

CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR TRENDS IN ON-CAMPUS RETAIL SPACES

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ABSTRACT

This research paper studies the purchasing behaviours of consumers in on-campus retail spaces. The study, based on a survey of 61 respondents including students, staff, teachers, and visitors, found that the most important factors influencing purchasing decisions are product availability that is approximately 64% and quality convenience is approximately 50%. Other key factors include price and brand name, with students being specifically Inclined towards finding a pocket-friendly options. The research also highlights the role of modern technologies and growing consumer expectations. A significant finding is that about one-third of consumers regularly compare on-campus and off-campus prices, and a large majority (90.2%) prefer digital payment methods like UPI/QR codes. The study points a high level of satisfaction (100%) with the transformation of retail outlets, particularly concerning improvements in quality, ambience, and digital services following the COVID-19 pandemic. Furthermore, the paper shows a surging interest in sustainability, with 83.3% of consumers supporting the idea of retail stores keeping eco-friendly products. The study concludes that on-campus retail spaces need to adapt to these changing consumer expectations by offering affordability, convenience, and sustainable options to enhance customer satisfaction and engagement

Key Words: Retail, on-campus, consumer behaviour, trends

1. Introduction

In today's dynamic culture of educational institutions on-campus retail spaces such as canteens, book stores, cafes and general stores play a crucial role in shaping the consumer experience. These on-campus retail outlets not only look after the everyday needs of consumers but also contribute to their lifestyle, demands and their pattern of consumptions.

Most consumers in our college are deeply influenced by certain aspects which deeply show their consumer behaviour is majorly influenced by product availability, quality convenience, brand name, price etc. With the growing digital landscape of payment in today's world and evolving consumer expectations, the traditional retail ideas are not relevant now. A more data centric approach should be taken to make data driven decisions which in turn results in profit generation. This study aims to analyse important factors that are involved in purchasing decisions of consumers. And we will talk about ideas that can support consumers better to improve their purchasing behaviour and also gives them satisfaction.

1.1 What Is on-campus retail consumer behaviour?

It is the behaviour of various people inside the campus whether be students, teachers, staff, visitors etc. when they use the retail outlets in campus premises. Such as canteen, stationery shops, general stores and cafe.

This behaviour depends on various factors like their time of visit, frequency of visits, and items they purchase during visit. Retail consumer behaviour in college is majorly dependent on factors like price, product availability, quality convenience, brand name, peer influence, discounts, offers and cleanliness or ambience.

1.2 Why is on-campus consumer behaviour important?

It is important because it improves the pricing, value and brand image of on-campus stores due to which we can see a change in perception of visitors. On-campus retail consumer behaviour helps



the retailers to keep proper stock at right time because of which colleges can plan a better retail infrastructure which will eventually help the shopkeeper to attract more and more visitors.

1.3 History of on-campus retail consumer behaviour and its transformation with time

On-campus retail consumer behaviour changes with the time, evolution of digital technologies and changing lifestyles of students. Let us look at the behaviour of on-campus retail consumers in different era. During conventional era (pre 2000s) campus retail was limited to basic amenities like canteens, small stationery shops, book shops. Most purchase that was happening depends mainly on need and payments were done in cash only. Limited product variety was available. Between 2000-2010 which was also called the early transformation era campuses start introducing chain businesses like subway, McDonald's etc. and large book stores. With the rise in usage of debit cards for payments and early mobile phones start influencing the on-campus retail consumer behaviour. Campus consumers in this era start becoming more brand conscious. Between 2010 to 2019 which is also the digital transformation era, rise of smart phones and payment apps start influencing buying behaviour. Shops and cafes in campus start giving facilities like wi-fi, good ambience. Online ordering, social media marketing and paperless transaction start influencing decision making. Need based purchases start getting converted to experience-based purchases. Student start expecting speed and quality. Then comes the COVID era (2020-21), Campuses were shut and when reopened major stress was given on safety, hygiene and no contact services. Student start becoming more health conscious. Post covid era (2022 – present), Increase in online orders can be seen nowadays. No contact money exchange services are dominating like UPS/ QR code. Student start demanding technology-enabled services. More impulse buying behaviour can be seen nowadays

