Library Progress International
Vol.44 No. 3, Jul-Dec 2024: P. 16026-16036

Print version ISSN 0970 1052
Online version ISSN 2320 317X

Original Article

Available online at www.bpasjournals.com

Choice of Retail Store Format: Factors Influencing the Consumer's Decision

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How to cite this article: Irfat Ahmad, Shailja Dixit (2024) Choice of Retail Store Format: Factors Influencing the Consumer's Decision. *Library Progress International,* 44(3), 16026-16036

1.1 Abstract

The purpose of this study is to provide a general understanding of grocery consumers 'retail format choices in the Indian market. The methodology adopted in this study is a qualitative, deductive, and interpretive approach. All the interpretations are drawn with a content analysis of recorded, semi-structured interviews and empirical evidence. This study used a stratified sampling method with a sample size of 100. The researcher has used descriptive and multivariate statistical techniques to evaluate the data. This study identifies education and income levels as key demographic factors influencing the retail format choice among Indian consumers. product quality offers and discounts, product displays, facility of online order placement and digital payment options have been identified as the most influential store attributes that determine the choice of format. The results of this study are based on data collected and reported from respondents based on their knowledge and experience in different formats. Limitations of this research include a lack of knowledge on whether each respondent had access to every format. This ultimately limits the applicability of the findings beyond general trends, as indicated by the data. The research provides grocery retailers with specific knowledge of the attribute's consumers consider the most important when choosing a retail format for their grocery shopping. The results of this study can be used to design marketing strategies and develop communication for target consumers in Indian markets. Considering the growing size of the Indian grocery industry and increasing competition among retailers, understanding the consumer format choice linkage is critical for new entrants.

Keywords**: Demographics, store attributes, grocery shopping,**

1.2 Introduction

The Indian grocery market has seen an unprecedented level of intensity in the last couple of years. The entry of many domestic and international players and the emergence of new retail formats (hyper-local, e-commerce platforms, and e-groceries) has radically transformed the sector's competitive landscape. Indian retail industry is projected to grow from US$ 779 billion in 2019 to US$1.8 trillion by 2030(IBEF, 2022).

The Indian grocery market can be broadly divided into organized and unorganized segments.

Organized retail is divided into modern retail, largely brick-and-mortar format, and online retail. The flow chart (Chart-1) below shows the basic categorization of the Indian retail market and its key players.

