Renuka Prasad

MBA_Thesis_Electronics_Updated

Document Details

Submission ID
trn:oid:::27535:140378883

Submission Date
May 25, 2026, 10:30 AM GMT+0

Download Date
May 25, 2026, 10:37 AM GMT+0

File Name
MBA_Thesis_Electronics_Updated.docx

File Size
199.0 KB

65 Pages

13,755 Words

80,609 Characters

14% Overall Similarity

The combined total of all matches, including overlapping sources, for each database.

Filtered from the Report

- Bibliography
- Quoted Text
- Cited Text
- Small Matches (less than 8 words)

Match Groups

168 Not Cited or Quoted 14%
Matches with neither in-text citation nor quotation marks

0 Missing Quotations 0%
Matches that are still very similar to source material

0 Missing Citation 0%
Matches that have quotation marks, but no in-text citation

0 Cited and Quoted 0%
Matches with in-text citation present, but no quotation marks

Top Sources

10% Internet sources
7% Publications
12% Submitted works (Student Papers)

Integrity Flags

0 Integrity Flags for Review

Our system's algorithms look deeply at a document for any inconsistencies that would set it apart from a normal submission. If we notice something strange, we flag it for you to review.

A Flag is not necessarily an indicator of a problem. However, we'd recommend you focus your attention there for further review.

Match Groups

- **168** Not Cited or Quoted 14%
  Matches with neither in-text citation nor quotation marks
- **0** Missing Quotations 0%
  Matches that are still very similar to source material
- **0** Missing Citation 0%
  Matches that have quotation marks, but no in-text citation
- **0** Cited and Quoted 0%
  Matches with in-text citation present, but no quotation marks

Top Sources

10% Internet sources
7% Publications
12% Submitted works (Student Papers)

Top Sources

The sources with the highest number of matches within the submission. Overlapping sources will not be displayed.

1	Internet	
louisdl.louislibraries.org		<1%
2	Student papers	
Alliance University on 2026-03-21		<1%
3	Internet	
pdfs.semanticscholar.org		<1%
4	Internet	
www.ijfmr.com		<1%
5	Student papers	
LTI on 2026-05-07		<1%
6	Student papers	
Liverpool John Moores University on 2026-05-12		<1%
7	Student papers	
University of Bradford on 2024-04-30		<1%
8	Internet	
dokumen.pub		<1%
9	Internet	
www.theseus.fi		<1%
10	Student papers	
Alliance University on 2026-05-08		<1%

11 Internet
www.tailieudaihoc.com <1%

12 Student papers
Alliance University on 2026-05-09 <1%

13 Student papers
UCL on 2025-09-01 <1%

14 Internet
etheses.whiterose.ac.uk <1%

15 Internet
gitarattan.edu.in <1%

16 Internet
ijsrem.com <1%

17 Student papers
Alliance School of Business on 2026-05-05 <1%

18 Student papers
University of Central England in Birmingham on 2011-03-28 <1%

19 Internet
pea.lib.pte.hu <1%

20 Internet
www.mdpi.com <1%

21 Student papers
UBS on 2026-03-19 <1%

22 Internet
academia.edu.pk <1%

23 Publication
Clay, Kendra. "A Quantitative Study of Psychological Empowerment and Mentorin... <1%

24 Publication
Fadi Al-Turjman. "Artificial Intelligence Learning Facilitators - Creating Smart Edu... <1%

25 Student papers

Swiss School of Business and Management - SSBM on 2026-03-24 <1%

26 Internet

ar.cou.ac.bd:8080 <1%

27 Internet

whiceb.cug.edu.cn <1%

28 Student papers

UBS on 2026-03-19 <1%

29 Internet

www.koreascience.or.kr <1%

30 Student papers

Abu Dhabi University on 2020-11-14 <1%

31 Internet

repositorio.tec.mx <1%

32 Internet

repository.uwtsd.ac.uk <1%

33 Internet

www.etda.libraries.psu.edu <1%

34 Student papers

College Faculty Members on 2026-05-12 <1%

35 Student papers

The University of the West of Scotland on 2025-11-17 <1%

36 Student papers

University of Ulster on 2026-05-06 <1%

37 Internet

etd.aau.edu.et <1%

38 Publication

Nagvadia, Jigar Jagdishbhai. "Factors Influencing Consumer's Online Buying Beha... <1%

