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Rupa P
Assistant Professor at
The Oxford College of Arts,
Bangalore.

Dr. K Karnamaharajan
Associate Professor, Centre for
Film and Electronic Media
Studies, Madurai Kamaraj
University.

The influence of advertising on consumer preference for online shopping as against offline shopping among IT professionals during Diwali season 2014

Rupa P, Dr. K Karnamaharajan

Abstract

Online shopping has taken over urban India in a big way. Every morning, we see advertisements in newspapers for the so-called 'big deals' on online shopping websites. Television channels and social media are also flooded with advertisements for online shopping sites. This phenomenon had literally reached a crescendo with the onslaught of heavy duty advertising for the Diwali season 2014.

Bangalore is the IT hub of India. It is a growing city with a large young, trendy, upwardly mobile population primarily employed in the IT sector and its allied industries. These young people are brand-conscious, tech-savvy and have a regular disposable income and are the target audience of many online shopping sites.

This quantitative study has sought to find out how mass media advertising for online shopping sites has influenced consumer preference for online shopping as against traditional offline shopping among IT professionals in Bangalore during Diwali season 2014. The study throws light on advertising's role in promoting online shopping among IT professionals and the shopping preferences (online Vs offline) of IT professionals. It also seeks to identify certain aspects of consumer behaviour with regard to online shopping by the said consumer group.

A study of this nature would help advertisers, marketers and online shopping companies understand the preferences and shopping behaviour of IT professionals. This would help them create more effective advertising campaigns and marketing strategies in order to influence IT professionals better.

Keywords: Advertising, Online shopping, Consumer Preference, Consumer Behaviour, IT professionals, Retail Shopping

Introduction

Browse, Click, Pay, Buy. Online shopping has not only changed the way in which marketers do business; but it has also changed the way in which consumers shop. It is no longer imperative that a simple shopping experience should involve a whole lot of processes that include dressing up, travelling, parking, shopping while standing elbow-to-elbow with the rest of the world, standing in a long queue for a considerable amount of time for payment and travelling back home. Shopping for everything from toothpastes to tomatoes to televisions can be done anywhere, at any time. In fact, consumers can now carry a mall in their pockets with so many mobile shopping applications.

However, like every other innovation that is being diffused into society, online shopping has its own set of early adopters and laggards. There are proponents of online shopping who vouch for its convenience and there are those who still prefer the old world charm reminiscent in traditional retail shopping. Advertising, with its ability to influence and mould the opinions of large numbers of people is being used by online shopping websites to pull more people towards this novel method of shopping. With online shopping still in its nascency in India, heavy-duty advertising is making sure that the message of convenience, choice and cost-effectiveness that online shopping offers, is heard loud and clear all across urban India. These messages are making a mark on the urban consumer who has embraced online shopping with as much enthusiasm as its traditional counterpart.

1.2 The Indian Consumer

India with a population of 1.21 billion people is the second most populous country in the world. India is a consumer-driven market, with consumer spending expected to double by 2025, according to the India Brand Equity Foundation.

Correspondence
Rupa P
Assistant Professor at
The Oxford College of Arts,
Bangalore.

According to a study conducted by the McKinsey Global Institute (MGI), India is projected to be the world's fifth largest consumer economy by 2025.

The Indian consumer is more connected than ever, more savvy and has a large disposable income and is willing to spend it on consumer goods. He yearns for quality as well as value for money and is willing to invest in good brands. Middle India will grow from an FMCG market worth INR 287 billion today to over INR 4 trillion in value by 2026, according to Nielsen (2011) [7].

1.3 Online Shopping

Online shopping is a form of electronic commerce which allows consumers to directly buy goods or services from a seller over the Internet using a web browser (Wikipedia). Unlike retail shopping, online shopping does not involve travelling to a store for a purchase. It can be done by anyone who is tech-savvy and has access to a web browser and an internet connection. Online shopping is convenient, fast, easy and saves big on time.

Online shopping has created a niche for itself, especially in urban India in a very short time. Right now, there are 205 million internet users in India and the numbers are steadily growing. One in six Indians are internet users. 137 million urban dwellers have regular access to the internet. 75% of the internet users in India are under the age of 35. This is the young, upwardly mobile population that has an impressive disposable income that they are willing to splurge on consumer goods. They are tech-savvy with disposable income and have taken to online shopping seamlessly. The size of the Indian online shopping segment was USD 1.8 billion in December 2013. Overall, online retailing is projected to grow threefold to become a Rs. 50,000 crore (US\$ 8.26 billion) industry by 2016, as per rating agency Crisil.

