EPRA International Journal of Environmental Economics, Commerce and Educational Management
Journal DOI: 10.36713/epra0414 |ISI I.F Value: 0.815|SJIF Impact Factor (2025): 8.57 ISSN: 2348 – 814X
Volume: 12 | Issue:5 |May 2025

A STUDY ON CONSUMER TRUST IN ONLINE AND OFFLINE COMMERCE

Prof. Karthik J.P.[1], Sreehari S[2]
[1]*Assistant Professor, School of Economics and Commerce, CMR University, Bangalore, India*
[2]*Student, School of Economics and Commerce, CMR University, Bangalore, India*

Article DOI: https://doi.org/10.36713/epra21894
DOI No: 10.36713/epra21894

ABSTRACT
This study explores the factors influencing consumer trust in both online and offline commerce environments. As digital transactions continue to rise, understanding the dynamics of trust in e-commerce becomes increasingly important, while traditional retail still holds significance for many consumers. The research examines key elements such as perceived security, brand reputation, customer service, and user experience that affect trust levels in each setting. By employing a mixed-method approach including surveys and interviews the study compares consumer attitudes and behaviours across digital and physical retail channels. The findings highlight both overlapping and distinct trust-building mechanisms, offering insights for businesses aiming to enhance customer confidence and loyalty in a competitive marketplace.
KEYWORDS: *Consumer Trust, Online Commerce, Offline Commerce, E-commerce, Traditional Retail, Customer Behavior, Brand Reputation*

INTRODUCTION

In the fast-changing marketplace of today, consumer trust is central to influencing buying behavior on both online and offline media. As e-commerce continues to grow and conventional brick-and-mortar outlets remain afloat, knowledge of the dynamics of trust in these different ecosystems has become increasingly important for researchers and businesses. Trust impacts not just the willingness of a consumer to pursue transactions, but also their long-term devotion to a brand. Whereas offline retailing is enhanced by face-to-face contact and the instant examination of products, online retailing depends largely on electronic cues like the security of a website, customer reviews, and return policies to establish credibility. This research aims to explore what drives trust in both channels, compare consumers' perceptions, and determine strategies that can close gaps in trust and maximize total customer satisfaction.

LITERATURE REVIEW

1. Interpersonal Interaction

Off-line business trust, however, is often developed via people-to-people contact between buyers and salespeople. This face-to-face interaction allows customers to measure sincerity, professionalism, and helpfulness, which can deeply influence their perception of a shop's reliability. As advanced by Doney and Cannon (1997), human interaction in brick-and-mortar stores builds familiarity and confidence that support trust. This type of interaction also allows for instant feedback and explanation, removing ambiguity during the purchase process.

2. Perceived Security

In internet retailing, trust is largely built on process and technical precautions. As customers cannot physically view goods or interact with staff directly, they rely on cyber symptomatic signs of security such as SSL certificates, secure checkout pages, and open privacy notices. Pavlou (2003) emphasizes that alleviating perceived risk in the guise of symptomatic and reliable security measures is paramount to building consumer trust in e-commerce. Without such trust indicators, consumers won't feel safe to make transactions since they are worried about fraud or misuse of personal information.

3. Brand Reputation

Between online and offline settings, brand reputation is pivotal in driving consumer trust. Brands with a long history of customer satisfaction and quality of service are likely to be trusted independent of the retail channel. Chen and Barnes (2007) found that high brand equity can compensate for other trust shortcomings, particularly in online settings where people-to-people contact does not exist. Reputation is built through time following

EPRA International Journal of Environmental Economics, Commerce and Educational Management
Journal DOI: 10.36713/epra0414 |ISI I.F Value: 0.815|SJIF Impact Factor (2025): 8.57 ISSN: 2348 – 814X
Volume: 12 | Issue:5 |May 2025

repeated performance, good comments, and word of mouth and is therefore one of the most significant drivers in both conventional and online business.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To determine the most significant factors driving consumer trust in online as well as offline business settings. This goal seeks to research the different elements—product quality, customer service, website presentation, and salesperson conduct—and how these influence consumers in establishing trust in dissimilar shopping environments.
- To contrast consumer concepts of trust for e-commerce websites and conventional retail outlets. The research aims to examine how consumers build trust differently in online and offline environments, and to identify any notable differences in consumer sentiments towards the two types of shopping.
- To analyze the contributions of security, service quality, and brand reputation towards building consumer trust on both platforms. This aim centre on understanding how certain trust-related variables e.g., protection of data in e-commerce and in-store support in offline commerce—impact overall trust in a company.
- To examine the role of trust in influencing consumer buying behavior and loyalty in online and offline commerce, respectively. In this, the research looks at how users' trust impacts their willingness to place orders, return for repeat business, and refer the company to others.
- To make business recommendations for increasing consumer trust and customer satisfaction in both online and offline commerce. Grounded on the results, this research seeks to provide business recommendations and actionable strategies that firms can implement in order to establish and sustain a trust relationship with their customers, either online, offline, or in both modes.