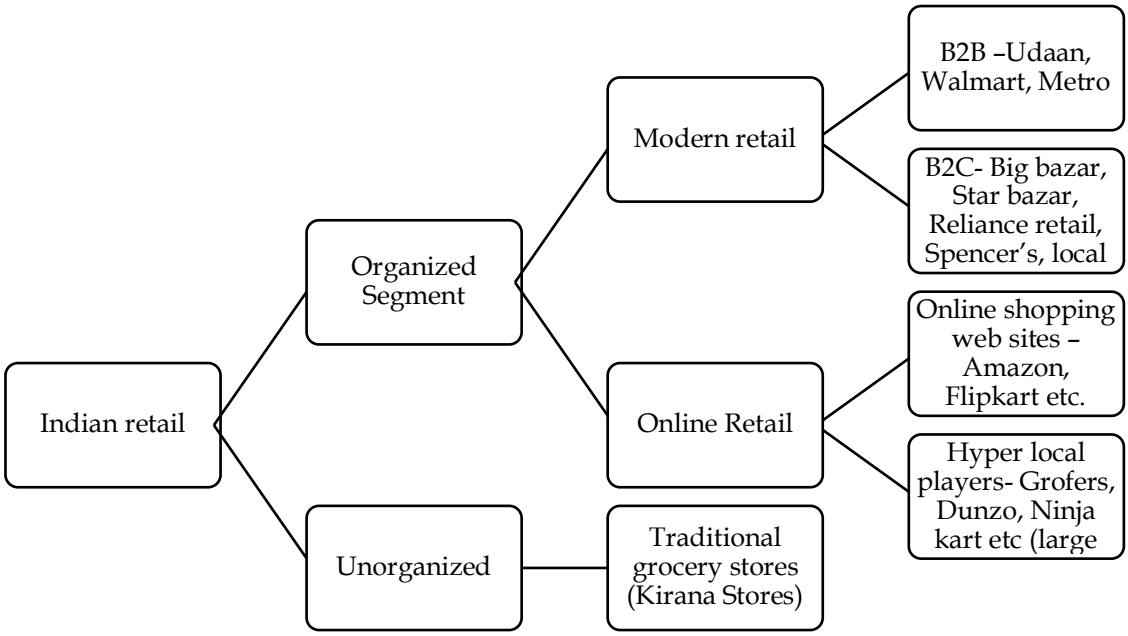

Chart-1(Source-Author)

With the blurring of lines between offline and online players, Omni channel grocery retail is prompting exponential growth. Pure-play, e-grocers, and hyper-local players, along with the Omni channel ecosystem, have worked as catalysts to disrupt the entire sector, where until a few years ago, traditional unorganized players had a monopoly. Reliance retail has enhanced direct consumer offerings with Jio Mart and the kirana ecosystem in the organized retail landscape. D-Mart (Avenue Supermarket), with 284 stores across India, is also making inroads with new offerings allowing online shopping and home delivery. Until 2013, traditional retail was the leading player with a 98.6% market share, but with the entry of modern retail, it started losing its share, and in 2019, it stood at 95.7%. In 2024, traditional retail is expected to be at 91.4% share, organized retail at 6.3%, and online retail at 2.3 %.((IBEF, 2022).

Modern retail and e-grocery platforms possess several key competitive advantages compared to traditional grocery stores (kirana stores). Including the ability to sell items at a lower process and offer discounts and other benefits besides changing consumers' shopping experiences, where they can browse several products before making a final purchase decision. In response to these competitive threats, traditional retailers with an advantage in location and personalized attention for consumers are looking to change their operational efficiencies. The change pertains to retaining their customers by offering credit and home delivery facilities and trying to use technology to create and maintain a customer database and to remain connected with them to lure them for repeat purchases.

With the changes in market dynamics and consumer preferences, retailers must better understand grocery consumers in India. Although plenty of literature examines the issues in the grocery context, few recent studies have attempted to characterize Indian grocery markets in terms of consumer channels, format choices, and reasons for their choices (store attributes). However, most studies are limited to changing consumer preferences toward online retailing, product purchase patterns, and how technology shapes the purchase experience.

This study aims to provide a general understanding of grocery consumers' retail format choices in the Indian marketplace. To accomplish this purpose, we used demographics to examine consumer format choice across the five most popular retail formats in the Indian market-shopping apps, local retail chains, online shopping sites, supermarkets, and traditional grocery stores. In addition, we investigated the desired store attributes of the consumer groups that frequently use each format. The demographic characteristics and desired store attributes of Indian consumers were identified and linked to format choice. We have further examined the key attributes that Indian grocery shoppers expect from traditional grocery stores, seeing the importance and criticality of that format for the Indian market, even in the future. With increased competition in the sector, the evolution of new formats, and changing demographics of Indian consumers, understanding consumer format choice linkages will be critical for retailers 'performance in the industry.