Review of Literature

According to the Total Retail: Global Survey of Online Shoppers (2013), 38% of shoppers in India, shop online. 88% of them made their first online purchase less than four years ago. 77% of the online shoppers in India make purchases on social media. 69% of the shoppers shop on the mobile phone and 59% use tablets for online shopping.

According to Guo *et al.* (2011) [3] implicit information passing and communication between buyers is a fundamental driver of purchasing activity in social commerce. High seller ratings in e-commerce sites are associated with product price premiums, and thus quantify a price for trust.

Gong *et al.* (2012) [2] have identified that although the Chinese consumers perceive online shopping to be more complex, they exhibit more favourable perceptions about the relative advantages of online shopping and are less concerned about the risks associated with online shopping, when compared to their American counterparts.

According to Nagra and Gopal (2013) [6], online shopping is generally perceived in a positive manner. Also, females shop more online when compared to men.

Sharma *et al.* (2014) [11] have found that there is an increasing significance of online stores in the life of Indian people. The e-commerce market has a great potential for the youth segment. Travel planning is one of the biggest services used by Indian online shoppers.

According to Thamizhvanan and Xavier (2013) [13] impulse purchase orientation, prior online purchase experience and online trust have significant impact on the customer purchase intention with regard to online shopping.

According to Rastogi (2010) [10] awareness of online shopping is high among consumers. Consumers feel that online shopping has easy buying procedures, wide variety of products, lower product prices and various modes of payments. Most consumers search and buy online but pay through cash on delivery.

According to Tripathi and Tripathi (2014) [14] most consumers feel safe shopping online and they prefer online shopping as they get variety of products of good quality at one place. A few consumers still prefer shopping in stores because they get the opportunity to physically observe the products and then buy them. However, these consumers are a minority.

Statement of the problem

Online shopping is a phenomenon that has begun to hold sway over urban India in recent times. Advertisements for online shopping websites and mobile applications have reached a crescendo with the onslaught of heavy duty advertising during the Diwali season 2014 (September-October 2014).

3.13 million people are employed in IT and its allied sectors in India (DeitY2013- 14). Bangalore is the IT hub of India. It is a growing city with a large young, trendy, upwardly mobile population primarily employed in the IT sector and its allied industries. 35% of India's IT professionals call this city, their home. These young people are brand-conscious, tech-savvy and have a regular disposable income and are the target audience of many online shopping sites.

In order to understand online shopping's sway over urban India, it is imperative to find out advertising's role in promoting online shopping among IT professionals during the high-spending Diwali season 2014 (September-October 2014), the shopping preferences (online Vs offline) of IT professionals and also identify certain aspects of consumer behavior with regard to online shopping by the said consumer group.

Objectives of the Study

- To find the influence of advertising on online shopping among IT professionals in Bangalore during Diwali season 2014
- To find out the consumer preference for online shopping as against offline retail shopping among IT professionals in Bangalore during Diwali season 2014
- To identify the online sites that were more frequented by IT professionals during Diwali season 2014
- To find out the types of consumer goods that were commonly purchased online by IT professionals during Diwali season 2014
- To find out the frequency of purchase of consumer goods online by IT professionals during Diwali season 2014
- To identify reasons for their preference for either mode of shopping (Online Vs Offline)

Research Design

The study was carried out in Bangalore city with a sample of 150 respondents who were employed in the IT and ITES (IT Enabled Services) industry. The primary data was collected by distributing a questionnaire to the respondents. Purposive sampling method was used in selecting the sample for the study. After eliminating samples that had errors, 140 questionnaires were selected for the final data analysis and interpretation.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

The primary data was collected using a questionnaire and the data was analysed using percentiles. The analysed data and interpretations are presented below.

Table 1: General Profile of Respondents

Gender	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Male	78	55.7
Female	62	44.2
Age		
21-30 years	46	32.9
31-40 years	85	60.7
41-50 years	9	6.2
50 and above	0	0
Married		
Yes	112	80
No	28	20
Educational Qualification		
Graduation	52	37.1
Post Graduation	86	61.4
Others	2	1.4
Monthly Household Income		
Below 30,000	7	5
30,000- 60,000	23	16.4
60,001 - 90,000	42	30
Above 90,000	68	48.6

Males (55.7%) outnumbered females (44.2%) by a slight margin. Most of the respondents belonged to the age group of 31-40 years (60.7%). Majority of the respondents have a monthly household income of above Rs.90,000 (48.6%).

Table 2: Like Shopping for Consumer Goods

Like shopping for consumer goods	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Yes	124	88.6
No	12	8.6
Not sure	4	2.9

Majority of the respondents (88.6%) liked to shop for consumer goods, while only 8.6% did not prefer this type of shopping.

