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Understanding Webrooming Behavior among Consumers in Bangalore: An S-O-R Perspective

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Abstract - Webrooming is a major consumer shopping behavior where consumers search and compare products online before purchasing the final item at a physical store. With an increase in the use of smartphones, online shopping platforms and physical retail stores, this study attempts to understand the factors influencing webrooming behavior of consumers in Bangalore using the Stimulus–Organism–Response (S-O-R) perspective. The study investigated the influence of online information quality, perceived risk, price consciousness, need for physical inspection and trust in physical stores on webrooming behavior. An online questionnaire using a five-point Likert scale was used to collect primary data. Convenience sampling was used in collecting the data from consumers in Bangalore. The collected data were analysed using descriptive statistics, correlation, multiple regression, hierarchical regression and K-means clustering. Perceived risk had the highest influence on web-rooming behavior followed by online information quality and price consciousness. Trust in physical stores and need for physical inspection did not significantly add to the prediction of web-rooming behavior. The study also identified consumer segments with different webrooming behavior, with differences observed primarily along age and education. The findings can assist retailers in understanding consumer behavior and improve their online and physical shopping experience.

Keywords: Webrooming, S-O-R, Online Information Quality, Perceived Risk, Price Consciousness, Bangalore, Consumer Behaviour

Today consumers use online and physical medium as part of their everyday shopping activity. Before buying any product, the consumer goes online, searches and compares the price of products, reads reviews and product descriptions before going to a physical store to look at the merchandise and make the purchase. This new pattern of consumer behaviour has led to webrooming tendency.

Webrooming is defined as searching and gathering product information from websites followed by a physical store purchase. The consumer might browse e-commerce sites, use social media, use search engines or read online reviews and then buy the item from a physical store. Webrooming is a prevalent tendency in the current era due to the increase of e-commerce, the use of smartphones and internet has increased tremendously. Webrooming involves product types like electronics, apparels, cosmetics and home appliances.

Consumers go for webrooming as they find it convenient to shop online as it gives them a clear idea about the product they are looking for, helps them compare prices and gives product reviews and pictures of the actual product. Some consumers still prefer to go to the physical store after shopping

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online to actually inspect and examine the product before buying it. There are other factors such as apprehension about online shopping, price consciousness, and trust in examining a product in person.

The S-O-R framework is based on the notion that external factors act as stimulus to an individual which affects the individual's appraisal of the situation and therefore influencing some response. In this study, OIQ, PR, PC and TPS are the main stimulus factors. NPI is the organism while Webrooming Behaviour is the response.

To put it simply, consumers receive stimulus or information about products from both online and offline sources which influences their intention to inspect an item before purchase. Therefore understanding S-O-R theory can help model the influence of these constructs on webrooming tendencies.

This study focuses on understanding of webrooming tendency of consumers in Bengaluru as they have easy access to both online and offline resources. This study can help different business owners to improve their products, services and pricing strategies online and offline. At the same time it can help the business owners to come up with strategies to prevent their products from being compared on both mediums. This study can also help the consumers get a clear idea of shopping offline and online. This study can add to the existing knowledge about webrooming tendency.

LITERATURE REVIEW

According to Verhoef et al. (2007), webrooming refers to consumers searching for product information through one channel and making the final purchase through another channel, particularly researching online before purchasing in a physical store. This behaviour has become increasingly relevant with the growth of e-commerce and the availability of online product information. Studies have identified several factors associated with webrooming, including online information quality, perceived risk, price consciousness, trust in physical stores, and the need for physical inspection (Arora & Sahney, 2019; Aw & Basha, 2021). Consumers may use online platforms to compare products, prices and reviews, while visiting physical stores to examine or experience the product before purchase. Accordingly, this study examines webrooming behaviour among consumers in Bangalore using the Stimulus–Organism–Response (S-O-R) perspective.

Shankar and Jain (2023) "Investigating webrooming behavior: a case of Indian luxury consumers". This research tells us that perceived usefulness of searching online, sales-staff assistance, socialization, and need for touch have significant positive effect on attitude toward webrooming. The findings are likely to aid luxury marketers in designing effective channel strategies to maximize their reach via both offline and online channel. The methodology used is cross-sectional data from 374 Indian luxury consumers was collected using questionnaire surveys. Confirmatory factor analysis, covariance-based structural equation modelling and PROCESS macro were used to analyse the data.