2. Literature review

Research study of Fareq, Shivakar and Salunke (march 2024), published in the International Journal of Agriculture Extension and Social Development provides an informative research study of consumer behaviour among college students. Researcher totally analysed the psychological, social and economic traits that shapes the student purchasing acumen. They highlighted factors such as peer influence, brand image, pocket friendliness, lifestyle and digital reach among students. Their findings show the inter relation of students purchasing behaviour with the rising social media influence and peer suggestions. Moreover, they also given stress on convenience and rising number of online platforms influencing their purchasing behaviour. They primarily focused on common behaviour patterns without going deep in specific consumer behaviour. Furthermore, their study also lacks in environmental factors, sustainability and cultural diversity inclusion. The researchers are also confined to only specific campus which open the further scope of research in future.

The research study by **Harakova M.** (**Dec. 2015**), published in the **Journal of competitiveness** provides a thorough analysis of consumer behaviour of college students in Czech Republic. Study gives stress on purchasing patterns, brand preferences and decision- making influences. Study emphasises that students with their combined duo of being unique and leveraging modern technologies for purchasing gives the perfect essence of the research. Harakova also listed the factor of limitations that students keep in their mind like unique lifestyle, budget limitations, due to which student tend to make a balance between value for money and aspirational consumption. Even after listing the fascinating features there are certain areas of concern like this study is only confined to Czech Republic. On-campus consumers include teacher, staff, visitor and most importantly student but research is only limited to students which provides a further scope of research in future.

The research study by Hang y. (2024), published in The EUrASEANs: Journal on Global Socio-economic Dynamics, presents a overall analysis on growing consumer behaviour among college



students in China. Study revolves around the certain factors like fast digital adoption, cultural uniqueness and economic evolutions which influences the purchasing behaviour of students. Findings mention that their purchasing decision majorly depend on trends going on in social media domain, particularly driven by influencers and peer networks. Moreover, study gives more stress on the student's inclination towards quick commerce, digital payments. Study also emphasises the consumer preference and habit depending on the financial and urban - rural background. Despite of these important points listed there are certain limitations in the research. This study majorly focused on the macro level behaviour and lacks specific research in particular areas such as canteen, bookstores and cafes. It also gives less attention to the transformation of on-campus retail consumer behaviour from the pre-2000s era to Genz generation, which gives this study a further of research in future.

The research study prepared by Kim, Lee and Kim (August 2015) published in Culinary Science and Hospitality research, defines the innate relationship between physical environment of retail spaces, consumers satisfaction and consumer behaviour among college students. Study mainly focuses on facility-related things in college like cafe, dining spaces, cleanliness and ambience etc. Gist that this study have is if there is good physical environment in college then it turns in positive consumer behaviour. Despite listing various salient features study was majorly focused on foodrelated environment and gives less inclusion to the areas like canteens, cafe and book stores. Sample is confined to college students only, no inclusion of teachers, professors, staff, visitor was seen. There are several behavioural outcomes were given less light like visit frequency, spending, needs etc. There was cultural and geographical limitation in study as it was related to Korean context only the work by Liu, Liu, and Xiu proposes a novel approach to identifying students in need by using consumer behaviour psychology theory, while research by Ya Ting L specifically examines the connection between lifestyle choices and travel-related consumer habits. The influence of the digital world is another major area of focus. The study by Wei Chen c. looks at ecommerce behaviour among students in Taiwan and China, and more recent research by Alizadeh and Nazarpour explores the modern impact of AI like ChatGPT on how Iranian students search for information online. This is complemented by the work of Wang L and Wang S, who investigated the flow experience during online searches for Chinese students. Even specific digital products have been analysed, as seen in the research by Lin K. and Lin Mingyi on the consumer behaviour related to electric dictionaries in Kaohsiung.