Table 3: Heard of Online Shopping

Heard of online shopping	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Yes	140	100
No	0	0

All respondents belonging to the IT and ITES sector have heard of online shopping.

Table 4: Information Source about Online Shopping Sites

Information source	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Advertisements	90	64.3
Friends/Family	90	64.3
From internet	108	77.1
Other	1	0.7

Majority of the respondents (77.1%) have heard about online shopping through the internet, while an equal number of respondents (64.3%) have heard about online shopping through advertisements and word-of-mouth from friends and family.

6.1 Section A: Online Shopping During Diwali Season 2014

Table 5: Visited Online Shopping Sites during Diwali Season 2014

Visited online shopping sites	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Yes	128	91.4
No	12	8.6

Majority of the respondents (91.4%) had visited online shopping sites during the Diwali season.

Table 6: Frequency of Visit to Online Shopping Sites during Diwali Season 2014

Frequency of Visit	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Everyday	38	29.7
2-4 times in a week	35	27.3
Once a week	33	25.8
Once or twice a month	22	17.2

When it comes to frequency of visit, many of the respondents (29.7%) had visited online shopping sites everyday during Diwali season. Several respondents (27.3%) had also visited these sites 2-4 times a week.

Table 7: Time Spent Browsing Through Online Shopping Sites during Diwali Season 2014

Time Spent	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Less than 10 minutes	35	25
10-30 minutes	60	42.9
30 minutes-1 hour	29	20.7
More than an hour	4	2.9

Majority of the respondents (42.9%) had spend 10-30 minutes browsing through these sites.

Table 8: Online Shopping Sites Visited during Diwali Season 2014

Name of Website	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Flipkart	122	95.3
Homeshop 18	6	4.7
Snapdeal	66	51.6
Jabong	60	46.9
Amazon	90	70.3
Myntra	43	33.6
Others	10	7.8

Flipkart (95.3%) was the most visited online shopping site during the diwali season, followed by Amazon (70.3%) and Snapdeal (51.6%).

Table 9: Reasons for Visiting Online Shopping Sites during Diwali Season 2014

Reasons	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Advertisements	36	28.1
Recommendations from Friends/Family	22	17.2
Simple and easy	38	29.7
No travel to the store	54	42.2
Easy delivery	56	43.8
Wide selection	48	37.5
Time saver	50	39
Quick shopping experience	28	21.9
Saves on cost	76	59.4
Good deals	92	71.9
Other	0	0

Majority of the respondents preferred online shopping because they found good deals (71.9%), it was cost-effective (59.4%), delivery was easy (43.8%), no travelling was involved (42.2%) and it saved time (39%).

Table 10: Purchase of Consumer Goods through Online Shopping Sites

Purchase	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Yes	100	78.1
No	28	21.9

Majority of the respondents (78.1%) had made a purchase through online shopping sites.

Table 11: Number of Products Purchased through Online Shopping Sites

Number of Products	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1-3	70	70
4-6	20	20
7-9	7	7
10 and above	3	3

Majority of the respondents (70%) have purchased 1-3 products online during Diwali 2014.

Table 12: Types of Products Purchased Online during Diwali 2014

Product Type	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Clothes	44	44
Footwear	32	32
Accessories	24	24
Beauty Products	6	6
Gadgets	66	66
Toys	12	12
Books	20	20
Music and Movies	6	6
Furniture and Furnishings	8	8
Home Appliances	8	8
Sports and Fitness	8	8
Gifts	10	10
Others	0	0

Majority of the respondents (66%) had purchased gadgets, followed by clothes (44%), footwear (32%), accessories (24%) and books (20%) online.

Table 13: Satisfaction with the Online Shopping Experience

Satisfaction Levels	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Very dissatisfied	3	2.3
Somewhat dissatisfied	5	3.9
Neutral	23	18
Somewhat satisfied	64	50
Very satisfied	33	25.8

Majority of the respondents (50%) are somewhat satisfied with their online shopping experience, while few (25.8%) are very satisfied with the same.

6.2 Section B: Advertising and Its Influence on Online Shopping During Diwali Season 2014

Table 14: Seen Advertisements Related to Online Shopping during Diwali 2014

Seen advertisements	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Yes	137	97.9
No	1	0.7
Don't remember	2	1.4

97.9% of the respondents have seen advertisements related to online shopping during Diwali.

Table 13: Advertising Media for Online Shopping during Diwali 2014

Media	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Print	76	55.5
Television	127	92.7
Radio	2	1.5
Internet	125	91.2

Majority of the respondents (92.7%) have seen Television advertisements. 91.2% have seen internet advertisements, while 55.5% have read print advertisements related to online shopping.