Bharath and Nagesh (2024) "Navigating the digital marketplace: perception, risks and webrooming intention". The study found that product discovery behaviour positively influences risk factors related to digital buying and webrooming intention. Webrooming intention is also positively related to these risks and partially mediates the relationship between product discovery behaviour and risk factors. The methodology used is Sobel test.

Kavitha (2024) "Analysing Consumer Purchase Behaviour in the Context of Mobile Phones: Webrooming vs. Showrooming". This research says Webrooming was more prevalent than showrooming, with 91% of omnichannel consumers showing webrooming behaviour. Purchase-

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channel preference varied by age but not gender. Survey of 200 Gen Y and Gen Z consumers in Karnataka using a structured questionnaire. Data was analysed using SPSS, including descriptive statistics, Chi-square and ANOVA.

Rathee and Rajain (2019) "Online shopping environments and consumer's Need for Touch". The study found that women had a higher Need for Touch (NFT) and preferred in-store shopping. Consumers with lower NFT were comfortable with both online and offline shopping. NFT also significantly influenced online buying behaviour, while technology can help bridge the gap between physical and virtual touch. The data were analysed using ANOVA.

Flavian (2020) "Combining channels to make smart purchases: The role of webrooming and showrooming". The study showed that webrooming resulted from combinations of consumer, product, and channel factors, with product involvement being common across all identified combinations. The survey of young Malaysian consumers aged 19–24 using questionnaires to identify factors influencing webrooming.

Zafar and Yaqub (2022) "Consumer Intention towards Webrooming Behaviour in Emerging Economies: A Conceptual Framework based on Behavioural Reasoning Theory". The proposed model suggests that consumer reasons, values, and channel factors influence webrooming intention. It highlights drivers and barriers that shape consumers' attitudes and intentions toward webrooming. The study used a Behavioural Reasoning Theory (BRT) to develop a conceptual framework.

Gaps analysis and Aim

- Studies have focused predominantly on other countries (Arora and Sahney, 2019).
- Limited research has used the S-O-R framework (Akram, 2023).
- Consumers increasingly shop across channels, but the need for physical inspection in webrooming remains underexplored (Hsieh & Kumar, 2023).
- Few studies have explored webrooming consumer segments to support targeted omnichannel strategies (Aw & Basha, 2021).

Aim

To analyze the webrooming behavior among consumers in Bengaluru and identify the factors influencing their purchase decisions.

Objectives of the study

- OB1: To identify the key factors associated with consumers' webrooming behaviour in Bangalore.
- OB2: To examine the influence of Online Information Quality on Perceived Risk, Price Consciousness, Trust in Physical Stores, and Need for Physical Inspection.
- OB3: To examine the influence of Online Information Quality, Perceived Risk, Price Consciousness, Trust in Physical Stores, and Need for Physical Inspection on consumers' webrooming behaviour.
- OB4: To classify consumers into distinct segments based on their webrooming behaviour and demographic characteristics.

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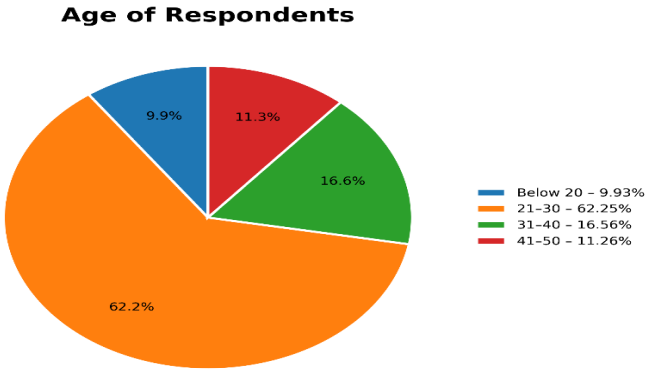
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Objective	Statement of the Objective	Method / Methodology
1	To identify the key factors associated with consumers' webrooming behaviour in Bangalore.	• Literature-based construct identification • Reliability Analysis • Construct-level Descriptive Statistics One-Sample *t*-Test
2	To examine the influence of Online Information Quality on Perceived Risk, Price Consciousness, Trust in Physical Stores, and Need for Physical Inspection.	• Correlation Analysis • Simple Linear Regression
3	To examine the influence of Online Information Quality, Perceived Risk, Price Consciousness, Trust in Physical Stores, and Need for Physical Inspection on consumers' webrooming behaviour.	• Correlation Analysis • Multiple Linear Regression
4	To classify consumers into distinct segments based on their webrooming behaviour and demographic characteristics.	• K-Means Cluster Analysis • Silhouette Analysis • Demographic Profiling • Chi-Square Test of Association • Cramer's V

DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

➢ Key Demographic Findings

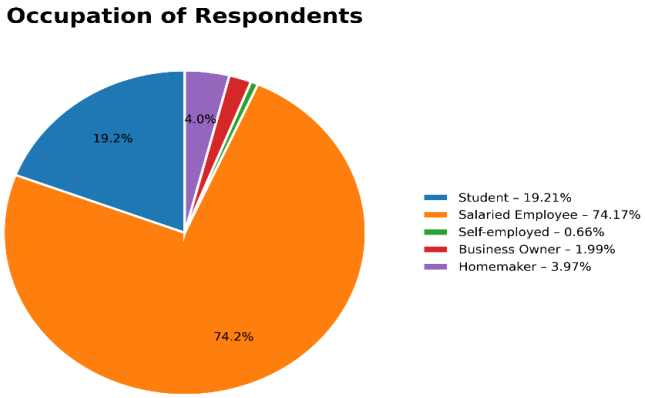
The process of demographic profiling consists of analyzing the background description of the respondents. Demographic profiling helps to understand what kind of people were surveyed. In this study, it is used to identify the respondents and their peculiarities, such as age, the level of education, gender, occupation, income, and shopping behavior. The convenience sampling method was utilized to gather the data from the consumers in Bangalore. The respondents were selected based on their accessibility and interest in participating in the survey. As a result, 151 questionnaire were distributed among the consumers and returned.



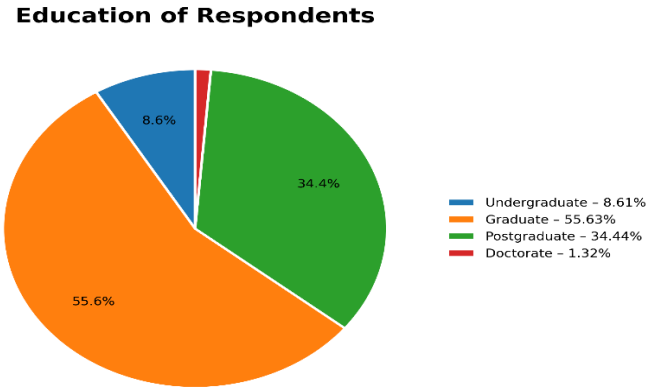
The sample is skewed towards people aged 21 – 30 years, which is the largest group. The second group consists of people aged 31 – 40. Below 20 and 41 – 50 years are the smallest groups. Therefore, most respondents fall under the age bracket of working individuals.

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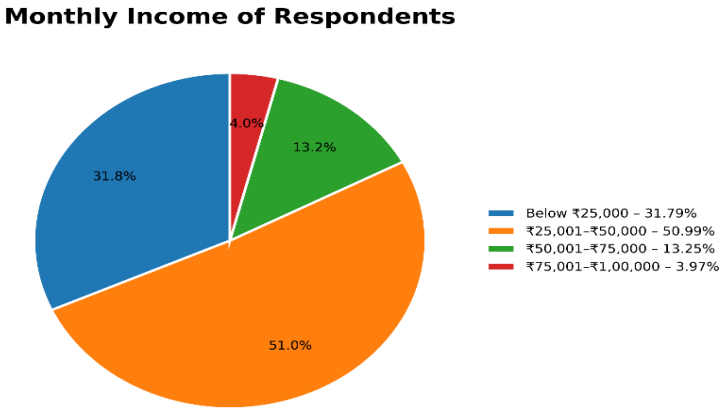
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Most respondents are employed, either on a salary or hourly basis. Students also constitute a significant portion of the sample. Homemakers, business owners, and self-employed are smaller groups. Therefore, the sample is composed mainly of working respondents.