1.3 Literature Review

1.3. Consumer Demographics and Retail Format Choice

With the introduction of new formats, many studies have been conducted on the role of demographic factors in grocery shoppers' choice of retail formats across markets and geographies. In their study, Crask and Reynolds (1978) dealt with frequent and infrequent shoppers of departmental stores and suggested that frequent customers were likely to be younger, more educated, and had higher incomes. Arnold et al. (1983) found significant differences between the demographic profiles (e.g., age, education, and household size) of large-format department store shoppers and non-shoppers. Carpenter and Moore (2006) examined the role of consumer demographics and store attributes on retail format choice among US consumers and evaluated five different retail formats(specialty grocers, traditional supermarkets, supercenters, warehouse clubs, and internet grocers). Their study indicated that income was the only significant predictor of patronage of format choice. Zeithaml (1985), in his research on US markets, examined the effect of five demographic variables (gender, female working status, age, income, marital status) on supermarket shopping variables (e.g., shopping time, number of supermarkets visited weekly, amount of money spent). The study emphasized that changes in family units (more working females, male shoppers, single, divorced, or widowed households) would drive consumer preference for grocery shopping. Fox et al. (2004) examine the effect of demographics on format choice across three formats: grocery stores, mass merchandisers, and drug stores. Solgard and Hansen (2003) in their study state that household size and income level influence the choice of retail format for grocery shopping. These findings were supported by another study on Indian consumers by Prasad and Aryasri (2011), who established that shoppers' age, gender, monthly income, and family size impact retail format choice decisions. While most studies concluded age, income, and gender as the determining factors for the selection of format choice, (Srividya, N,2016) frequently stated that younger consumers, irrespective of gender, prefer to buy groceries online. Some younger customers focus on buying, seeing the changing lifestyle and time constraints (Kiran et al., 2008)). Consumers in the higher income group and higher education level prefer to visit supermarkets (Kumar et al.,2016) and local retail chains. Most of these stores are situated in shopping malls and allow shopping for other products under one roof. Consumers in the lower income group (Gupta & Tandon, 2013) and older age prefer to buy groceries from traditional stores, largely due to the convenience of proximity (Broad bridge and Calderwood, 2002) and available credit facilities (Rani & Ramchandra, 2015). A study of gender as a demographic factor revealed that female consumers prefer to buy groceries online, as it saves time to visit a store (Srividya, N, 2016).

1.3. Store Attribute and Format Choice

Martineau (1958) categorizes store attributes into two main categories: functional and psychological. The functional category includes location, product assortment, and store layout attributes. The psychological category represents feelings generated by the functional elements of the stores. For this study, both functional and psychological attributes were studied in literature and for research.

Functional attributes, location, and income level have been cited as key attributes to decide for format choice in earlier studies (Brown, 1989; Craig, Ghosh, and McLafferty, 1984; Huff, 1964, Houthakkr 1971, Fotheringham 1988; Meyer and Eagle, 1982, Palma, Emerson and House 2003, Sinha and Banerjee, 2004). Later, researchers suggested factors such as price and range of products as deciding attributes to decide on format choice (Singh & Powell, 2002, Zulqarnain, Zafar and Shahzad, 2015). A study in Vietnam on the factors that influence consumers' decision-making when selecting traditional bazaars versus supermarkets revealed that price plays a key role in selecting shopping outlets for processed food, drinks, and non-food products (Maruyama and Trung, 2007). Many other studies also support this assumption that price is the differentiating factor in format choice (Bell, Ho, and Tang, 2001; Freymann, 2002; Arnold, Oum, and Tigert, 1983, Taylor, 2003). Regarding functional parameters, customer patronage of grocery stores is found to be positively related to cleanliness, location, variety, product selection, price competitiveness, and store atmosphere. (Brown, 1989; Craig, Ghosh, and McLafferty, 1984; Carpenter and Moore, 2006 Baker et al., 1994; Donovan et al., 1994, Goswami & Mishra2009).