The research also extends to consumption related to food, health, and the environment. A study by Tamashiro, Murari, and Oliveira looked at the socio-environmental behaviour of college students in Brazil, a theme that is spread in a more recent case study by Guan, Liu, and et al. on students' thoughts of reducing food plastic packaging in China. Health and safety are also Important topics, with Wang and Yueh studying food safety awareness in Taiwan and Mainland China, and Chen T. P. looking into meat safety hygiene among students in Tainan. Even particular product categories like beverages have been explored by researchers like **Chih Yuan C.** Finally, some studies focus on very specific contexts and demographics. The work by Im Hyo-ji, Lee Sang mook, and Kim Hyun-joo examines the important relationship between the physical environment of a store and student satisfaction. Other research confines in on particular groups, such as the study by Ming xian and Li ming xian on the consuming behaviour of female students regarding cosmetics in Taiwan. Together, these studies paint a wide-ranging picture of a field that seeks to understand student consumers from nearly every angle. In all the above studies point related to evolution of oncampus behaviour was missing, which has a significant effect in shaping consumer behaviour in college campus. Less stress was given on the selling of eco-friendly and sustainable products on the campus outlets. Above studies mainly focused on student behaviour in campus purchasing whereas teachers, staffs, and visitors were not included.



3. Methodology

This study has various objectives to fulfil like factors responsible for purchasing behaviour, culture, pricing, convenience, selling of eco-friendly and sustainable products, transformation in consumer behaviour over time. For doing all these studies there are certain methods to involve. Study is based on descriptive statistics design for identifying and evaluating the factors that affects the consumer behaviour. Study also uses analytical study to breakdown survey responses, compare past vs present trends, decoding consumer behaviour. Descriptive statistics is used for calculating percentage, frequency, average for various responses that we get from the data. Comparative analysis was done to know the pre COVID vs post COVID consumer behaviour. Trend analysis was done to learn about the changes in consumer behaviour over time.

Population sample comprises of 61 respondents (as of now, data may be expanded). Respondents include students, visitors, staff and teachers. A simple data collection technique was used which includes a questionnaire floated. Primary data was collected using a google form which includes both open ended and close ended questions. Questionnaire include questions related to various dimensions like factors influencing consumer behaviour, frequency of visits and average spending per visit, facility of digital payments, overall perception on pricing and availability. Secondary data was collected through literature reviews from various academic studies and journals related to oncampus consumer behaviour of students in college. This study aimed to understand the factors that influence the purchasing decisions of consumers in on-campus retail spaces. We wanted to explore various aspects, including the impact of campus culture, pricing, product convenience, the growing demand for sustainable products, and how consumer habits have changed over time. To achieve these goals, we adopted a research approach that combined descriptive and analytical methods.

The core of our research was a survey designed to gather initial information from the campus community. This combination of participants allowed us to get a comprehensive idea of campus-wide consumer behaviour. The primary tool for data collection was a straightforward questionnaire created using Google Forms. This survey included questions which gives the respondents the flexibility to provide specific feedback. The questions were carefully made to cover key areas such as the factors influencing their purchases, how often they visit campus stores, their average spending, preferred payment methods, and their opinions on product pricing and availability.

This involved calculating percentages, frequencies, and averages from the survey responses to identify common trends and patterns in consumer behaviour. For instance, we calculated the percentage of consumers who prioritize product availability over price. In addition to the primary data from our survey, this study also drew upon secondary data. We conducted a literature review, examining existing academic studies and journals related to on-campus consumer behaviour. This helped us ground our findings within the context of previous research and identify gaps that our study could address. By combining direct feedback from the campus community with insights from existing literature, we were able to build a comprehensive picture of the modern on-campus retail environment

4. Data analysis of on-campus retail consumer behaviour

As per the 61 responses that is collected from the survey, things have become clear as many of the responses received are totally inclined to a particular ideology. There are certain important factors that affecting the on-campus retail consumer behaviour. Collection of responses is still going and google form link is attached to get the clear idea. Let us get some insights on on-campus retail consumer behaviour backed with data.