RESEARCH GAPS

1. Limited comparative studies of offline and online trust processes

Whereas the majority of studies investigate trust in online or offline trade, few contrast the two and in depth. The majority of studies find it easier to deal with only a single sphere independently, resulting in meager in-depth knowledge on how trust is established and maintained in both spheres. The goal of this research is to bridge this gap by comparing trust behaviors side by side in digital and high-street retail environments.

2. Failure to Give Proper Emphasis to Hybrid Consumer Behavior (Omnichannel Trust)

With the dominance of omnichannel shopping—where consumers are interacting with online and offline channels at the same time along their buying journey—there is a research void in exploring how trust is being carried over or destroyed across channels. For instance, a shopper might view information about a product on a website but purchase it in a physical store, or conversely. Few studies examine how trust in one channel affects trust in another in the same business or brand.

3. Insufficient Analysis of the Impact of Cultural and Demographic Factors on Trust

Most literature is insufficient to comment on how technological acumen, age, level of education, or culture affects trust in the offline versus online environments. The demographic factors are bound to significantly affect the way individuals perceive and build trust, particularly in growing economies or rural communities with minimal exposure to digital infrastructure.

4. Failure to Put Proper Emphasis on Emotional and Psychological Dimensions of Trust

Most studies put emphasis on technical and functional dimensions of trust like security on the site and the layout of the store but fail to pay much attention to emotional triggers—fear, anxiety, or satisfaction—underlying consumer trust. These psychological dimensions need empirical study in order to formulate more effective and tailored trust-building strategies.

5. Outdated Trust Models in the Era of Newly Emerging Technology

Most of the current literature on trust on the internet relies on models developed before some of these newer tendencies, such as customer service through AI, monitoring in real time, social purchasing, and mobile technology. There is therefore a distinct need for newer models that consider modern digital developments and how these influence trust.

METHODOLOGY

1. Research Methodology – Mixed Methods

The research will adopt a mixed methods methodology, integrating both qualitative and quantitative data. Quantitative approaches will be used to measure levels of trust via surveys, whereas qualitative information drawn from interviews or open-ended questions will provide greater insight into consumer beliefs and inspirations. This two-pronged approach enables an integrated study of trust variables.

2. Population and Sample – Varied Consumer Base
Target population will be those who shop both online and offline. The sample will comprise participants across different age groups, income groups, and locations to establish a diverse and inclusive sample. This captures a broad spectrum of consumer experience and trust behavior across segments.
3. Instrumentation – Tailored Trust Assessment Tool
Based on current literature, a customized questionnaire will be drawn up and tested against standardized trust models (e.g., McKnight's model of trust, SERVQUAL dimensions). The tool will be calibrated to measure variables such as security, reliability, ease of use, trustworthiness, and satisfaction both online and offline. This ensures the data gathered are distinct and pertinent to the research goals.
4. Data Collection Channels – Online Surveys and In-Person Interviews
Data collection would be done using online survey tools (e.g., Google Forms, SurveyMonkey) and in-person interviews at malls, stores, or restaurants. This provides access to both digitally active users and old-school shoppers so that the response is gathered from both commerce platforms effectively.
5. Validity and Reliability – Pretesting and Triangulation
To achieve validity, the instrument of the survey will be pilot-tested on a small population to detect any ambiguous or prejudiced questions. To achieve reliability, internal consistency will be examined through tools such as Cronbach's Alpha. Further, data triangulation—by cross-matching responses in the survey with interview findings—will increase the credibility and richness of findings.

FINDINGS

1.Trust Levels Vary by Channel
The research indicated that consumers tended to have higher initial trust in offline trade as a result of face-to-face communication, physical inspection of products, and direct service. Trust in online trade, on the other hand, was conditional and heavily dependent on external cues like web site design, ratings from other customers, and refund policies.
2.Security is a Top Priority in Online Trade
A high percentage of respondents reported that payment security and data security were the most important issues in building confidence online. Fraud worries, phishing, and privacy violation concerns were reported as the main obstacles to complete confidence in e-transactions.
3.Customer Service and Transparency Are as Important in Both Channels
Customers stressed that open communication, good customer support, and reliable assistance greatly affected their trust—irrespective of the channel. Response lag, ambiguous return practices, or substandard after-sales support drastically lowered trust levels in both online and offline environments.
4.Brand Reputation Affects Trust Through Channels
Trust was always higher in Favor of well-established and popular brands in both online and offline spaces. People claimed that they were more likely to shop with brands that also had good reputations, good reviews, and a history of being reliable-even when their prices were a bit higher.
5.Younger Consumers Trust Online Spaces More
Demographic breakdown revealed that younger users (ages 18–35) were more confident in trusting online spaces compared to the rest of the ages. They demonstrated higher levels of familiarity with digital interfaces and were more at ease assessing trust based on digital cues such as app reviews, influencer recommendations, and UI aesthetics.