On psychological attributes, researchers have studied the role of trust, customer services, and product assortment on format choice and found a positive correlation between these attributes in format choice (Arnold, 1997; Sparks, 1995). Kristiansen (2014) supports this view by saying that building trust with consumers by format is critical and reduces the perceived risks involved in shopping at a specific store. This concept of trust is largely integrated with market or social exchanges, such as the quality of the products sold, the manner in which the consumer is subjected, and the pricing of items in the store. Besides trust, strategic efforts by retailers to match consumer needs through their channels and store commitment toward consumers' needs also help build consumer loyalty towards a format (Macintosh and Lockshin, 1997, Christy, Oliver, &

Penn (1996). This commitment can result from a store's repeated attempts to engage with the consumer. These engagement activities are usually through communication channels, advertisements, rewards, coupons, or marketing activities. They further argue that consumer satisfaction with the store plays a critical role in the overall evaluation of stores. Miranda et al.(2005) also supported the role of satisfaction in building trust and consumer loyalty toward stores. Trust and satisfaction build a sense of familiarity with the store, affecting the shopping speed and efficiency.(Wahl,1992). Familiarity with stores is largely driven by the courtesy and nature of store personnel, irrespective of format (Carpenter and Moore, 2006). Trust, familiarity with stores, and satisfaction further build emotions toward a store, leading to frequent buying from the same store (Macik & Nalewajek (2013). Laine (2014), while researching factors influencing Finnish consumers for grocery shopping, took this point forward where they established that previous experience and familiarity with the store led to a frequent visit to a particular store.

Format choice also depends on consumers' socioeconomic backgrounds and personalities (Dodge and Summer, 1969). Lumpkin et al. (1985) found that, compared to young shoppers, elderly shoppers were less price-conscious, and the proximity of residence to the store was not an important factor for them. They considered shopping a recreational activity and thus chose a store perceived to be high on "entertainment" value. Because of this, the kids' play area and parking area are also featured as deciding factors for format choice (Khurram L. Bhatti. et al. (2015). With changes in demographics and income levels, consumers now see grocery shopping as a recreational activity and user convenience and comfort in selecting a format (Yadav and Verma, 2015, Sinha and Banerjee, 2004). Radka (2018) studied the format choice decision among Czech consumers and took the concept of convenience further by adding delivery time and minimum delivery orders as factors of format selection with the growing popularity of home delivery options from both online and offline formats. Format choice is also influenced by shopper characteristics and consumption patterns (Leszczyc et al., 1979; Kim and Park, 1997). For example, consumers for monthly grocery buying may prefer supermarkets where shopping can be linked with entertainment and family outings. Still, for short fill-ins, nearby local stores are preferred (Kahn and Schmittlein, 1989, Sinha and Banerjee, 2004).

In summary, the literature on format choice over the last 30-40 years has focused on a number of issues and contexts, including the functional parameters of location, income, price, etc., and psychological factors such as trust, familiarity, and in-store experience. Recent literature has discussed the recreational nature of grocery shopping with the advent of new formats and changes in consumer profiles. (Cort and Dominguez, 1977, Gehrt and Yan, 2004, Schoenbachler and Gordon, 2002, Sinha and Banerjee, 2004, Kumar et al. l 2016, Radka, 2018). Owing to the very nature of the context, the current research is intended to establish a general understanding of grocery store format choice in the Indian market under current competitive conditions, where many formats are evolving, and older ones are reworking their offering patterns. This comprehensive study incorporates demographics and store attributes across five retail formats.

1.4 Research Methodology

1.4. Sampling Method & Data Collection

The sampling method was designed to capture a representation of the Indian demographic group based on age, education, monthly income, and employment status. To control for the size and cost of the study, the sampling method focused on providing representation among demographic groups across large, medium, and small cities. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire from a sample of Indian consumers aged 18 years and older. Personal interviews were used to assess their effectiveness and efficiency, and they reached a range of consumers. Data on grocery shoppers were collected through the snowball sampling method, and later stratified sampling was used to identify 150 consumers for the survey. Of the 150 identified consumers, 100 completed the interviews. The questionnaire was prepared after a detailed literature review of the factors responsible for the format selection. A detailed literature review suggested that the key factors for format selection in the Indian context are location, the ambiance of stores, quality of products, discounts, and offers, product displays, trust, familiarity, experience with the retailer, shopping convenience in terms of payment options, free home delivery, and facilities to provide orders through mobile and online channels. A total of 62 factors were considered for this study based on various parameters.