39 Student papers
The University of Dodoma on 2026-04-22 <1%

40 Student papers
United International College on 2026-05-22 <1%

41 Internet
citation.allacademic.com <1%

42 Internet
eprints.utas.edu.au <1%

43 Internet
peds.rivad.org <1%

44 Student papers
Asia Pacific University College of Technology and Innovation (UCTI) on 2022-07-19 <1%

45 Student papers
Capella University on 2025-04-10 <1%

46 Student papers
Hochschule Bremen on 2026-03-04 <1%

47 Student papers
London School of Business and Finance on 2026-03-11 <1%

48 Publication
Saurabh Sale. "The Impact of Digital Financial Literacy on the Financial Inclusion ... <1%

49 Publication
W A Piyumi Udeshinee, Sashini Gayanika, Thilini De Silva. "Applied Research in Bu... <1%

50 Internet
conservancy.umn.edu <1%

51 Internet
cyberleninka.org <1%

52 Internet
libproject.hkbu.edu.hk <1%

53 Internet
researcharchive.vuw.ac.nz <1%

54 Internet
www.clydemarineplan.scot <1%

55 Student papers
(school name not available) on 2007-02-27 <1%

56 Publication
European Journal of Marketing, Volume 47, Issue 10 (2013-09-28) <1%

57 Student papers
Georgia Institute of Technology Main Campus on 2024-10-27 <1%

58 Student papers
HELP UNIVERSITY on 2025-12-21 <1%

59 Student papers
Macquarie University on 2024-11-01 <1%

60 Student papers
Swiss School of Business and Management - SSBM on 2025-10-28 <1%

61 Student papers
Tilburg University on 2026-05-22 <1%

62 Student papers
University of Leeds on 2021-09-12 <1%

63 Student papers
University of Mauritius on 2026-04-02 <1%

64 Student papers
University of Northumbria at Newcastle on 2007-09-22 <1%

65 Student papers
University of Ulster on 2025-06-06 <1%

66 Internet
docs.google.com <1%

67 Internet
journals.sjp.ac.lk <1%

68 Internet
oulurepo.oulu.fi <1%

69 Internet
rjsaonline.org <1%

70 Internet
ubir.buffalo.edu <1%

71 Internet
www.coursehero.com <1%

72 Internet
yadaventertainment.blogspot.com <1%

73 Student papers
Alliance University on 2026-05-06 <1%

74 Student papers
Bocconi University on 2026-03-12 <1%

75 Student papers
College Faculty Members on 2026-01-06 <1%

76 Student papers
Ellenki College of Engineering & Technology on 2025-12-19 <1%

77 Student papers
Khwaja Moinuddin Chishti Language University on 2025-03-25 <1%

78 Publication
Kwon, Soyon. "The Effect of Exchanged Benefits and Information Collection Meth... <1%

79 Publication
Maydew, Savannah Sage. "Teaching Reading With Heart: A Mixed-Methods Exami... <1%

80 Student papers
Medi-Caps University on 2025-04-22 <1%

81 Publication
Mulaudzi, Rembuluwani. "The Moderating Influence of Perceived Risk in the Relat... <1%

82 Student papers
Organisation et Développement on 2026-05-18 <1%

83 Publication
Rosalind H. Searle, Ann-Marie I. Nienaber, Sim B. Sitkin. "The Routledge Compani... <1%

84 Student papers
Swiss School of Business and Management - SSBM on 2025-03-25 <1%

85 Student papers
Tilburg University on 2026-05-20 <1%

86 Student papers
University of Southampton on 2006-09-26 <1%

87 Student papers
Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam on 2025-10-30 <1%

88 Publication
Yike Wang, Xinghua Bai. "Empowering Patients through AI-Driven Care Navigatio... <1%

89 Internet
bbrc.in <1%

90 Internet
docplayer.net <1%

91 Internet
erepo.uef.fi <1%

92 Internet
miet.ac.in <1%

93 Internet
thuvienso.ktkt.edu.vn:8080 <1%

94 Internet
vital.seals.ac.za:8080 <1%

95 Internet
www.ijprt.org <1%

96 Student papers
Accra Business School on 2026-04-15 <1%

97 Publication
Aljebrini, Saleh. "Factors Influencing Consumers Attitude Towards E-Commerce P... <1%

98 Publication
Arnett Sanders, Nicole. "The Impact of Marketing Mix on Unplanned Purchasing a... <1%

99 Student papers
