in the Store:

- **Correlation with Cleanliness Inside the Store (0.376):** The moderate positive correlation of 0.376 suggests that there is a relationship between product prices and store cleanliness. Stores with higher product prices tend to maintain a cleaner shopping environment. This correlation might be attributed to the expectation of higher standards in more upscale stores.

Store Staff Helpfulness:

- **Correlation with Reliance One Loyalty Programme (0.485):** A strong positive correlation of 0.485 indicates that stores with helpful staff are often associated with the presence of a loyalty program. This could imply that stores with attentive and supportive staff also invest in loyalty programs to reward and retain customers. Helpful staff may play a role in promoting such programs.

Parking Facility for the Store:

- **Correlation with Signboards and Directions (0.512):** This strong positive correlation suggests that stores with adequate parking facilities also tend to have clear signboards and directions. This relationship highlights the importance of providing convenience not only in parking but also in helping customers find their way around the store.

Visible and Easy to Understand:

- **Correlation with Assistance, Information on Quick (0.495):** A strong positive correlation of 0.495 indicates that attributes related to visibility and ease of understanding are closely associated with the availability of quick assistance and information. This suggests that stores that prioritize clear displays and easy-to-understand layouts often complement these features with efficient assistance for customers.

SUMMARY OUTPUT

Regression Statistics	
Multiple R	0.673443761
R Square	0.453526499
Adjusted R Square	0.450807725
Standard Error	0.370148781
Observations	203

ANOVA					
	df	SS	MS	F	Significance F
Regression	1	22.8550546	22.8550546	166.8128941	3.50473E-28
Residual	201	27.53903407	0.13701012		
Total	202	50.39408867			

	Coefficients	Standard Error	t Stat	P-value	Lower 95%	Upper 95%	Lower 95.0%	Upper 95.0%
Intercept	-1.802056848	0.18333042	-9.829557168	7.20923E-19	-2.163554464	-1.440559232	-2.163554464	-1.440559232
Average	0.593515433	0.045953353	12.91560661	3.50473E-28	0.502902933	0.684127932	0.502902933	0.684127932

Regression Statistics:

- The multiple R indicates a moderate positive linear relationship between the predictor variable (independent variable) and the response variable (dependent variable). In this analysis, the multiple R is approximately 0.6734.

- The R Square represents the proportion of the variance in the response variable that can be explained by the predictor variable. It sits at approximately 0.4535, indicating that about 45.35% of the variance in the response variable is explained by the predictor variable.
- The Adjusted R Square, which is similar to R Square but adjusts for the number of predictor variables in the model, stands at approximately 0.4508.
- The standard error, indicating the average error or deviation of the actual response values from the predicted values in the regression model, is approximately 0.3701.
- There are 203 observations used in the regression analysis.

ANOVA (Analysis of Variance):

- In the regression model, there is 1 degree of freedom for the predictor variable.
- The sum of squares (SS) associated with the regression model amounts to approximately 22.8551.
- The mean sum of squares (MS), obtained by dividing SS by its degrees of freedom, is approximately 22.8551.
- The F-statistic, measuring the overall significance of the regression model, is 166.8129.
- The significance F-value, the p-value associated with the F-statistic, is very close to zero (3.50473E-28), indicating strong evidence against the null hypothesis that the predictor has no effect.
- In the residuals, there are 201 degrees of freedom.
- The sum of squares (SS) of the residuals amounts to approximately 27.5390.
- The mean sum of squares (MS) for the residuals, obtained by dividing SS by its degrees of freedom, is approximately 0.1370.

Coefficients:

- The intercept, representing the estimated value of the response variable when the predictor variable is zero, is approximately -1.8021.
- The coefficient for the predictor variable "Average" is approximately 0.5935. This represents the estimated change in the response variable for a one-unit change in the predictor variable, assuming all other factors are held constant.