1.4. Measurement

Measures for this study's variables were taken from previous research and were developed directly for this study. The importance of the 15 store attributes was measured on a five-point interval scale ranging from not important to critical. The measures for format choice were developed for the study using a five-point interval scale (i.e., never, rarely, sometimes, often, and always) that measured how often consumers shop in kirana stores, supermarkets, local retail chains, online

shopping sites, and shopping apps. For the supermarket, consumers were given examples of Big Bazar, Spencer's, etc., while for online shopping, examples of Amazon and Flipkart were given. For shopping apps, consumers were told examples of Grofers and Big baskets. For the local retail chain, examples of branded stores with 2-3 outlets in the city were cited as examples that were more organized than traditional stores. For traditional stores, consumers were asked to refer to neighborhood grocery stores called kirana stores of their choice. Demographic data, including income, education, age, gender, and marital status, were also collected.

1.4. Analysis

Data collected through the survey was analyzed and presented in the master table. Required sub-tables were prepared to measure the effects of demographics and stores on format choice. A combination of descriptive and inferential statistical techniques was used in this study. KS test (Kolmogorov-Smirnov) for normality was conducted. The data were found to be normally distributed. Thus, non-parametric tests, such as the Mann-Whitney U and Kruskal Wallis tests, were used. To rank the preferences, the Friedman rank test was also performed. To determine this association, a Pearson Correlation test was conducted. Multiple linear regression analysis was conducted to determine the factors that influenced the selection of retail formats.

1.5 Data analysis and results

1.5. **Sample Characteristics: The sample includes 100 respondents, comprising mostly males (58%) against 42% females, indicating** slightly less female representation according to most recent census data. Most respondents comprised the 22-25 age group (27%) followed by 18-21 years (21%). Both 30-40 years and above 40 age groups represented 20%, while only 12% of respondents were included from the 26-30 age group. Most respondents included in this study were having master's degrees (48%), while others were bachelor 's(20%), professional (26%), and doctorate (6%). the majority were students (28%), while the balance was involved in other occupational activities like teachers (20%), self-employed (16%), and executives (26%). The income of the respondents ranges from ₹10,000 to more than one lakh, majority earning ₹10,000 to ₹30,000 (46%), ₹30,000 to ₹50,000 (23%), ₹75,000 to one lakh (3%) and 18% were earning more than one lakh in a month. Among all, 47% of respondents were married, and 53% were unmarried (Table I).

Variable	Label	Frequency	Percent (%)
Gender	Male	58	58.0
	Female	42	42.0
Age	18-21	21	21.0
	22-25	27	27.0
	26-30	12	12.0
	30-40	20	20.0
	Above 40	20	20.0
Qualification	Bachelor	20	20.0
	Master	48	48.0
	Professional	26	26.0
	Doctorate	6	6.0
Employment Status	Student	28	28.0
	Teacher	20	20.0
	Self Employed	16	16.0
	Executive	26	26.0
Monthly Income (,000)	10-30	46	46.0
	30-50	23	23.0
	50-75	10	10.0
	75-100	3	3.0
	Above 100	18	18.0
Marital Status	Single	53	53.0
	Married	47	47.0

Table ***I***: Sample Characteristics

1.5. Consumer Demographic and Format Choice

Using stepwise regression, the effects of demographic variables including age, education, income, and employment status on the five individual choices were examined. The results of the regression models for three dependent variables (local retail chains and online shopping sites) were significant, including distinct predictors at varying levels. The overall regression model for shopping apps yielded a significant statistic (f =4.1, p <0.004). The regression model for local retail chains is insignificant (f =.16, p=.918). The regression model for online shopping sites was insignificant (f= 1.2, p = 0.286). Again, the regression model for supermarkets (f = 4.1, p =.008) and kirana stores (f = 3.0, p = 0.021) was significant. Summarizing the findings, we can state that the regression analysis results were significant for *shopping apps, supermarkets,* and *kirana stores. In contrast, for local retail chains* and *online shopping sites*, the regression models were insignificant at the 0.05 level of significance (table ii). Since the results of the two regressions (*local retail chains* and *online shopping sites*) are insignificant, the models could be used for descriptive purposes only, and any inference or prediction should be avoided.