Asian Institute of Technology on 2021-04-30 <1%

100 Student papers
Associatie K.U.Leuven on 2026-05-20 <1%

101 Publication
Bingjia Shao, Zhendong Cheng, Lijuan Wan, Jie Yue. "The impact of cross border E... <1%

102 Publication
Carsten Roever, Aek Phakiti. "Quantitative methods for Second Language Resear... <1%

103 Student papers
City University on 2025-09-01 <1%

104 Student papers
Coventry University on 2020-12-05 <1%

105 Student papers
De Montfort University on 2026-04-13 <1%

106 Publication
Divyakant T. Meva, Kalpesh Popat, Himanshu Maniar, Rahul J. Nikam, Madhuri Pa... <1%

107 Publication
Emek, Fikri Ugu. "Modeling and Testing Consumers' Overall Trust in E-Commerce ... <1%

108 Publication
Fatokun, Bukola Opeyemi. "Customers' Affective Responses Towards the Key Fact... <1%

109 Publication
Ilenia Confente, Ivan Russo, Simone Peinkofer, Robert Frankel. "The challenge of ... <1%

110 Student papers
Kaakkois-Suomen ammattikorkeakoulu (XAMK) on 2026-05-25 <1%

111 Student papers
Laureate Higher Education Group on 2012-12-24 <1%

112 Student papers
London School of Commerce on 2012-09-11 <1%

113 Student papers
M S Ramaiah University of Applied Sciences on 2025-10-09 <1%

114 Student papers
Maastricht School of Management on 2003-05-23 <1%

115 Student papers
Manipal University Jaipur Online on 2025-08-01 <1%

116 Publication
Mohammad Hatim Abuljadail. "The Role of Social Media in Shaping Knowledge, A... <1%

117 Publication
Mou, Jian. "Trust and Risk in Consumer Acceptance of E-Services", University of th... <1%

118 Student papers
Muscat University on 2026-04-29 <1%

119 Publication
Paixão, João António Pereira. "Experiential Marketing: Bridging the Gap Between ... <1%

120 Publication
Rohit Bakshi, Komal Chopra, Pravin Dange, Smita Mehendale, Pravin Kumar Bhoy... <1%

121 Student papers
Sheffield Hallam University on 2026-04-22 <1%

122 Student papers
Sheffield Hallam University on 2026-04-29 <1%

123 Student papers
Strathmore University (Main Account) on 2026-05-20 <1%

124 Student papers
Thesis 2026 on 2026-03-30 <1%

125 Student papers
University of Durham on 2010-09-06 <1%

126 Student papers
University of Durham on 2011-12-14 <1%

127 Internet
cuir.car.chula.ac.th <1%

128 Internet
iceb.johogo.com <1%

129 Internet
ir-library.ku.ac.ke <1%

130 Internet
jyx.jyu.fi <1%

131 Internet
libdoc.dpu.ac.th <1%

132 Internet
libweb.kpfu.ru <1%

133 Internet
m.christuniversity.in <1%

134 Student papers
metubudapest on 2025-04-24 <1%

135 Internet
mfuir.mfu.ac.th <1%

136 Internet
osuva.uwasa.fi <1%

137 Internet

usir.salford.ac.uk <1%

138 Internet

www.academypublication.com <1%

139 Internet

www.anzmac.org <1%

140 Internet

www.cbmsbm.com <1%

141 Internet

www.econstor.eu <1%

142 Internet

www.slideshare.net <1%

143 Internet

www.tandfonline.com <1%

PROJECT DISSERTATION REPORT ON

Impact of E-Commerce Platforms on Consumer Behaviour in the Electronics Sector: Evidence from Indian Online Shoppers

Submitted in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Business Administration (MBA)

Department of Management Studies

Submitted by:

Khushi Maggo
24/DMBA/114

Supervised by:

Dr. Renuka
Assistant Proffessor, Delhi School of Management

May 2025

DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the Major Research Project titled "Impact of E-Commerce Platforms on Consumer Behaviour in the Electronics Sector: Evidence from Indian Online Shoppers" submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Business Administration (MBA) is an original work carried out by me under the supervision of Dr. Renuka. The information and data presented in this thesis are true and original to the best of my knowledge and belief.