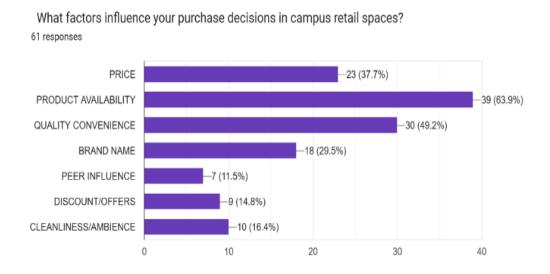


Figure 1. Important factors influencing purchase decision

As per the data collected product availability plays a major role in influencing the purchasing decision getting the percentage approx. 64%. And the second important factor is quality convenience getting approx. 50%. These two are important deciding factors because anyone visiting on-campus retail outlets is not coming with much expectations. They just want that their respective needs to get fulfilled. Other two important factors are price (37.7%) and brand name (29.5%), these two factors are also important as students specifically tends to buy in a pocket friendly manner and due to their awareness about the current market on-goings they also look for brand in their budget.

4.1Role of campus culture, pricing and convenience in on-campus retail consumer behaviourPrice is a very important factor for consumers before buying anything from the campus. Many also do compare the prices off-campus vs on-campus before buying any stuff. Even a small change in price or discount offers can change the purchasing decisions of consumers. Low prices can override the brand image, if money saving is the prime motive.

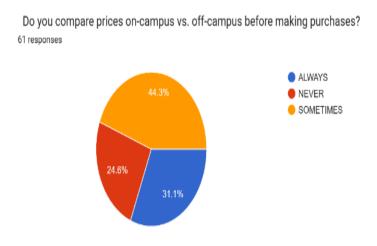


Figure 2. Price comparison



Here from the above pie-chart it is clearly visible that 31.1% consumers always compare the prices whereas 24.6% never compare, reasons can be deciphered into both ways either they are happy with facilities of on-campus retail space or totally unhappy. Mobile commerce became an effective part of campus culture. Due to continuous evolution of digital payments over ages, campus culture is also deeply affected due to this. Other payment options like mobile wallet, cash etc significantly impact campus culture of consumer buying.



Figure 3. Payment methods used by the consumers

Time constraints also play important role in shaping consumer behaviour. Due to their busy schedule in college and offices, consumers have different time preferences to reach the retail outlets. Traffic in evening time can be seen in most of the colleges as it is the time students found themselves free from the scheduled day, and they buy different stuffs at a one go. This also shows a aspect of consumer behaviour in which the buying can also be time dependent. Many consumers prefer to travel short distances that's why they go to on-campus retail outlets. Digital payment options available at on-campus retail outlets also attracts more and more consumers.

4.2 Consumer views on transformational behaviour, selling of sustainable eco-friendly products on outlet and other demographic factors.

Many consumers are happy with the transformation of on-campus retail outlets, which significantly impacted their business and growth. If we compare today's era with the conventional era the quality, needs, ambience, catering had changed a lot. With the evolution of different technologies and setup of various startups adds to this change. We got 100% positive review on this transformation aspect. Consumer nowadays expect a seamless integration of the digital and physical facilities. Real-time inventory and digital convenience has affected a lot in evolving consumer behaviour on on-campus retail spaces. Nowadays our youth is getting more concerned about using sustainable products in their daily life. It is a new practice slowly affecting the consumer buying behaviour these days. Consumers these days are seeking genuine efforts in transparency in the usage of respective products. Student these days. Practices like veganism, minimalism and ethical consumption are totally creating impact on consumer behaviour in retail outlets. Many institutional-level changes such as green supply chains campus outlets, recycling bins near retail outlet happening these days clearly reflects why we got 83.3% review on this factor.

