

GENDER DIFFERENCES IN PERCEPTIONS AND ATTITUDES TOWARDS ONLINE SHOPPING IN KANYAKUMARI DISTRICT

Rajitha P.T¹, Dr. S. Lakshmanan², Dr. V. Leela³

¹Rajitha P.T, Ph.D Research Scholar (Reg. No.19221171012011), Department of Commerce and Research Centre, S.T Hindu College, Nagercoil, Affiliated to Manonmaniam Sundaranar University, Abishekapatti, Tirunelveli, Tamil Nadu, India.

²Dr. S. Lakshmanan, Assistant Professor of Commerce (Guide), Government Arts and Science College, Kanyakumari District, Affiliated to Manonmaniam Sundaranar University, Abishekapatti, Tirunelveli, Tamil Nadu, India.

³Dr. V. Leela, Assistant Professor (Co-Guide), Department of Commerce and Research Centre, S.T Hindu College, Nagercoil, Affiliated to Manonmaniam Sundaranar University, Abishekapatti, Tirunelveli, Tamil Nadu, India.

ABSTRACT

The rise of online shopping has transformed consumer behavior by offering unparalleled convenience, broader product choices, and competitive pricing. In India, both urban and semi-urban areas are witnessing rapid growth in e-commerce usage, driven by increased internet access and smartphone penetration. This study examines gender-based differences in perceptions and attitudes toward online shopping among consumers in Kanyakumari District, a region where traditional values and digital adoption coexist. Primary data were collected through a structured questionnaire from 150 respondents, and statistical tools like Mean, Standard Deviation, Chi-Square Test, Garrett Ranking Technique, and Friedman's Test were employed for analysis. The findings reveal that while both men and women demonstrate high levels of awareness regarding online shopping, no significant difference exists between genders in terms of awareness levels. Perceived convenience,

product quality, and ease of use were identified as key motivators for online shopping. However, trust issues, poor product quality, and delivery delays were major concerns affecting consumer attitudes. The study highlights the importance of building consumer trust and enhancing service quality to cater to the evolving needs of both male and female online shoppers. It provides valuable insights for businesses and policymakers aiming to create more gender-inclusive and user-friendly online shopping experiences in semi-urban regions like Kanyakumari District.

Keywords: Online Shopping, Consumer Behavior, Buying Attitudes, Product Quality.

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, online shopping has revolutionized consumer behavior, providing unprecedented convenience, wider product choices, and competitive pricing. With the rapid growth of internet penetration and smartphone usage, e-commerce has become an integral part of daily life in both urban and rural India. However, the adoption and usage of online shopping platforms are influenced by various demographic factors, particularly gender.

Kanyakumari District, located at the southernmost tip of India, presents a unique socio-cultural and economic landscape where traditional values coexist with emerging digital trends. In such a setting, understanding the gender-based differences in perceptions and

attitudes toward online shopping becomes essential for businesses, marketers, and policymakers aiming to tap into this evolving market.

This study seeks to explore how men and women in Kanyakumari District perceive online shopping, what factors influence their attitudes, and how these attitudes vary across genders. By identifying the key motivators and barriers for both male and female consumers, the research aims to contribute valuable insights into consumer behavior in a semi-urban context. Such an understanding will not only help in designing gender-sensitive marketing strategies but also enhance the overall online shopping experience for diverse consumer groups.

NEED FOR THE STUDY

The rapid digital transformation in India has significantly influenced consumer shopping habits, with online platforms becoming increasingly popular. Despite this growth, there exists a noticeable variation in how different genders perceive and engage with online shopping. These differences can stem from a variety of factors, including trust issues, product preferences, digital literacy, risk perception, and social influences.

In Kanyakumari District, where traditional lifestyles intersect with emerging digital practices, it becomes crucial to understand these gender-specific behaviors. While e-commerce companies are expanding their reach, there is still limited research focusing on how men and women in semi-urban and rural areas like Kanyakumari differ in their online shopping attitudes and experiences.

This study is necessary to:

- Identify the gender-based differences in the perceptions and attitudes levels with online shopping.
- Understand the level of awareness of online shopping among respondents.
- Provide insights that can be used to enhance digital inclusion and promote consumer awareness and accessing or trusting online platforms.