Table 14: Frequently Viewed Advertisements Related to Online Shopping Sites

Name of Website	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Flipkart	129	94.2
Homeshop 18	5	3.6
Snapdeal	112	81.8
Jabong	65	47.4
Amazon	119	86.9
Myntra	89	65
Others	3	2.2

Advertisements for Flipkart (94.2) was most highly viewed, followed by Amazon (86.9%) and Snapdeal (81.8%).

Table 15: Influence of Advertisements on Visit to Online Shopping Websites

Advertising Influence on Visit	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Yes	85	62
No	20	14.6
Not sure	23	16.8

62% of the respondents are of the opinion that advertisements influenced them to visit online shopping websites.

Table 16: Influence of Advertisements on Purchase at Online Shopping Websites

Advertising Influence on Purchase	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Yes	30	21.9
No	87	63.5
Not sure	11	8

63.5% of the respondents are of the opinion that advertisements did not influence their purchase decision, when it came to online shopping during Diwali 2014.

Table 17: Influence of Advertisements on Decision to Buy Online as against Retail

Advertising Influence on Choice	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Yes	50	36.5
No	48	35
Not sure	30	21.9

36.5% of the respondents feel that advertising influenced them to buy online rather than in retail, while almost an equal number of respondents (35%) felt that advertisements did not influence them to choose online shopping over retail.

6.3 Section C: Retail Shopping During Diwali Season 2014

Table 18: Visited Retail Shopping Outlets during Diwali Season 2014

Visited retail outlets	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Yes	92	65.7
No	48	34.2

Majority of the respondents (65.7%) had visited retail outlets selling consumer goods during Diwali 2014.

Table 19: Frequency of Visit to Retail Shopping Outlets

Frequency of Visit	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Everyday	2	2.2
2-4 times in a week	6	6.5
Once a week	30	32.6
Once or twice a month	54	58.7

Majority of the respondents (58.7%) had visited retail outlets once or twice a month. This is followed by respondents who visited retail outlets once a week (32.6%).

Table 20: Time Spent Browsing Through Retail Shopping Outlets

Time Spent	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Less than 10 minutes	3	3.3
10-30 minutes	30	32.6
30 minutes-1 hour	23	25
More than an hour	36	39.1

Majority of the respondents (39.1%) had spent more than an hour browsing through retail shopping outlets, while 32.6% respondents spent 10-30 minutes in retail outlets.

Table 21: Reasons for visiting Retail Shopping Outlets during Diwali 2014

Reasons	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Advertisements	12	13
Big deals	24	26
Recommendations from Friends/Family	4	4.3
Simple and easy	10	10.9
Wide selection	24	26.1
Touch and feel of products	58	63.1
The real-time shopping experience	44	47.8
Saves on cost	8	8.7
Joy of shopping	42	45.7
Other	2	2.2

Respondents felt that they could touch and feel products (63.1%) and experience real-time shopping (47.8%) and enjoy the joy of shopping (45.7%) while visiting retail shopping outlets.

Table 22: Purchase of Consumer Goods through Retail Outlets during Diwali 2014

Purchase	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Yes	84	91.3
No	8	8.7

91.3% of the respondents purchased consumer goods through retail shopping outlets.

Table 23: Number of Products Purchased through Retail Outlets

Number of Products	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1-3	62	73.8
4-6	12	14.3
7-9	2	2.4
10 and above	8	9.5

Majority of the respondents (73.8%) had purchased 1-3 products through retail during Diwali.

Table 24: Type of Products Purchased through Retail Outlets

Product Type	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Clothes	56	66.7
Footwear	24	28.6
Accessories	2	2.4
Beauty Products	8	9.5
Gadgets	8	9.5
Toys	18	21.4
Books	6	7.1
Music and Movies	0	0
Furniture and Furnishings	2	2.4
Home Appliances	12	14.3
Sports and Fitness	10	11.9
Gifts	20	23.8
Others	0	0

Majority of the respondents (66.7%) purchased clothes, 28.6% of the respondents purchased footwear, 23.8% purchased gift articles while shopping in retail outlets.

Table 24: Satisfaction with the Retail Shopping Experience – Diwali 2014

Satisfaction Levels	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Very dissatisfied	2	2.2
Somewhat dissatisfied	6	6.5
Neutral	28	30.4
Somewhat satisfied	38	41.3
Very satisfied	18	19.6

Majority of the respondents (41.3%) are somewhat satisfied with their retail shopping experience, while few (30.4%) have a neutral opinion on the same.