4.3 Other demographical factors affecting on-campus consumer retail behaviour.

Males and females may show differing preferences for products such as clothing, technology, food, and personal care items. Males comprise of 72.1% and female comprises of 27.9% according the survey floated. Males prioritize gadgets and sports related items more whereas, females might prefer fashion and wellness products more. Females mostly take decisions based on emotional driven and aesthetics ads. Male decision depends on the performance of the product.



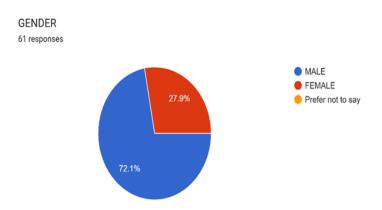
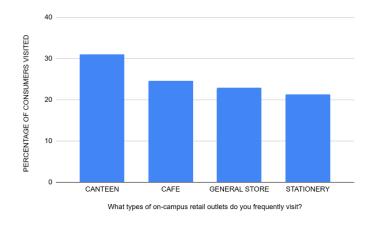


Figure 4. Gender breakdown

Now coming to the role of responders in our survey, that we get in a campus, students visit retail outlets in huge quantity as it is their place to live and eat. Number of staffs, teachers and visitor is quiet less and their purchases also is urgency driven. 83.6 % are students, 8.2 % are visitors and rest were staffs and teachers. If we look at the most visited outlet then we get a similar percentage for all the shops like 21.3 % visited general store, 31.1% visited canteen, 24.6% café and stationery was visited by 23% of the consumers.



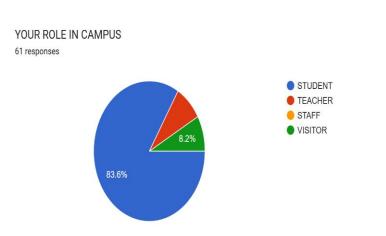


Figure 5. frequently visited outlets



Role of visitors Is quite varied as 83.6% are students, 8.2% are visitors, rest are staffs and teachers. As per response that we get in a campus, students visit retail outlets in huge quantity as it is their place to live and eat. Number of staffs, teachers and visitor is quiet less and their purchases also is urgency driven. students use to visit the outlets the most as It Is like their home and In case any urgency arrives It Is first place to get all the required belongings. Average spending per visit is a relative term depending on person to person. Certain factors affect the spending patterns like type of outlet, purpose of visit, time of month, peer influence etc. according to the data that we have collected most of consumers spends less than 100 In their visits to the campus outlets.

Satisfaction of consumers is very necessary and salient feature to comprehensively analyze the consumer behaviour in any place and most Important In these Is the product quality and pricing, according to our study 50.8% consumers are satisfied with the product quality of the retail outlets in campus. However, it has a scope of improvement and with coming innovations and evolution of new technologies this loophole will also get sorted with time.

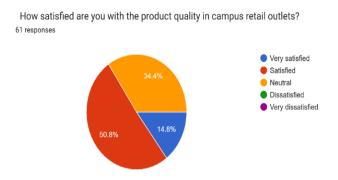


Figure 6. satisfaction of consumers with product quality

Coming the next important factor is price,42.6% has neutral reviews on this topic related to satisfaction of pricing. Satisfaction level of consumers in pricing aspect majorly depends on traits like service quality, speed of service, cleanliness, ambience etc. Pricing Is very sensitive and in some case it also become case sensitive.





Mostly consumers visit the retail outlets in campus only 2-3 times a week. Frequency of visit depends on the factors classes timings, schedule, routine, events, seminars, studying, daily needs and usage patterns etc.