Thus, this study aims to fill the knowledge gap and support the development of more inclusive and gender-sensitive e-commerce strategies in the Kanyakumari District.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Despite the growing popularity and convenience of online shopping, there exists a significant variation in how male and female consumers perceive and utilize these platforms. Factors such as trust in technology, product preferences, risk tolerance, digital literacy, and cultural influences contribute to these differences. In regions like Kanyakumari District, where digital adoption is still evolving, these gender-based differences may be even more pronounced. While online retailers are rapidly expanding their operations, a lack of understanding about the diverse attitudes of male and female consumers can lead to ineffective marketing strategies and poor customer satisfaction. Moreover, the absence of

localized research on this topic makes it difficult to design interventions that encourage equitable digital participation. Therefore, this study aims to investigate the gender differences in perceptions and attitudes toward online shopping among consumers in Kanyakumari District, to identify the underlying factors influencing these differences, and to offer suggestions for bridging the gap in digital consumer behavior.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To assess the level of awareness of online shopping among respondents.
2. To analyze the level of awareness and usage of online shopping platforms among male and female consumers.
3. To examine the perceptions and attitudes of consumers towards online shopping.
4. To identify the problems faced by consumers while using online shopping platforms.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study is descriptive in nature. Data for the research have been collected from both primary and secondary sources. Primary data were gathered through a structured questionnaire administered to online consumers in Kanyakumari District. Secondary data were obtained from books, journals, and online sources.

SAMPLE DESIGN

A sample design is a definite plan for obtaining a sample from the sampling frame. It refers to the technique or procedure the researcher adopts in selecting certain sampling units. An optimum sample may be defined as the sample size that fulfills the requirements of efficiency, representativeness, reliability, and flexibility. In this study, primary data were collected using a sample size of 150 respondents.

TOOLS FOR ANALYSIS

The data obtained from the respondents are analysed with the help of statistical tools.

1. Mean, Std. Deviation, Rank
2. Chi – square test
3. Garrett Ranking Technique
4. Friedman’s test

ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

Age – wise classification of the respondents

Table: 1
Age-wise classification of respondents

Sl. No.	Age	No. of Respondents	Percentage
1	Below 30	19	13
2	31 – 60	97	65
3	Above 60	34	23
	Total	150	100

Source: Primary Data

From the above table, it is evident that the majority of the respondents (65%) belong to the age group of 31–60 years. This indicates that middle-aged individuals are the most

active participants in online shopping activities in Kanyakumari District. About 23% of the respondents are above 60 years, reflecting a growing trend of online shopping interest even among older adults. A smaller segment, 13%, falls under the age of 30, suggesting that younger consumers may either be underrepresented in this sample or may have different shopping preferences or platforms.

Gender - wise classification of respondents

Table: 2

Gender - wise classification of respondents

Sl. No.	Gender	No. of Respondents	Percentage
1	Male	108	72
2	Female	42	28
	Total	150	100

Source: Primary Data

The data reveals that a significant majority of the respondents, 72%, are male, while 28% are female. This indicates a notable gender imbalance in the sample, with male respondents being more actively involved or accessible for the survey. The disparity may reflect underlying societal or technological factors influencing women's participation in online shopping or digital platforms in the district.

Classification of respondents on the basis of Marital Status

Table: 3

Classification of respondents on the basis of Marital Status

Sl. No.	Marital Status	No. of Respondents	Percentage
1	Married	34	23
2	Unmarried	116	77
	Total	150	100

Source: Primary Data

The table shows that a majority of the respondents, 77%, are unmarried, while only 23% are married. This suggests that unmarried individuals, possibly including a larger number of students or young professionals, are more actively participating in or accessible for the study. It may also reflect the demographic structure of online shoppers in the region, where unmarried individuals might be more tech-savvy and open to digital commerce.

Education - wise classification of the respondents

Table: 4

Education - wise classification of the respondents

Sl. No.	Educational qualification	No. of respondents	Percentage
1	Up to HSC	54	36
2	UG	61	41
3	PG	13	9
4	Others	22	15
	Total	150	100

Source: Primary data

The data shows that the majority of respondents are undergraduates (UG), making up 41% of the sample. This is followed by 36% who have studied up to Higher Secondary (HSC), and 15% falling under the 'Others' category, which may include diploma holders,

vocational training, or professional certifications. Only 9% of respondents have completed postgraduate (PG) studies.