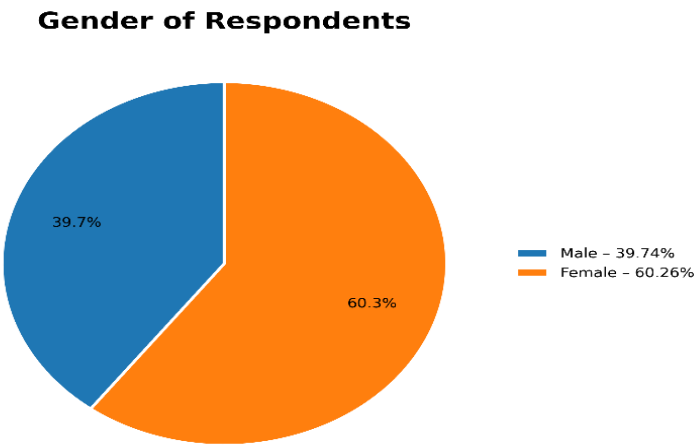
Most respondents are graduates followed by postgraduate respondents while only a minor proportion are undergraduates or possess a doctorate degree. Consequently, most of the target audience have graduated from either graduate or postgraduate schools.



Most respondents fall under the ₹25,001–₹50,000 category which is why it is the highest. All other respondents belong to either higher or lower categories. Overall, the target audience consists of consumers with different income levels with higher proportions belonging to the ₹25,001–₹50,000 category.

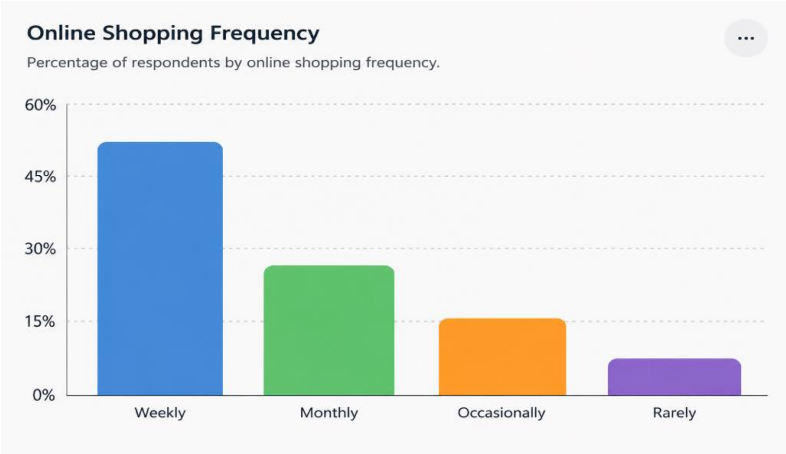
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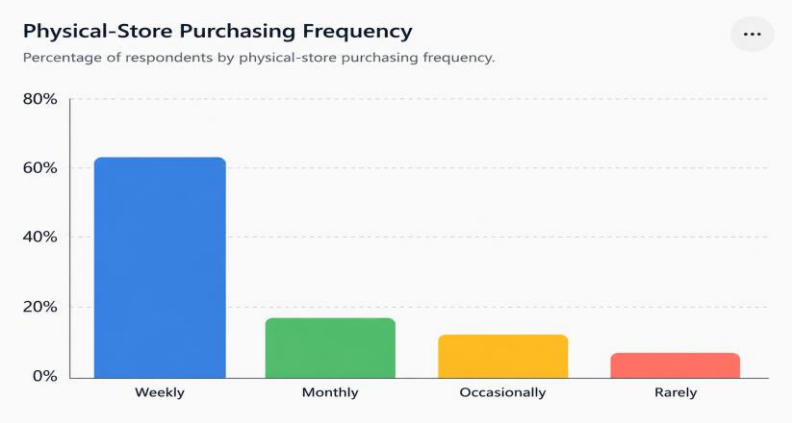


The sample has more female respondents than male respondents. Nevertheless, both genders are represented in the study, and it covers responses from different consumer groups.