Model/DV	R	R2	Adjusted R2	Standard Error of the estimate	Sum of square	Df	Mean square	F	Sig.
Shopping Apps									
Regression	.385	.148	.113	1.456	35.094	4	8.773	4.1	.004
Residual					201.266	95	2.119		
Total					236.360	99			
Local retail Chains									
Regression	.072	.005	-.026	1.039	.542	3	.181	.16	.918
Residual					103.618	96	1.079		
Total					104.160	99			
Online Shopping Sites									
Regression	.196	.038	.008	1.177	5.308	3	1.769	1.2	.286
Residual					132.932	96	1.385		
Total					138.240	99			
Super Market									
Regression	.340	.115	.088	1.277	20.413	3	6.804	4.1	.008
Residual					156.587	96	1.631		
Total					177.000	99			
Kirana Stores									
Regression	.336	.113	.076	1.070	13.860	4	3.465	3.0	.021
Residual					108.780	95	1.145		
Total					122.640	99			

Table II. *Regression Model Summary*

Model/Predictor Variable	**Unstandardized coefficients**		**Standardised Coefficient**		**Significance**
	B	**Standard error**	**B**	**t**	
Shopping Apps					
(Constant)	5.142	.477		10.776	.000
Age	-.098	.162	-.093	-.605	.546
Education	-.331	.196	-.176	-1.684	.095
Employment Status	-.293	.179	-.235	-1.638	.105
Monthly Income	.020	.155	.020	.132	.896

Local Retail Chains					
(Constant)	3.499	.338		10.361	.000
Education	-.060	.138	-.048	-.434	.665
Employment Status	-.030	.117	-.037	-.260	.796
Monthly Income	-.004	.100	-.007	-.044	.965
Online Shopping Sites					
(Constant)	4.113	.383		10.750	.000
Education	-.025	.156	-.017	-.158	.875
Employment Status	.024	.132	.025	.180	.858
Monthly Income	-.161	.114	-.205	-1.416	.160
Super Market					
(Constant)	2.182	.415		5.255	.000
Education	.597	.170	.366	3.516	.001
Employment Status	.048	.143	.044	.334	.739
Monthly Income	-.137	.123	-.154	-1.112	.269
Kirana Stores					
(Constant)	3.939	.351		11.229	.000
Age	-.390	.119	-.510	-3.262	.002
Education	.104	.144	.076	.717	.475
Employment Status	.088	.131	.098	.668	.506
Monthly Income	.134	.114	.181	1.172	.244

Table III. *Estimates for demographic variables on format choice*

Referring to Table ***III***, showing model coefficients and their significance, it is noticeable that for ***shopping apps,*** education (β = -0.331, p = 0.095) and employment status (β = -0.293, p = 0.105) seems significantly important, but at a higher level of significance (10%). In the case of ***local retail chains*** and ***online shopping sites***, none of the predictors are significant and useful in predicting the choice, as all reported *p-values* are above 0.05. For the supermarket, education was the only predictor but highly significant (β = 0.597, p = 0.001). For kirana stores, age was found to be the main determinant and a significant contributor in the regression model ((β = -0.3903, p = 0.002).

An independent sample t-test determines whether there is a statistically significant difference between the means of the two groups (Neubach & Cohen, 1998). An independent sample t-test was conducted to test the hypothesis that significant gender differences exist among respondents with reference to format choice. The results of the independent sample t-test for retail formats are presented in Table IV. Levene's test shows variances are the same across format choices except for online shopping sites (p-value = 0.002). However, the tests were conducted assuming equal variance pertaining to sample size (field, 2009).