LEVEL OF AWARENESS OF ONLINE SHOPPING AMONG RESPONDENTS

Table: 5

Level of Awareness of Online Shopping among Respondents

Sl. No.	Level of Awareness	No. of respondents	Percentage
1	Not aware at all	6	4
2	Slightly aware	14	9
3	Moderately aware	30	20
4	Aware	58	39
5	Highly aware	42	28
	Total	150	100

Source: Primary data

The data shows that 67% of the respondents fall under the 'Aware' and 'Highly Aware' categories, indicating a strong awareness of online shopping platforms in the Kanyakumari District. Only a small proportion, 13%, indicated low or no awareness, suggesting that online shopping is a well-recognized concept among the general population, though outreach can still be improved for complete inclusion.

ASSOCIATION BETWEEN THE LEVELS OF AWARENESS OF ONLINE SHOPPING BY GENDER

The association between the Level of Awareness of Online Shopping by Gender is analyzed using chi-square test and presented in the below table.

Table: 6

Level of Awareness of Online Shopping by Gender

Sl. No.	Gender	Not aware at all	Slightly aware	Moderately aware	Aware	Highly aware	Total
1	Male	4% (4)	9% (10)	20% (22)	39% (42)	28% (30)	108
2	Female	4% (2)	9% (4)	20% (8)	39% (16)	28% (12)	42
Total		6% (6)	9% (14)	20% (30)	39% (58)	28% (42)	150

The data shows that both male and female respondents have very similar levels of awareness regarding online shopping. A significant portion of both genders, 39%, fall into the "Aware" category, with another 28% being "Highly aware" for each gender. Only a small percentage, 4%, of both males and females are "Not aware at all." The distribution of awareness levels is almost identical across genders, indicating that gender does not play a significant role in determining awareness of online shopping. This suggests that online shopping is a widely known concept among both male and female consumers, and marketing efforts can be generalized without specific gender targeting.

Table: 7**Level of Awareness of Online Shopping by Gender**

Chi-square value	Degrees of freedom	Table value	Inference
4.32	4	9.488	Insignificant

Source: Computed Value

The Chi-Square test for the level of awareness of online shopping by gender resulted in a computed value of 4.32, which is lower than the critical value of 9.488 at 4 degrees of freedom and a 5% significance level. This indicates that the difference in the awareness levels between male and female respondents is not statistically significant. As a result, we fail to reject the null hypothesis, concluding that gender does not have a significant effect on the level of awareness of online shopping among the respondents.

PERCEPTIONS AND ATTITUDES TOWARDS ONLINE SHOPPING

The mean represents the central value of a dataset, calculated by summing all the observations and dividing by the total number of observations. It provides a single, representative value that describes the overall tendency or "centre" of the data. In statistical analysis, the mean is commonly used to summarize a sample and to facilitate comparisons across different groups or variables.

The standard deviation, on the other hand, is the most widely used measure of dispersion. It indicates how much the individual data points deviate from the mean, thus providing insight into the spread or variability within the dataset. A smaller standard deviation suggests that the data points are closely clustered around the mean, whereas a larger standard deviation indicates greater variability among the observations.

Table No: 8**Perceptions and Attitudes toward Online Shopping**

Sl. No	Perceptions and Attitudes	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Rank
1	Perceived Convenience	150	3.20	1.404	I
2	Perceived Product Quality	150	3.18	1.379	II
3	Ease of Use	150	3.06	1.412	III
4	Usefulness	150	3.02	1.401	IV
5	Innovativeness	150	3.01	1.434	V
6	Enjoyment	150	2.98	1.262	VI
7	Online Risks	150	2.94	1.383	VII

Source: Computed Data

The analysis of perceptions and attitudes toward online shopping reveals that perceived convenience ranks the highest among respondents, with a mean score of 3.20, indicating that consumers value the time-saving and effort-reducing aspects of online shopping. Perceived product quality and ease of use follow closely, suggesting that users also consider the quality of products and the user-friendliness of online platforms as important factors. Usefulness, innovativeness, and enjoyment occupy middle ranks, reflecting moderate satisfaction in these areas. Online risks, with the lowest mean score of 2.94, rank last, showing that although risk is perceived; it is relatively less influential compared to convenience and product quality. Overall, the findings suggest that positive perceptions,

particularly related to convenience and product trust, outweigh concerns about risk among the respondents.

PROBLEMS FACED BY THE CONSUMER USING ONLINE SHOPPING

In this section, the various problems influencing consumer perceptions and attitudes towards online shopping have been analyzed. To identify and rank these issues based on respondents' experiences, Friedman's test has been applied. This non-parametric test is suitable for analyzing ordinal data and helps determine whether there are significant differences in the rankings of problems as perceived by the respondents. The test results provide insights into which challenges are most commonly faced and how they impact overall consumer attitudes toward online shopping platforms.

