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TRENDS AND DETERMINANTS OF DURABLE GOODS PURCHASE IN KERALA: A BEHAVIOURAL PERSPECTIVE

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ABSTRACT
Online marketing has emerged as a transformative component of electronic commerce, allowing consumers to purchase goods and services directly from sellers through digital platforms. This shift not only stimulates economic growth but also accelerates the evolution of modern economic systems. In this context, consumer behaviour has become a dynamic and increasingly complex concept, shaped by psychological, social, and behavioural dimensions. It plays a crucial role in developing consumer culture and serves as a foundational tool for analysing economic structures and designing effective marketing strategies. This paper explores the changing dynamics of the consumer market and identifies the key factors influencing these behavioural shifts in the digital era.
KEYWORDS: *Consumer Behaviour, Kerala, Buying Decisions, Behavioural Dimensions, Marketing Strategies*

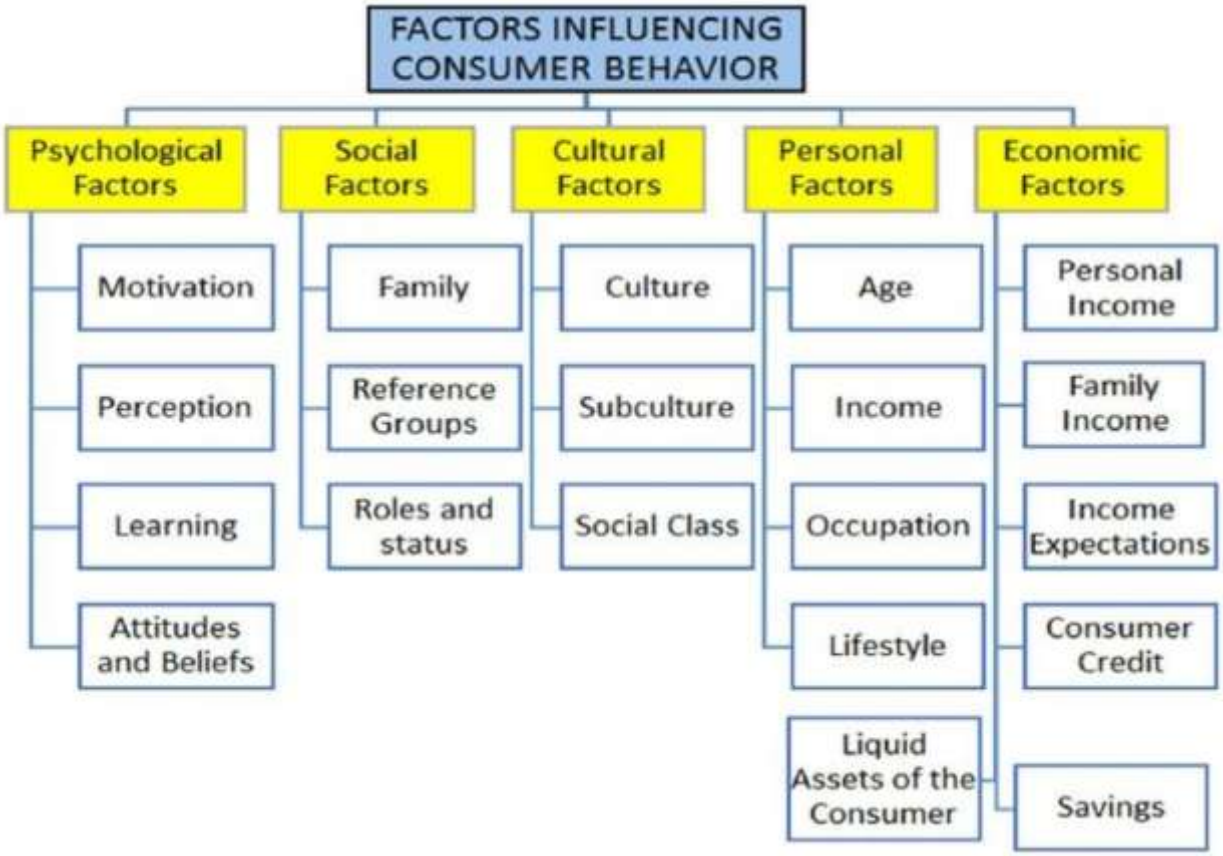
I. INTRODUCTION

In the contemporary digital age, consumer sovereignty—the idea that consumer preferences drive production and market strategies—has gained unprecedented significance. With the proliferation of digital platforms and the rapid advancement of technology, consumers today are more informed, empowered, and selective than ever before. These transformations have not only enhanced product quality and variety but have also led to continuous innovations in marketing, product design, and service delivery. As a result, consumer behaviour has evolved into a complex and dynamic phenomenon, reflecting deep psychological, social, and physical interactions with products and services. Technological progress has redefined how products are conceptualized, produced, and consumed. It influences both the decision-making process of consumers and the strategic planning of producers, creating an interactive ecosystem where preferences shape production decisions. Engel, Blackwell, and Mansard (1995) aptly define consumer behaviour as "the actions and decision processes of people who purchase goods and services for personal consumption." This definition captures the essence of consumer behaviour as a holistic process encompassing what, how, when, and why consumers buy or reject offerings. Despite the growing body of research emphasizing the positive impact of innovation on consumer engagement and market responsiveness, gaps persist in effectively identifying, scaling, and implementing these innovations to match consumer expectations (Parasuraman, 2000). This challenge highlights the need for continuous adaptation in marketing and management strategies, especially in a world where consumer preferences are rapidly shifting.