Table 25: Preferred Mode of Shopping

Preferred Mode of Shopping	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Online	62	44.3
Retail	27	19.3
Both	51	36.4

44.3% of the respondents have preferred online shopping, while 36.4% have preferred both online and retail. Only 19.3% of the respondents have preferred retail shopping. Online shopping was clearly most preferred mode of shopping by IT professionals during Diwali season 2014.

Reasons for Preference of Online Shopping

To the open-ended question asking respondents the reason for preference of online shopping, the following responses were received.

- Variety
- Time Saver
- Value for money
- Rate comparison is easy
- No travel
- Branded goods are cheaper online
- Easy replacement
- No traffic
- No queues at payment counter

Reasons for Preference of Retail Shopping

To the open-ended question asking respondents the reason for preference of retail shopping, the following responses were received.

- Product is in hand immediately
- Feel and decide on what to buy
- Good for unbranded products
- Preferred for clothes that require trials
- Personal attention from the shop

Findings

- Majority of IT professionals liked to shop for consumer goods.
- All respondents belonging to the IT and ITES sector have heard of online shopping.
- Respondents have heard of online shopping through internet messages, advertisements and word-of-mouth from friends and family.
- Majority of the respondents had visited online shopping sites during the Diwali season. Similarly a majority of the respondents had visited retail outlets selling consumer goods during Diwali 2014. However, the percentage of those who visited online sites (91.4%) is much higher than those who visited retail stores (65.7%).
- Majority of the respondents had visited online shopping sites every day during Diwali season, while a majority of

the respondents had visited retail outlets only once or twice a month. In terms of frequency of visit, online shopping has a definite edge.

- Time spent browsing through retail shopping outlets (more than an 1 hour) is greater than time spent on online shopping sites (10-30 minutes). This could be because physical walking and browsing takes a lot longer than browsing with a click of the mouse.
- Flipkart was the most visited online shopping site during the diwali season, followed by Amazon and Snapdeal.
- Reasons quoted for preference towards online shopping include good deals, cost effectiveness, easy delivery, no travel and time-saving factor.
- Reasons quoted for preference towards retail shopping include the ability to touch and feel products, the need to experience real-time shopping and enjoy the joy of shopping.
- While 78.1% of the respondents who visited online shopping sites had made a purchase, an overwhelming 91.3% of the respondents purchased consumer goods when visiting retail outlets. While a visit to an online shopping site does not necessarily translate into immediate purchase, more people who visit retail outlets buy consumer goods.
- Be it online or retail, majority of the respondents had purchased 1-3 consumer goods during Diwali season 2014.
- Majority of the respondents have purchased gadgets, clothes, footwear, accessories and books online. Majority of the respondents purchased clothes, footwear, gifts and toys through retail outlets.
- IT professionals are somewhat satisfied with both modes of shopping (online and retail), while a significantly higher number of respondents were very satisfied with online shopping.
- Most of the respondents have seen advertisements related to online shopping during Diwali season 2014.
- Television advertisements related to online shopping has enjoyed great visibility, followed by internet and print advertisements.
- Advertisements for Flipkart was most highly viewed, followed by advertisements for Amazon and Snapdeal.
- Majority of the respondents are of the opinion that advertisements influenced their visit to online shopping websites. However, most respondents feel that advertisements for online shopping sites did not influence their purchase decisions. So, while advertisements drive traffic to these sites, they do not play a major role in product purchase.
- The verdict is divided on whether advertisement can actually influence people to shift from retail to online shopping. While a slight majority (36.5%) felt that they moved to online shopping because of advertisements, almost an equal number of respondents (35%) felt that advertisements did not influence them to choose online shopping over retail.
- Online shopping is clearly the most preferred mode of shopping by IT professionals during Diwali season 2014, while some respondents prefer both online and retail.

Conclusion

Internet and Television advertising has spread awareness about online shopping among IT professionals. All IT

professionals are aware of online shopping. IT professionals in Bangalore prefer online shopping to retail shopping.

While advertising has influenced IT professionals to visit online shopping sites, they do not play a major role in product purchase. Online shopping is preferred for its good deals, cost effectiveness and convenience. Gadgets and clothes are most often purchased online by IT professionals. IT professionals are somewhat satisfied with online shopping. Advertisements have also had a marginal influence in convincing people to purchase online as against traditional retail shopping.

Retail shopping is less preferred by IT professionals and is mostly used to purchase clothes and footwear. People who prefer retail enjoy the touch and feel of shopping and the real-time experience.

In the future, advertisers and marketers need to use particular strategies to convert visits to online shopping sites into sales. Also, advertisers have to add a touch of *real-time shopping experience* in order to convert retail shoppers to online shopping enthusiasts.

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