- **Key Shopping Behaviour Findings**



Over half of the respondents shop online almost every week, implying that online shopping is a regular behavior for them. Monthly and occasional shoppers represent smaller groups, and there are fewer respondents who hardly ever shop online.

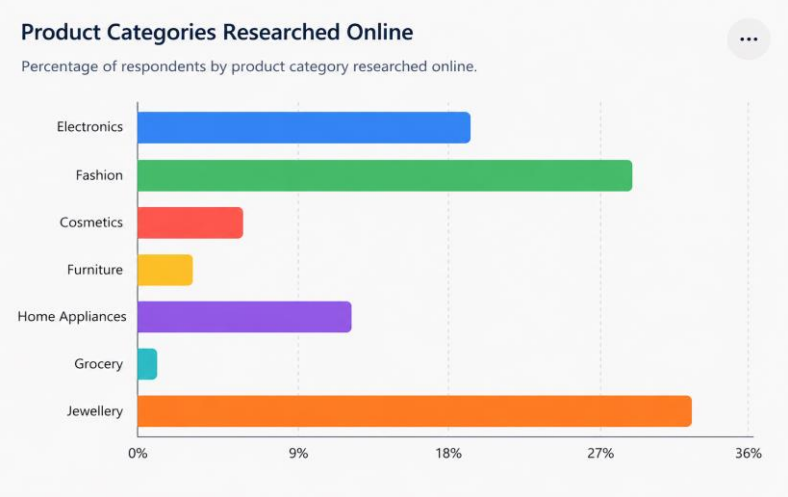


The respondents also engage in physical-store shopping as an activity fairly often, with almost two-thirds of the interviewees visiting physical stores at least once a week. This further supports the need to

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assess the phenomenon of webrooming, namely, the practice of researching goods online before purchasing them in a physical store.



Jewellery, fashion, and cosmetics are the most researched categories, with home appliances and electronics following in second place, and furniture, cosmetics, and grocery accounting for a minor part of online research activities. Thus, it can be stated that the respondents tend to research expensive and visually appealing goods more carefully before purchasing them physically.

- Objectives of the Study

Each objective is focused on an aspect of webrooming behavior of the consumers in Bangalore, including factors affecting webrooming, the effect of Online Information Quality, the effect of consumer-related factors, and the identification of segments based on the webrooming behavior of consumers in Bangalore. The analysis and results related to each objective are discussed separately in the following paragraphs.

Objective 1: To identify the key factors associated with consumers' webrooming behaviour in Bangalore.

Construct	**Adapted From**
Webrooming Behaviour (WB)	Arora and Sahney, 2019
Need for Physical Inspection (PI)	Childers, 2003
Price Consciousness (PC)	Lichtenstein *et al.*, 1993; Lichenstien, 1993
Perceived Risk (PR)	Forsythe *et al.*, 2006; Forsthye, 2006
Trust in Physical Stores (TPS)	Mainardes, 2019
Online Information Quality (OIQ)	Wang & Strong, 1996; Tzer Liu, 1996

The study employed established measurement scales in the measurement of the selected constructs of interest. The items were adapted from previous studies to fit the scenario of Bangalore consumers. The table below shows the constructs that were measured together with their sources.

- Reliability Analysis of the Constructs

Construct	**Cronbach's α**	**Interpretation**
OIQ	0.843	Good

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PR	0.887	Good
PC	0.879	Good
TPS	0.849	Good
NPI	0.853	Good
WB	0.858	Good

Reliability analysis was performed by calculating Cronbach's alpha (α) for all items of the measurement model, which represent the constructs of the study. The reliability or consistency of all six constructs of the measurement model was found to be good, with α ranging from 0.843 to 0.887.