5. Results and conclusion

The study reflected several important information into the purchasing behaviour of consumers at on-campus retail outlets. The most influential factor driving consumer decisions was product availability, with approximately 65% of respondents giving their consent on it during their visits. Quality and convenience were the second priority, with around 50% indicating these as key behaviours. Price and brand name were also important, especially among students who prefer pocket-friendly options but remain aware of brand value. A salient finding was that nearly one-third of the consumers regularly compared on-campus and off-campus prices, reflecting a price-sensitive mindset. Convenience also played a important role, with many preferring short-distance travel to retail outlets and choosing digital payment methods like UPI and QR codes for quick transactions. The results indicated a high level of satisfaction regarding the transformation of retail outlets over time, with 100% of respondents positively praising improvements in quality, ambience, and digital services post-COVID. Furthermore, the growing interest towards sustainability was evident, as 83.3% of consumers supported the idea of selling eco-friendly products on campus. Regular footfall patterns showed that most consumers visited outlets 2-3 times a week, and their spending habits change based on outlet type, peer influence, and time of the month. While 50.8% of consumers were satisfied with product quality, views on pricing were more neutral, suggesting room for improvement in value perception. These findings provide a detailed view of current trends in campus-based consumer behaviour and set the groundwork for better retail planning.

This study gives an overall understanding of on-campus retail consumer behaviour by analysing the preferences, expectations and patterns of various consumer groups including student, staffs, teachers and visitors. Finding give stress on factors such as product availability, quality, convenience and price play crucial role in influencing purchasing decisions. The research also reflects the growing importance of digital payments, quick service, and technology base retail experiences in shaping modern consumer behaviours. A noticeable shift has been observed in post-COVID consumer behaviour, where students now prefer safe, hygienic, and digitally services. Additionally, the rising awareness and demand for sustainable and eco-friendly products reflect a change in lifestyle and purchasing priorities among the youth. Overall, the project concludes that campus retail spaces are evolving rapidly and must adapt to consumer expectations by offering affordability, convenience, digital innovation, and sustainable practices to enhance overall customer satisfaction and engagement.

6. Discussion

The study offers the consumer behaviour that is time-sensitive and need-based buying as buying here totally depend on the campus culture and convenience. Furthermore, the study highlights that students are not just passive consumers but are becoming increasingly aware of global issues like sustainability and ethical consumption. Pricing remains a mid-way area, with many students expressing neutral opinions, which may suggest a gap between perceived value and actual experience. The results align with existing literature but also add new terms by including not just students but also staff, teachers, and visitors, and by considering both historical transformation and modern expectations. Overall, the discussion highlights that campus retail is not just about selling products but creating a proper, meaningful experience that balances speed, price, technology, and sustainability.



7. Limitations and future scope

Despite providing valuable insights into on-campus retail consumer behaviour this study has certain limitations that need to be taken into consideration. Sample size of only 61 is limiting the reach of study, although there are responders from various institutes but it should be vast and many different colleges should be taken into consideration keeping in mind the regions, culture and institutions.

Secondly, the study relies heavily on self-collected data, which may involve personal biases or inaccurate views by respondents. The use of only basic descriptive analysis limits the statistical depth. More advanced statistical methods such as regression analysis, factor analysis, or structural equation modelling (SEM) could have offered deeper insights. Survey was conducted on short window of time, if it would have taken more time to collect data then reach and gist of data would have been more on the best side. The data collection of study was very simple it does not include any comparison factors between campuses like public vs private, urban vs rural settings etc.

This study is opening the door for further research and analysis in future. In future, studies can include various colleges across different states and cities to encompass various cultural, regional and social elements influencing the consumer behaviour. Future studies can include multiple respondents that come into campus for various services like vendors, hawkers, retail managers, construction workers etc. to give an overall view of the factors influencing consumer behaviour. More stress can be given on the green consumption in college campuses with the rise in demand of eco-friendly and sustainable products by the on-campus retail consumers, as it will eventually result in the willingness to pay and also will result in their frequent visit to campus. A thorough study of the integration of technological facilities affecting psychological behaviour of on-campus retail consumers can be also be considered as stepping stone in researches to come.

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