Consumer behaviour is shaped by a variety of internal factors, such as needs, motivations, attitudes, and habits, as well as external influences; including family, peer groups, culture, social status, and economic conditions. These factors work in tandem to determine how individuals and groups select, purchase, use, and dispose of products and services. Importantly, this behavioural process encompasses both observable actions (like shopping or comparing products) and underlying mental activities (like perception, evaluation, or post-purchase satisfaction), making it a rich field for empirical and strategic exploration. Understanding consumer behaviour in such a multidimensional context is crucial for businesses, marketers, and policymakers aiming to remain competitive and consumer-centric. As the market landscape becomes increasingly digital and innovation-driven, the need to decode the evolving behavioural patterns of consumers becomes essential—not only to enhance consumer satisfaction but also to sustain long-term brand loyalty and market relevance.

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Factors Influencing Consumer Behaviour



Psychological factors include motivation, perception, learning, and attitudes, which shape how consumers process information and form preferences. Social influences such as family, reference groups, and social roles affect decision-making through interpersonal relationships and societal expectations. Cultural factors like culture, subculture, and social class determine broader value systems and consumption norms. Personal factors—age, income, occupation, lifestyle, and financial liquidity—reflect individual characteristics that guide purchase decisions. Finally, economic factors, including personal and family income, credit access, and savings, play a critical role in determining the consumer's purchasing power and expectations. Together, these interconnected elements provide a comprehensive understanding of how and why consumers make buying choices.

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

David L. Loudon and Albert J. Della Bitta (2002), in their book Consumer Behaviour – Concepts and Applications, discuss not only the theoretical dimensions of consumer behaviour but also emphasize the importance of applying these concepts to marketing strategies and decision-making across the private, public, and non-profit sectors. They aim to offer an integrated framework that encapsulates the key areas of consumer behaviour knowledge. The book is well-documented and designed to allow readers to delve deeper into specific topics of interest.

Keshav Sharma et al. (2002), in their study on rural consumers in urban-analogous villages, highlight that although rural customers aspire to adopt urban lifestyles, their buying decisions differ markedly from those of their urban counterparts. According to the authors, culture plays a significant role in shaping their purchasing choices. They emphasize that rural consumers are simple and culturally rooted, and marketers who approach them with cultural sensitivity are more likely to earn their trust and loyalty.

Verma and Munjal (2003) identified key determinants in brand choice decisions, namely quality, price, availability, packaging, and advertising. They state that brand loyalty is influenced by both behavioural and cognitive patterns. Moreover, their findings suggest that variables such as age and other demographic factors significantly impact these patterns, whereas gender and marital status do not show a statistically significant influence.