I further declare that this work has not been submitted, either in whole or in part, for the award of any other degree or diploma at this institution or any other institution. Where other sources of information have been used, they have been duly acknowledged in accordance with APA 7th edition referencing standards.

Signature: _____

Name: Khushi Maggo

Date: _____

13

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my research supervisor,, for their invaluable guidance, constructive feedback, and continuous encouragement throughout the duration of this research project. This thesis would not have been possible without their academic expertise and patient mentorship.

ABSTRACT

The Indian online shopping sector is growing fast. It was worth around $70 billion in 2023. Is expected to reach $325 billion by 2030. The electronics category in shopping is one of the most valuable and fastest-growing areas. However not much research has been done on how trust, risk and promotions affect buying and returning products in this category in India.

This study looks at how people behave when buying electronics online in India. It uses a survey of 100 online shoppers of electronics to collect data. The study tests five research questions using analysis. The research is based on theories, including the Technology Acceptance Model, the Theory of Planned Behaviour, Perceived Risk Theory and the Stimulus-Response Framework.

The results show that trust in shopping helps people buy more electronics. On the hand the risk of buying online makes people less likely to buy. Promotions like discounts, festive sales and Buy Now Pay Later services make people more likely to buy. They also lead to more product returns. The study provides information on how Indian online shoppers behave and gives advice on digital marketing strategies. The Indian e-commerce sector and electronics category are really important for shopping.

The study focuses on the electronics category within the Indian e-commerce sector. Consumer trust and perceived risk play a role in shaping purchase behaviour in the Indian e-commerce sector. Promotional strategies are also essential, in influencing purchase tendency in the electronics category.

The Indian e-commerce sector is expected to grow and the electronics category will likely play a major role in this growth.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

DECLARATION 2
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS 3
ABSTRACT 4
TABLE OF CONTENTS 5
LIST OF TABLES 8
List of Figures 8
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION 9
1.1 Background of the Study 9
1.2 India's E-Commerce Landscape: Scale, Players, and Consumer Dynamics 10
1.3 Consumer Behaviour in Online Shopping: Theoretical Context 12
1.4 Problem Statement 13
1.5 Objectives of the Study 14
1.6 Significance of the Study 15
1.7 Scope and Limitations of the Study 15
CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW 16
2.1 Consumer Trust in E-Commerce 16
2.1.1 Conceptual Foundations 16
2.1.2 Antecedents of Trust in Online Retail 16
2.1.3 Trust and Social Commerce 17
2.2 Perceived Risk in Online Shopping 17
2.2.1 Theoretical Origins and Dimensions 17
2.2.2 Trust as a Moderator of Perceived Risk 17
2.2.3 Perceived Risk and Return Behaviour 18
2.3 Promotional Strategies in E-Commerce 18
2.3.1 Theoretical Framework: Stimulus-Response 18
2.3.2 Price Promotions and Impulsive Buying 18
2.3.3 Buy Now Pay Later (BNPL) as a Promotional Mechanism 18
2.3.4 Promotions, Platform Loyalty, and Return Behaviour 18
2.4 Purchase Behaviour in E-Commerce 19
2.4.1 Technology Acceptance and Purchase Intention 19
2.4.2 Social Proof and Purchase Decision-Making 19
2.5 Return Behaviour in E-Commerce 20
2.5.1 The Economic Significance of E-Commerce Returns 20