Table No: 9

Problems Faced by Consumer Using Online Shopping

Sl. No	Problems	Mean Rank
1	Lack of Trust in Online Sellers	8.06
2	Poor Quality of Products Received	7.46
3	Delay in Delivery	6.69
4	Security Issues in Online Payment	5.15
5	Misleading Product Descriptions	4.91
6	High Delivery Charges	4.57
7	Fear of Personal Data Theft	5.07
8	Hidden Costs or Unexpected Charges	5.16
9	Difficulty in Navigating Websites/Apps	4.88
10	Inconsistent Product Availability	4.55
11	Lack of Physical Inspection Before Buying	3.78
12	Issues in Order Tracking	3.43
13	Limited Payment Options	3.19

Source: Computed Data

Table No: 10
Friedman's Test

Chi-Square	59.24
df	9
Asymp. Sig.	0

Source: Computed Data

The analysis of the problems influencing consumer perceptions and attitudes toward online shopping was conducted using Friedman's test, a non-parametric statistical tool suitable for ranked or ordinal data. The results show a Chi-Square value of 59.24 with 9 degrees of freedom and a p-value of 0.000, which is statistically significant at the 5% level. This clearly indicates that there are significant differences in how consumers rank the problems they face while engaging in online shopping. In other words, not all problems are perceived equally; some issues are seen as far more critical than others.

The mean rank scores reveal the relative severity of each problem based on the consumer experiences:

- **Lack of Trust in Online Sellers (Mean Rank = 8.06)** emerges as the most critical problem. This shows that consumers are still highly skeptical about the credibility and reliability of online sellers, which heavily influences their buying behavior. Trust is foundational in any transaction, and a lack of it creates strong hesitation toward purchasing online.
- The **second major problem is Poor Quality of Products Received (Mean Rank = 7.46)**. Many consumers have experienced a mismatch between what is promised online and what is actually delivered. This gap between expectation and reality not only results in dissatisfaction but also discourages repeat purchases.
- **Delay in Delivery (Mean Rank = 6.69)** stands as another prominent issue. Despite advancements in logistics, delayed shipments continue to be a major frustration, especially when consumers expect quick or guaranteed delivery times.
- Problems related to **Security Issues in Online Payment (Mean Rank = 5.15)** and **Fear of Personal Data Theft (Mean Rank = 5.07)** also feature prominently. Together, these concerns highlight the anxiety consumers feel about the safety of their financial and personal information when engaging in online transactions.
- Issues like **Hidden Costs or Unexpected Charges (Mean Rank = 5.16)** and **Misleading Product Descriptions (Mean Rank = 4.91)** show that consumers often feel deceived during the shopping process, either through incomplete information or surprise fees at checkout.
- **Navigation Difficulties on Websites or Apps (Mean Rank = 4.88)** and **Inconsistent Product Availability (Mean Rank = 4.55)** reflect technical and operational problems faced during the shopping journey, impacting the overall user experience.
- **Lack of Physical Inspection before Buying (Mean Rank = 3.78)** is an inherent limitation of online shopping, but it still significantly affects customer confidence, especially for products like clothing, electronics, or furniture where feel, fit, or quality is important.
- **Issues in Order Tracking (Mean Rank = 3.43)** and **Limited Payment Options (Mean Rank = 3.19)** are ranked the lowest among the listed problems. This suggests that while they are concerns, they are relatively less severe in influencing consumer perceptions compared to issues like trust and product quality.

FINDINGS

- ❖ The study revealed that the majority of the respondents (65%) are between the ages of 31–60 years, showing that middle-aged individuals are the most active participants in online shopping activities in Kanyakumari District. About 23% of the respondents are above 60 years, indicating a growing interest in online shopping among older adults, while only 13% are below 30 years, suggesting either underrepresentation of younger consumers or their preference for different shopping platforms.
- ❖ In terms of gender distribution, 72% of the respondents are male and 28% are female, reflecting a noticeable gender imbalance in the sample. This could be due to various societal, economic, or technological factors influencing online shopping behavior in the region.