Null Hypothesis and Conclusion:

- The null hypothesis (H0) in a regression analysis typically states that the predictor variable(s) have no significant effect on the response variable. In this case, the p-value associated with the F-statistic is very close to zero (3.50473E-28), which is much smaller than the typical significance level of 0.05 (5%). Therefore, null hypothesis would be rejected.
- In practical terms, this means that there is strong statistical evidence to suggest that the predictor variable "Average" has a significant effect on the response variable. The positive coefficient (0.5935) indicates that as the "Average" variable increases, the response variable also tends to increase.
- Overall, the regression model appears to be a good fit for explaining the variability in the response variable, and the predictor variable "Average" is a statistically significant factor in this model.

Regression Analysis: Product Quality versus Overall shopping experience today

Regression Equation

Gender

Female Product quality = 3.357 + 0.1626 overall shopping experience tod

Male Product quality = 3.304 + 0.1626 overall shopping experience tod

Coefficients

Term	Coef	SE Coef	T-Value	P-Value	VIF
Constant	3.357	0.356	9.43	0.000	
overall shopping experience tod	0.1626	0.0770	2.11	0.036	1.00
Gender					
Male	-0.053	0.143	-0.37	0.713	1.00

Model Summary

S	R-sq	R-sq(adj)	R-sq(pred)
0.940190	2.26%	1.28%	0.00%

Regression Equation:

The regression equation expresses the relationship between the predictor variables and the response variable for different genders:

- For Females:
 - Product quality = $3.357 + 0.1626 * \text{overall shopping experience today}$
- For Males:
 - Product quality = $3.304 + 0.1626 * \text{overall shopping experience today}$

Coefficients:

- Constant (Intercept): For Females, the intercept is 3.357, and for Males, it is 3.304. These values represent the estimated product quality when the overall shopping experience today is zero (the intercept).
- Overall Shopping Experience Today: The coefficient for "overall shopping experience today" is the same for both genders at 0.1626. It indicates that for each unit increase in overall shopping experience today, product quality is expected to increase by 0.1626 units, assuming gender remains constant.
- Gender: The coefficient for "Gender - Male" is -0.053. However, its p-value is high (0.713), indicating that it is not statistically significant. This suggests that gender does not have a significant effect on product quality in this model.

Model Summary:

- Multiple R-squared (R-sq): R-squared measures the proportion of the variance in the response variable explained by the predictors. In this model, it is approximately 2.26%, indicating that the predictors explain only a small portion of the variance in product quality.
- Adjusted R-squared (R-sq(adj)): Adjusted R-squared adjusts for the number of predictors in the model. It is approximately 1.28% in this case.
- R-squared Predicted (R-sq(pred)): This value is 0.00%, indicating that the predictors do not effectively predict product quality in this model.

Analysis of Variance (ANOVA):

- The ANOVA table assesses the overall significance of the regression model and the individual predictors.
- Regression: The F-statistic tests the overall significance of the model. In this case, the F-value is 2.31, with a p-value of 0.102. Since the p-value is greater than 0.05 (the typical significance level), the overall model is not statistically significant.
- Overall Shopping Experience Today: This individual predictor has an F-value of 4.46, with a p-value of 0.036. This indicates that "overall shopping experience today" has a statistically significant effect on product quality.
- Gender: The predictor "Gender" has a p-value of 0.713, indicating that it is not statistically significant in explaining product quality.

Fits and Diagnostics for Unusual Observations:

- This section presents observations (data points) that may be unusual or have large residuals (differences between actual and predicted values). Observations 11, 14, 41, 43, 48, 74, 83, 88, 90, 100, 113, 123, and 158 are flagged for further investigation.
- "R" indicates a large residual, and "X" indicates unusual X values.

CONCLUSION

Based on the regression analysis, the overall shopping experience today appears to have a statistically significant effect on product quality, as indicated by the low p-value (0.036). However, gender does not have a significant effect on product quality in this model. It's important to note that the model's R-squared values are relatively low, suggesting that the predictors explain only a small portion of the variance in product quality. The overall model is also not statistically significant at the typical significance level of 0.05.