- Descriptive Profile of the Identified Constructs

Construct	**Mean**	**SD**	**Interpretation**
Webrooming Behaviour (WB)	3.92	0.76	High
Need for Physical Inspection (NPI)	3.91	0.76	High
Price Consciousness (PC)	3.89	0.76	High
Perceived Risk (PR)	3.83	0.78	High
Trust in Physical Stores (TPS)	3.74	0.78	High
Online Information Quality (OIQ)	3.73	0.70	High

The results of the study show that respondents have a high level of webrooming behaviour and influence factors. Webrooming Behaviour has the highest mean among others, and Online Information Quality has the mean of 3.73, which can be considered high as well.

- One-Sample t-Test for Webrooming Behaviour

The one-sample t-test was conducted to determine if the mean of webrooming behaviour was significantly different from the neutral midpoint of 3 on the 5-point Likert scale. The test results showed that the mean Webrooming Behaviour score was significantly higher than the neutral value, which indicates that there was a significantly high level of webrooming behaviour among the respondents.

Objective 2: To examine the influence of OIQ on PR, PC, TPS, and NPI.

- Correlation Analysis: Relationship between OIQ and Organism Variables

Relationship	**r**	**p-value**	**Interpretation**
OIQ → PR	0.465	< .001	Moderate positive
OIQ → PC	0.469	< .001	Moderate positive
OIQ → TPS	0.584	< .001	Moderate positive
OIQ → NPI	0.560	< .001	Moderate positive

The results demonstrate that online information quality had a moderately positive and significant connection with all four organism variables. The strongest relationship was found with OIQ and trust

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Variable	r with WB	p-value
OIQ	.507	< .001
PR	.595	< .001
PC	.548	< .001
TPS	.494	< .001
NPI	.532	< .001

in physical stores (TPS) (r = .584), followed by the need for physical inspection (NPI) (r = .560). The results are statistically significant with p < .001.

- Simple Linear Regression: Influence of OIQ on Organism Variables

Dependent Variable	β	R^2	p-value
Perceived Risk (PR)	.465	.216	< .001
Price Consciousness (PC)	.469	.220	< .001
Trust in Physical Stores (TPS)	.584	.341	< .001
Need for Physical Inspection (NPI)	.560	.314	< .001

The results of the analysis demonstrate that Online Information Quality predicts all four Organism variables. Indeed, OIQ explained 21.6% of variance in Purchasing Reason, 22.0% of variance in Purchasing Context, 34.1% of variance in Trust in Physical Stores, and 31.4% of variance in Negative Purchase Intentions, with the strongest effect on Trust in Physical Stores.

Objective 3: To examine the influence of Online Information Quality, Perceived Risk, Price Consciousness, Trust in Physical Stores, and Need for Physical Inspection on consumers' webrooming behaviour.

- Correlation Analysis: Relationship between Key Constructs and Webrooming Behaviour

Correlation analysis was performed to assess the relationship between the study variables and Webrooming Behaviour (WB). The results reveal that all the five variables had positive and significant relationships with WB (p < .001). The highest level of relationship was observed with Perceived Risk (PR) (r = .595), then followed by Price Consciousness (PC) (r = .548) and Need for Physical Inspection (NPI) (r = .532).

- Multiple regression results

Predictor	β	p-value	Finding
PR	.326	< .001	Significant
PC	.233	.004	Significant
OIQ	.188	.020	Significant
TPS	.072	.387	Not significant
NPI	.036	.699	Not significant

The results suggest that PR, PC, and OIQ significantly predicted the webrooming behaviour with Perceived Risk being the most potent predictors. TPS and NPI did not make a significant unique contribution when all variables were taken into account.

Objective 4: To classify consumers into distinct segments based on their webrooming behaviour and demographic characteristics.

- K-Means Cluster Analysis: Consumer Segmentation Based on Webrooming Behaviour

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Cluster	%	Mean WB
Cluster 1 – Higher Webrooming	79.5%	4.22
Cluster 2 – Lower Webrooming	20.5%	2.75
Total	100%	

A cluster analysis using the K-means clustering method was performed to classify respondents according to their webrooming behaviour, which resulted in two distinct groups of online and offline shoppers. Of the two, the Higher-Webrooming Segment was the bigger one, representing 79.5% of all respondents with a mean WB score of 4.22. The smaller group, namely the Lower-Webrooming Segment, only accounted for 20.5% of all respondents with a mean WB score of 2.75.