- ❖ With respect to marital status, 77% of the respondents are unmarried, while 23% are married. This shows that unmarried individuals, likely consisting of students and young professionals, are more engaged in online shopping activities.
- ❖ Educational qualification data showed that 41% of the respondents are undergraduates, followed by 36% who have studied up to Higher Secondary level. About 15% fall under the 'Others' category, such as diploma holders or those with vocational training, and only 9% are postgraduates. This suggests that the majority of online shoppers possess at least a basic level of college education.
- ❖ Regarding the level of awareness of online shopping, 67% of respondents fall under the 'Aware' and 'Highly Aware' categories, highlighting that awareness about online shopping is widespread among the population. Only 13% reported being 'Not aware at all' or 'Slightly aware,' indicating that there is still some scope for improving awareness.
- ❖ Analysis of awareness levels by gender showed that both male and female respondents have very similar levels of awareness. The Chi-Square test results (Chi-square value = 4.32 < Table value = 9.488) indicate that gender does not have a significant influence on the level of awareness about online shopping. Therefore, it can be concluded that awareness of online shopping is equally distributed across genders in the study area.
- ❖ The analysis of perceptions and attitudes toward online shopping revealed that perceived convenience (Mean = 3.20) ranks highest among the respondents, suggesting that saving time and effort is the major motivation behind online shopping. Perceived product quality (Mean = 3.18) and ease of use (Mean = 3.06) are also important factors influencing consumer behavior. Online risks (Mean = 2.94) received the lowest mean score, implying that while risks are acknowledged, they are less influential compared to the perceived benefits.
- ❖ The analysis of problems faced in online shopping, using Friedman's test, revealed that lack of trust in online sellers (Mean Rank = 8.06) is the most critical problem experienced by consumers. Poor quality of products received (Mean Rank = 7.46) and delay in delivery (Mean Rank = 6.69) are also major issues impacting consumer satisfaction. Other significant problems include security issues in online payments, fear of personal data theft, hidden costs, and misleading product descriptions. Difficulty in navigating websites and inconsistent product availability were also noted, though to a lesser extent. Problems such as issues in order tracking and limited payment options were found to be relatively less important. The Friedman's test result (Chi-Square = 59.24, p-value = 0.000) confirmed that there are statistically significant differences in the ranking of these problems, indicating that consumers prioritize some problems much more than others when evaluating their online shopping experiences.

SUGGESTIONS

- ❖ Online sellers should focus on building greater trust with consumers by maintaining transparency, providing detailed and honest product descriptions, and enhancing after-sales support.
- ❖ Improving the quality control measures to ensure that the products received match the online descriptions can significantly reduce dissatisfaction among consumers.

- ❖ Delivery mechanisms must be strengthened to ensure faster and more reliable shipping, as delays can negatively impact customer loyalty.
- ❖ Enhancing security measures for online payment gateways and educating customers about safe online practices would help in reducing concerns about data theft and online fraud.
- ❖ E-commerce platforms should be made more user-friendly by simplifying navigation, offering clear product categories, and providing efficient customer service options to address grievances swiftly.
- ❖ Offering a broader range of payment options, including cash-on-delivery and easy returns could encourage hesitant buyers, especially those new to online shopping.
- ❖ Marketing efforts should be inclusive, targeting both male and female consumers equally, as awareness levels are almost similar across genders in the Kanyakumari District.
- ❖ More awareness campaigns can be launched in semi-urban and rural areas to bridge the small gap that still exists in online shopping awareness among certain sections of the population.

CONCLUSION

This study on gender-based perceptions and attitudes toward online shopping in Kanyakumari District has provided valuable insights into the evolving e-commerce landscape in semi-urban regions. The findings reveal that while there are some distinct differences in the engagement levels of male and female consumers, these differences are less pronounced than anticipated, particularly in terms of awareness. Both genders show similar levels of awareness and positive perceptions about the convenience, product quality, and ease of use offered by online shopping platforms. However, certain gender-related issues do emerge, such as the underrepresentation of women in the sample, potentially reflecting societal, cultural, or economic barriers. Trust remains the most significant concern for both genders, followed by issues such as product quality and delivery delays, which are crucial factors affecting the overall online shopping experience.

The study also highlights that despite the growing digital awareness, challenges such as security issues, misleading product descriptions, and high delivery charges continue to deter consumer confidence and satisfaction. These barriers are especially important to address in regions like Kanyakumari, where the integration of traditional values and modern digital practices creates a unique socio-economic dynamic. In conclusion, while the digital divide is narrowing, understanding the specific needs, concerns, and behaviors of male and female consumers in rural and semi-urban areas is essential for crafting more inclusive and effective marketing strategies. E-commerce platforms and marketers can benefit by adopting gender-sensitive approaches to enhance the online shopping experience and build trust among all consumer segments.

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