Variable	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means			
Format choice	F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference
Shopping Apps	1.294	.258	3.68	83.561	.003	.519
Local retail Chains	1.451	.231	-.551	92.675	.583	-.113
Online_Shopping_Sites	10.165	.002	-.165	97.994	.869	-.038
Super Market	1.365	.245	.215	93.290	.831	.057
Kirana Shops	3.967	.049	-.267	78.235	.790	-.062

Table IV. T-test statistic for gender on format choice

The t-tests that examined the effect of gender on retail format choice across the five format types indicated no significant differences between males and females in their choices (*p-values* > 0.05), except for online stores (t =3.68, p = .003, mean difference=.519). This implies that males are more inclined to choose grocery shopping apps, and the difference is higher

by 0.519 points.

1.5. Store attribute and format choice

The study aimed to identify the most influential attribute of retail formats that influences the choice of format for grocery shopping. For this purpose, the respondents were asked to rank the order of their preference (1-5) for each of the 14 attributes. For each attribute within each category, the mean score was calculated, and ranks were assigned accordingly, where the highest mean represents 1st rank, and the lowest mean represents the last rank. The results are summarized in Table V, which indicates that the *quality of the product* is ranked 1st across formats. Furthermore, for Shopping Apps, *experience with channel/seller* (rank = 2) is important, followed by the *time it saves to place and receive orders* (rank =3) along with store ambiance. For Local Retail Chains, the second most important variable is the *time it saves to place and receive orders* (rank = 2), and *offers & Discounts,* along with *online ordering facility,* are ranked 3rd. In the case of traditional grocery stores, *Online Ordering facilities* are ranked 2nd, and *product displays* are ranked 3rd. *Product display* and *time-saving* are ranked 2nd while *personalized attention* stood on 3rd rank for online shopping sites. For supermarkets, ease of payment is ranked 2nd, while the time it saves to place and receive an order is ranked 3rd.

Store Attributes	*Shopping Apps N=34*	*Local_Retail_ Chains N=10*	*Kirana Stores N=24*	*Online_ Shopping Sites N=33*	*Super markets N=22*
Location	3.41(9)	3.60(7)	3.79(11)	3.67(6)	3.36(10)
Ambience of store	3.88(3)	3.80(6)	4.00(7)	4.03(4)	3.35(11)
Offers & discount	3.12(12)	4.20(3)	4.13(4)	3.91(5)	3.90(5)
Quality of products	4.12(1)	5.00(1)	4.46(1)	4.64(1)	4.36(1)
Personalized attention	3.76(6)	4.10(4)	3.89(8)	4.04(3)	3.18(14)
Options to place my order- Phone/App/Website	3.41(9)	4.00(5)	3.88(9)	3.61(8)	3.27(12)
Ease of Payment methods	3.82(5)	2.60(8)	3.83(10)	3.61(8)	4.00(2)
Online ordering facility	3.29(10)	4.20(3)	4.33(2)	3.48(11)	3.55(8)
Free & convenient home delivery	3.50(8)	3.80(6)	4.08(6)	3.79(7)	3.73(7)
Product display & Merchandise	3.71(7)	5.00(1)	4.29(3)	4.33(2)	3.91(4)
Past experience with channel/seller	4.00(2)	2.00(11)	3.67 (12)	3.55(9)	3.41(9)
Feedback from friends and family	3.85(4)	2.40(9)	3.42(13)	3.36 (10)	3.21 (13)
The time it saves to place and receive orders	3.88(3)	4.80(2)	4.13(5)	4.33(2)	3.95(3)
Acquaintance with seller /its employees	3.19(11)	2.00(11)	3.25 (14)	3.26(12)	3.82(6)