- Cluster Profiles: Webrooming Behaviour Profile of the Clusters

WB Item	Higher Webrooming	Lower Webrooming
WB1	4.22	2.58
WB2	4.28	2.81
WB3	4.15	2.77
WB4	4.12	2.87
WB5	4.30	2.74
Overall WB	4.22	2.75

In comparison, the five WB items demonstrated consistently higher scores for the Higher-Webrooming Segment, with the overall mean score of 4.22, while the Lower-Webrooming Segment scored 2.75, on average, which illustrates the difference in webrooming tendencies between these customer segments..

- Demographic Profiling: Association between Webrooming Segments and Demographic Characteristics

Variable	χ^2	p-value	Cramer's V	Conclusion
Age	20.985	**< .001**	.373	**Significant**
Education	20.388	**< .001**	.367	**Significant**
Gender	0.113	.736	.044	Not significant
Occupation	5.969	.196	.199	Not significant
Income	1.950	.616	.114	Not significant
Online shopping frequency	0.795	.874	.073	Not significant
Physical-store frequency	7.637	.051	.225	Not significant
Product category	5.305	.509	.187	Not significant

The results demonstrated that age and education significantly associated with the cluster membership ($p < .001$) with Cramer's V of .373 and .367. Meanwhile, gender, occupation, income, online shopping frequency, physical-store frequency and product category were not significantly associated.

DISCUSSION

- Objective 1: To identify the key factors associated with consumers' webrooming behaviour in Bangalore.

For this objective, six constructs of webrooming behaviour were identified: Online Information Quality (OIQ), Perceived Risk (PR), Price Consciousness (PC), Trust in Physical Stores (TPS),

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Need for Physical Inspection (NPI), and Webrooming Behaviour (WB). These constructs were the main elements taken into account by researchers when studying the consumers' webrooming behavior. The reliability analysis indicated that all six constructs possessed good reliability since each of their Cronbach's Alpha was 0.843 or higher, which was close to the value of 1. The level of agreement between items measuring each construct was satisfactory, thus making the constructs good for further research.

The descriptive statistic indicated that the means of all the constructs were above the neutral point of 3.0, with Webrooming Behaviour (WB) having the highest mean of 3.92, followed by the Need for Physical Inspection (NPI) with 3.91 and Price Consciousness (PC) with 3.89. Thus, it can be stated that all respondents had relatively high scores for each mentioned construct. However, in order to identify respondents' level of WB, a one-sample t-test was conducted by comparing WB's mean with the neutral point of 3.0. The results indicated that there was a meaningful difference between the respondents' WB mean (3.92) and the neutral point, $t(150) = 14.809$, $p < .001$. Therefore, the level of WB among the respondents was relatively high.

- Objective 2: To examine the influence of OIQ on PR, PC, TPS, and NPI.

For this purpose, the relationship between Online Information Quality (OIQ) and four Organism variables, namely Perceived Risk (PR), Price Consciousness (PC), Trust in Physical Stores (TPS), and Need for Physical Inspection (NPI) was tested through correlation and regression analyses. The results demonstrated that OIQ positively and significantly correlated with all four Organism variables at the level of $p < .001$. Furthermore, the magnitude of the correlations was found to be the strongest for Trust in Physical Stores (TPS) ($r = .584$), followed by NPI ($r = .560$), PC ($r = .469$), and PR ($r = .465$). This means that participants who evaluated Online Information Quality as more useful, accurate, detailed, and informative tended to report higher levels of these consumer-related factors.

Simple linear regression analyses revealed that OIQ significantly predicted all four Organism variables. Specifically, it explained 34.1%, 31.4%, 22.0%, and 21.6% of the variance in TPS, NPI, PC, and PR, respectively. Thus, the highest prediction was found for Trust in Physical Stores. In general, the results provided sufficient support for the relationships between OIQ and the Organism variables specified in the conceptual model and based on the S-O-R framework.