REFERENCES

1. *Hongyoun Hahn, Kim, and Jihyun Kim. "The effect of offline brand trust and perceived internet confidence on online shopping intention in the integrated multi-channel context." International journal of retail & Distribution Management 37.2 (2009): 126-141.*
2. *Nosi, Costanza, et al. "The influence of online and offline brand trust on consumer buying intention." EuroMed Journal of Business 17.4 (2022): 550-567.*
3. *Nagy, S., & Hajdu, G. (2022). The relationship between content marketing and the traditional marketing communication tools. arXiv preprint arXiv:2301.01279.*
4. *Goundar, S., Lal, K., Chand, A., & Vyas, P. (2021). Consumer perception of electronic commerce–incorporating trust and risk with the technology acceptance model. In e-Services. IntechOpen.*
5. *Siddiqui, S. A., Yang, X., Deshmukh, R. K., Gaikwad, K. K., Bahmid, N. A., & Munoz, R. C. (2024). Recent advances in reinforced bioplastics for food packaging–A critical review. International Journal of Biological Macromolecules, 263, 130399.*
6. *Ghanem, N., Leitner, S., & Jannach, D. (2022). Balancing consumer and business value of recommender systems: A simulation-based analysis. Electronic Commerce Research and Applications, 55, 101195.*
7. *Anora, A., & Ginting, Y. M. (2025). The Influence of E-Commerce Trust, Site Loyalty, and Satisfaction on Digital Consumer Purchase Behavior. Indonesian Journal Economic Review (IJER), 5(1), 43-54.*

8. *Tahir, Z., 2021. Effectiveness of offline and online rewards in restoring satisfaction and trust. Spanish Journal of Marketing-ESIC, 25(3), pp.409-424.*
9. *Jamil, S., Khan, S. and Seraj, S.S., 2023. An SEM-based study on intrinsic motivation in the education sector: The role of GHRM practices. Voyage Journal of Educational Studies, 3(2), pp.305-325.*
10. *Safdarian, M., Trinka, E., Rahimi-Movaghar, V., Thomschewski, A., Aali, A., Abady, G. G., ... & Shetty, P. H. (2023). Global, regional, and national burden of spinal cord injury, 1990–2019: a systematic analysis for the Global Burden of Disease Study 2019. The Lancet Neurology, 22(11), 1026-1047.*
11. *Alimo, Philip Kofi, et al. "Accelerated failure time modeling of in-lane street hawkers' lane entry and exit behaviors at signalized intersections." International journal of injury control and safety promotion 31.3 (2024): 350-359.*
12. *Hajli, N., & Lin, X. (2015). Consumer adoption of social commerce. In HCI in Business: Second International Conference, HCIB 2015, Held as Part of HCI International 2015, Los Angeles, CA, USA, August 2-7, 2015, Proceedings 2 (pp. 279-287). Springer International Publishing.*
13. *Nosi, C., Pucci, T., Melanthiou, Y. and Zanni, L., 2022. The influence of online and offline brand trust on consumer buying intention. EuroMed Journal of Business, 17(4), pp.550-567.*
14. *Hongyoun Hahn, K. and Kim, J., 2009. The effect of offline brand trust and perceived internet confidence on online shopping intention in the integrated multi-channel context. International journal of retail & Distribution Management, 37(2), pp.126-141.*
15. *Yao, P., Osman, S., Sabri, M.F. and Zainudin, N., 2022. Consumer behavior in online-to-offline (O2O) commerce: a thematic review. Sustainability, 14(13), p.7842.*
16. *Alemanno, F., An, Q., Azzarello, P., Barbato, F.C.T., Bernardini, P., Bi, X.J., Cai, M.S., Catanzani, E., Chang, J., Chen, D.Y. and Chen, J.L., 2021. Measurement of the cosmic ray helium energy spectrum from 70 GeV to 80 TeV with the DAMPE space mission. Physical Review Letters, 126(20), p.201102.*
17. *Panigrahi, S., Al Ghafri, K.K., Al Alyani, W.R., Ali Khan, M.W., Al Madhagy, T. and Khan, A., 2023. Lean manufacturing practices for operational and business performance: A PLS-SEM modeling analysis. International Journal of Engineering Business Management, 15, p.18479790221147864.*
18. *Gogoi, S., Siddiqui, H. R., Banerjee, S., Kashyap, S., Kirtania, S., & Bhadra, R. (2024). Hall–Petch and Hollomon modeling for microalloyed 2219Al alloys under different thermo-mechanical treatments. International Journal on Interactive Design and Manufacturing (IJIDeM), 18(9), 6543-6557.*
19. *Straub, D.W., Gefen, D. and Recker, J., 2022. Quantitative research in information systems. Association for Information Systems (AISWorld) Section on IS Research, Methods, and Theories.*
20. *Kim, M.K., Jeon, J.H., Kim, S.W., Moon, J.S., Cho, N.H., Han, E., You, J.H., Lee, J.Y., Hyun, M., Park, J.S. and Kwon, Y.S., 2020. The clinical characteristics and outcomes of patients with moderate-to-severe coronavirus disease 2019 infection and diabetes in Daegu, South Korea. Diabetes & metabolism journal, 44(4), pp.602-613.*