G. Prakash (2004), in his study titled A Study on Consumer Buying Behaviour on Britannia Marie Gold Biscuits, observes that organizations focused on maximizing productivity and profit show considerable interest in understanding consumer needs. He notes that customer satisfaction is crucial, as a satisfied customer serves as a free promoter for the brand. Additionally, he stresses the importance of ensuring satisfaction among dealers and retailers, especially in the fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG) sector.

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Statement of the Problem

The evolving digital landscape has significantly altered consumer purchasing patterns, particularly in the context of durable goods. In Kerala, a state marked by socio-economic progress and digital penetration, the purchasing behaviour of consumers reflects a complex interaction of psychological, social, and technological factors. However, businesses and marketers often struggle to interpret these shifting behavioural patterns, resulting in a mismatch between consumer expectations and market offerings. This disconnect underscores the need to investigate the behavioural dimensions influencing durable goods purchases, particularly within Kerala's unique socio-cultural environment, to facilitate more responsive and consumer-centric strategies.

Research Gap

Despite a growing body of literature on consumer behaviour and online purchasing, there is a noticeable lack of region-specific studies that examine the behavioural nuances of durable goods consumers in Kerala. Existing research tends to generalize findings across broader populations, often neglecting local cultural, economic, and behavioural variables. Additionally, few studies integrate both psychological and social dimensions in analysing consumer decisions specific to durable goods in digitally mediated environments. This indicates a clear gap in context-sensitive research, highlighting the need for an empirical exploration tailored to Kerala's unique market dynamics.

Objectives of the Study

1. To examine the behavioural trends associated with the purchase of durable goods among consumers in Kerala.
2. To identify key psychological, socio-demographic, and economic factors influencing consumer decisions related to durable goods.

Hypotheses

H1: Consumer preferences for durable goods in Kerala are significantly influenced by socio-demographic variables such as income, age, and educational attainment.

H2: Digital marketing exposure and advancements in technology have a positive impact on consumer decision-making related to the purchase of durable goods.

III. METHODOLOGY

The study adopts a mixed-method approach, utilizing both primary and secondary data to explore the behavioural determinants influencing the purchase of durable goods in Kerala. Primary data were collected through structured questionnaires administered to a sample of 50 respondents across diverse demographic segments, capturing insights on consumer preferences, attitudes, and behavioural patterns. Secondary data sources included consumer trend reports, the Consumer Price Index (CPI), and the Wholesale Price Index (WPI) for the period 2019–2023, providing macroeconomic context. The study examined the impact of cultural, social, personal, psychological, and digital factors on consumer decision-making. A log-linear model was specified to quantify the influence of economic conditions (ECO), cultural factors (CUL), social influences (SOCI), amenities and services (AME), health considerations (HEAL), and digitalisation (DIG) on consumer durable purchases (CONSDU). Data normalization techniques were employed to address heterogeneity in individual consumption patterns, and regression analysis was conducted to estimate the relationships, with appropriate controls for stochastic error.

IV. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Profile of the respondent

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Age	Up to 20	9	18
	21–30	24	48
	31–40	9	18
	Above 40	9	18
Sex	Male	26	52
	Female	24	48
Educational Qualification	Plus Two	9	18
	Degree	9	18
	Postgraduate	18	36
	Above PG	14	28
Occupation	No Job	6	12
	Professional	12	24
	Non-professional	14	28
	Others	18	36
Monthly Income	Below ₹10,000	10	20
	₹10,000–₹30,000	17	34
	₹30,000–₹50,000	6	12
	Above ₹50,000	7	14

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Marital Status	Married	23	46
	Unmarried	27	54
Family Size	Small	12	24
	Medium	17	34
	Large	21	42
Residential Area	Rural	11	22
	Semi-urban	14	28
	Urban	25	50

The sample consists of 50 respondents, with a majority aged between 21–30 years (48%) and nearly equal gender distribution. Most participants hold a postgraduate or higher qualification (64%) and are either in non-professional or other occupations (64%). Monthly income predominantly falls within the ₹10,000–₹30,000 range (34%), and more than half are unmarried (54%). In terms of household structure, large families (42%) are most common, and the majority reside in urban areas (50%).