- Objective 3: To examine the influence of Online Information Quality, Perceived Risk, Price Consciousness, Trust in Physical Stores, and Need for Physical Inspection on consumers' webrooming behaviour.

For this objective, initially, the correlation analysis was conducted to explore the relationship between the five study factors and Webrooming Behaviour. Consequently, the results demonstrated that OIQ, PR, PC, TPS and NPI all positively and significantly related to WB suggesting that each of them individually had an influence on Webrooming Behaviour. To further find out which of the factors had a unique contribution to WB, a multiple regression analysis was performed by considering all the five variables. It was discovered that Perceived Risk was the most significant predictor of WB among the study variables with a coefficient of .326 ($p < .001$) followed by Price Consciousness ($\beta = .233$, $p = .004$) and Online Information Quality ($\beta = .188$, $p = .020$).

The interpretation of these results implied that concerns about the risks of online purchasing and high attention to prices and quality of information while purchasing in the online platform were important factors associated with participants' webrooming behaviour. Even though Trust in Physical Stores and Need for Physical Inspection significantly related to WB in the correlation analysis, they failed to be considerable predictors of WB in the multiple regression analysis suggesting that individual relationships with WB could have been masked by the presence of other variables. In conclusion, the overall analysis displayed that 47.2% of the variance in Webrooming Behaviour could be predicted by the variables included in the regression model ($R^2 = .472$).

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- Objective 4: To classify consumers into distinct segments based on their webrooming behaviour and demographic characteristics.

In order to achieve the objective, a K-means clustering analysis was conducted to group respondents according to their levels of Webrooming Behaviour. As a result, two segments were identified. Firstly, Higher-Webrooming Segment comprising 79.5% of participants with mean WB score of 4.22. Secondly, Lower-Webrooming Segment comprising 20.5% of participants with mean WB score of 2.75. In addition, in order to explore if identified segments differed significantly from each other in terms of selected demographic characteristics, a chi-square analysis was conducted. Results revealed that age ($p < .001$) and education ($p < .001$) were significant predictors of the membership in identified segments. In fact, Cramer's V values of .373 and .367 were observed for age and education, respectively, indicating strong associations of these factors with the identified segments.

However, no significant associations were detected between gender, occupation, income, online shopping frequency, physical-store shopping frequency and product category with identified segments. As a result, it can be concluded that differences in respondents' characteristics are mainly observed in terms of age and education. Other factors did not contribute to significant differences between segments.

CONCLUSION

The study found that webrooming is a pervasive consumer behavior in Bangalore. Online information quality, perceived risk, and price consciousness were significant predictors of Webrooming Behavior, with the model accounting for 47.2% of its variance. The study also revealed the existence of two consumer segments characterized by their webrooming behavior, with age and education being significant predictors of membership in these segments. Overall, the study found that online information and consumer evaluation significantly influenced the decision to research online and buy in a physical store.

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE WORK

Although this study provides insightful empirical evidence on the cross-channel decision-making process of the consumers, there are several inherent limitations in the research design. Firstly, the research was constrained to the consumers in Bangalore, thereby restricting the geographical scope of the inquiry. It might be challenging to generalize the results from this study to different regions, countries, or even markets. Further, the study employed a cross-sectional research design; thus, it was not possible to establish a temporal relationship between the items under investigation. Thirdly, the researchers used convenience sampling procedures to gather the data from the participants, and the results could be biased due to various sources of errors and inconsistencies. Lastly, the scope of this study was limited to a particular set of attributes and did not consider other factors that could influence the cross-channel shopping behaviours of the participants.

FUTURE WORK

To expand cross-channel retail research in future studies, the following suggestions may prove valuable. First of all, the research base should be extended to include more cities and regions, thus making the results more applicable to a larger population of diverse groups. The study should also be longitudinal to observe changing trends over time instead of presenting a static picture. Further, scholars should analyze webrooming in different product categories to see if there are preferences in terms of any given product category or the need for different levels of evaluation. Lastly, new online sources of information should be included in the research, and the phenomenon should be compared within the context of omnichannel retailing.

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