Table V. *Means and ranks of the store attribute who frequent shops*

1.6 Conclusion and Discussion

Examination of the demographic variables on format choice indicated that for shopping apps, **education, and income level** are significant predictors of patronage. The stepwise regression model suggested that respondents with a higher income and sound educational background were likelier to shop from shopping apps. There were no indications in the data regarding the significance of other demographic factors. The regression model could not predict any direct impact of demographic factors on format choice for online shopping sites and local retail chains. In the case of supermarkets, **education** has been highlighted as a key predictor of patronage. In contrast, in the case of Kirana stores, **age** has emerged as a key predictor of patronage. Close analysis of the results indicates that education level plays a critical role in format choice, and with increasing levels of education, consumers tend to try newer formats more. Previous studies by Carpernter and Moore (2006), Arnold (1997), and Crask and Reynolds (1978) on US grocers also established income level as a significant predictor of format choice. Another dimension of this finding can be related to the digital payment facility associated with online formats and supermarkets. It can be established that education level drives higher adoption of newer

technology and reduces technological anxieties. Analysis of gender as a factor suggests that males are more inclined towards online shopping sites than females. In the Indian context, where women do most household grocery shopping, they may prefer physical formats for convenience, accessibility, and payment modes. Age can also be a predictor for kirana stores. Older consumers are generally more price-conscious and have different needs than younger grocery shoppers. Older consumers enjoy interactions more than younger consumers and prefer to shop in a store where they can receive special assistance services (Moschis et al., 2004).

The top five store attributes for shopping in supermarkets are offers and discounts, payment methods, Product display and merchandise, product quality, and time savings. Ranking for kirana stores was almost similar to that for supermarkets, except for online ordering facilities, which comparatively younger consumers cited. Time-saving, although highlighted in the top five attributes but ranked lower as grocery consumers at kirana stores, also use this opportunity to learn about the neighborhood from store owners and other store customers. Online ordering facilities and time-saving are ranked as the top five attributes besides product quality, offers and discounts, and product displays for local retail chains. The facility to place an online order is being highlighted as a key attribute both for kirana stores and the local retail chain, and it needs to be closely monitored by these formats. Personalized attention is ranked among the top five attributes of online shopping sites. With evolving technology and the usage of artificial intelligence supported by strong data analytics, online sites provide a different experience in terms of personalized offers basis past purchase history.

Experience and feedback from family and friends have been cited as key attributes of shopping apps. The presence of these attributes in the key determinant list indicates the trust factor of consumers, where most of these apps operate in a hyper-local format. Most of the time, the online customer portal is the communication medium between consumers and formats. During this study, many consumers raised the issue of delayed redressal of their complaints and grievances using these apps. In the case of shopping sites, since established companies are behind, a trust factor exists among consumers, which somehow seems missing in the case of apps.

An interesting attribute has been cited as payment options. With the increased penetration of digital options, consumers seek faster checkouts with more payment options beyond traditional card-swiping machines and cash counters. Most consumers cited the pain it takes to pay at these stores after long shopping hours, mostly due to old swiping machines and frequent issues related to Internet connectivity.

Overall, the results provide critical insights into the format choice of Indian grocery shoppers with regard to store attributes. Although attributes such as product quality, offers and discounts, merchandising, and product displays have been cited as the most critical factors, the results from this study clearly indicate that online order and digital payment facilities, as well as feedback and experience with format or store owners, are the other key determinants that influence the choice of format among Indian consumers for their grocery shopping.

1.7 Limitations and future research

The results of this study are based on data collected and reported from respondents based on their knowledge and experience in different formats. One of the limitations of this research is the lack of knowledge on whether these respondents had access to each format, which ultimately limits the applicability of the findings beyond general trends, as indicated by the data. Another area not explored in this research is the analysis of the data-basis construct of the urban, semi-urban, and rural markets. This distribution is critical in big markets such as India, where social, cultural, and geographical factors may influence choice. The sample size used in this study is another limitation that can also impact the overall applicability of the findings of this research. For future research, it is suggested to include factors such as household size and frequency of grocery shopping in a month. This could give us a clearer understanding of format choices among Indian consumers.

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