Ownership of Selected Consumer Durables among Respondents

Product	Ownership Status	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Mixer	Yes	13	26
	No	37	74
Grinder	Yes	11	22
	No	39	78
Washing Machine	Yes	24	48
	No	26	52
Refrigerator	Yes	49	98
	No	1	2
Television (TV)	Yes	40	80
	No	10	20
Personal Computer (PC)	Yes	49	98
	No	1	2
Mobile Phone	Yes	37	74
	No	13	26
Water Purifier	Yes	35	70
	No	15	30
Microwave Oven	Yes	45	90
	No	5	10
Air Conditioner	Yes	49	98
	No	1	2

As shown in a high percentage of respondents owned air conditioners (98%), refrigerators (98%), and personal computers (98%), while ownership of traditional appliances like mixers (26%) and grinders (22%) remained relatively low. This suggests a consumer preference shift towards technologically advanced durables in Kerala.

Media Channels through which Respondents Viewed Advertisements

Media Type	Never	%	Rarely	%	Sometimes	%	Often	%	Always	%	Total (%)
Print Media	2	4	11	22	13	26	11	22	13	26	100
Radio	4	8	10	20	9	18	11	22	16	32	100
Television (TV)	3	6	10	20	16	32	8	16	13	26	100
Hoardings and Banners	5	10	12	24	10	20	12	24	11	22	100
In-store Displays	4	8	8	16	12	24	17	34	9	18	100

The table indicates that television is the most frequently used medium for advertisement exposure, with 74% of respondents viewing TV ads at least "sometimes." Print media and radio have more evenly distributed responses, suggesting moderate engagement. In-store displays and hoardings also show strong visibility, with over 70% of respondents noticing these ads at varying frequencies. Overall, TV and physical displays appear to be the most effective advertisement channels among respondents.

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Correlation Matrix among Variables

Variables	CONSDU (Consumer Durables)	ECO (Economic)	CUL (Cultural)	SOCI (Social)	AME (Amenities)	DIG (Digitalisation)
CONSDU	1.000	0.742**	0.689**	0.665**	0.601**	0.723**
ECO	0.742**	1.000	0.621**	0.598**	0.546**	0.704**
CUL	0.689**	0.621**	1.000	0.671**	0.572**	0.640**
SOCI	0.665**	0.598**	0.671**	1.000	0.533**	0.613**
AME	0.601**	0.546**	0.572**	0.533**	1.000	0.588**
DIG	0.723**	0.704**	0.640**	0.613**	0.588**	1.000

The correlation matrix shows a strong and statistically significant positive relationship between consumer durable purchases (CONSDU) and all independent variables. Economic (r = 0.742), digitalisation (r = 0.723), and cultural (r = 0.689) factors exhibit particularly high correlation values, suggesting their dominant influence on consumer behaviour. This affirms that as income, cultural orientation, and digital exposure increase, so does the likelihood of purchasing durable goods. Lower, but still significant, correlations with amenities and social factors highlight their contributory, though relatively moderate, influence.

CONCLUSION

The present study explored the behavioural dimensions influencing the purchase of consumer durables in Kerala, using primary data collected from 50 respondents. The analysis revealed strong interconnections between economic, cultural, social, and digitalisation factors in shaping consumer preferences. The correlation trends confirmed significant positive relationships among all key variables, with economic conditions and digital exposure demonstrating the strongest association with consumer durable purchases. Ownership patterns of household commodities further highlighted a consumer shift toward technologically advanced products such as air conditioners, microwave ovens, and personal computers, while traditional appliances like mixers and grinders reflected comparatively lower usage. Advertisement visibility through television and digital displays appeared to be the most impactful, shaping awareness and reinforcing consumer brand consciousness. The study affirms that Kerala's consumers are becoming increasingly informed, digitally engaged, and selective, reflecting an evolved behavioural pattern driven by lifestyle aspirations, access to technology, and media influence.

SUGGESTIONS

1. Strengthen digital and television-based advertising strategies.
2. Emphasize product quality, durability, and after-sale services.
3. Introduce attractive pricing schemes and promotional offers.
4. Localize marketing campaigns to reflect regional preferences.
5. Conduct awareness drives on the utility of modern appliances.

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