2.5.2 Typology of Return Behaviour 20
2.5.3 Return Policy Design and Consumer Behaviour 21
2.5.4 Platform Switching Behaviour 21
2.6 Integrative Theoretical Framework and Hypothesis Development 22
CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY 24
3.1 Research Philosophy and Approach 24
3.2 Research Design 24
3.3 Population and Sampling 24
3.4 Research Instrument Development 24
3.5 Reliability Analysis 25
3.6 Analytical Techniques 25
3.6.1 Descriptive Statistics 25
3.6.2 Pearson Correlation Analysis 26
3.6.3 Multiple Regression Analysis 26
3.7 Ethical Considerations ..... **Error! Bookmark not defined.**
CHAPTER 4: DATA ANALYSIS — DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS 27
4.1 Demographic Profile of Respondents 27
4.2 Online Shopping Behaviour Frequencies 28
4.3 Reliability Analysis 29
4.4 Descriptive Statistics of Construct Variables 29
4.5 Item-Level Analysis: Consumer Trust 30
4.6 Item-Level Analysis: Perceived Risk 30
4.7 Return Behaviour: Reasons and Patterns 31
CHAPTER 5: INFERENTIAL STATISTICAL ANALYSIS 33
5.1 Pearson Correlation Analysis 33
5.2 Multiple Regression Analysis — Model 1: Purchase Behaviour 34
5.3 Multiple Regression Analysis — Model 2: Return/Switching Behaviour 35
5.4 Summary of Hypothesis Test Results 36
CHAPTER 6: DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS 46
6.1 Consumer Trust as a Driver of Purchase and Loyalty 46
6.2 Perceived Risk as an Inhibitor and Return Driver 46
6.3 Promotional Strategies: A Double-Edged Construct 47
6.4 Theoretical Contributions 47
CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND FUTURE RESEARCH 49

7.1 Summary of Key Findings 49
7.2 Managerial Recommendations 49
7.2.1 Trust-Building Strategy 49
7.2.2 Risk Mitigation 50
7.2.3 Promotional Strategy Optimisation 50
7.2.4 Return Management 50
7.3 Limitations of the Study 51
7.4 Directions for Future Research 51
7.5 Concluding Remarks 52
REFERENCES 53
APPENDIX A: RESEARCH QUESTIONNAIRE 62
Section A: Basic Information 62
Section B: Consumer Trust 63
Section C: Perceived Risk 63
Section D: Promotional Strategies 63
Section E: Purchase Behaviour 64
Section F: Return and Platform-Switching Behaviour 64

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1. Demographic Profile of Respondents

Table 2. Shopping Frequency and Platform Preference

Table 3. Descriptive Statistics of Construct Variables

Table 4. Reliability Analysis (Cronbach's Alpha)

Table 5. Pearson Correlation Matrix

Table 6. Multiple Regression: Purchase Behaviour (Model 1)

Table 7. Multiple Regression: Return Behaviour (Model 2)

Table 8. Summary of Hypothesis Test Results

List of Figures

Figure 1. Integrative Theoretical Framework

Figure 2. E-Commerce Market Size in India (2019–2030)

Figure 3. Consumer Trust Index by Platform

Figure 4. Reasons for Product Returns

Figure 5. Reasons for Platform Switching

Figure 6. BNPL Awareness vs. Actual Usage

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Over the last decade, the Indian retail industry has seen a fundamental transformation, with a clear shift from brick-and-mortar to digital platforms. This transition has been further fueled by a combination of structural factors including the rapid growth of smartphone penetration, the availability of low-cost mobile internet services, the expansion of digital payment infrastructure, and a growing consumer preference for convenience-driven shopping experiences (Statista, 2024). Amazon India, Flipkart, Myntra and Meesho, among leading e-commerce platforms, have together garnered hundreds of millions of users and have transformed the consumer decision-making process.

The magnitude of this expansion is enormous. The number of active online shoppers in India stood at approximately 220 million in 2023, with projections indicating it will surpass 400 million by 2027 (Internet and Mobile Association of India, IAMAI, 2023). This growth is not only a quantitative change in purchasing channels but a qualitative transformation in consumer behaviour: online consumers compare products more diligently, rely extensively on peer-produced reviews, react to personalised recommendations and show significantly higher price sensitivity than traditional offline shoppers (Deloitte, 2023).

Three behavioural constructs, namely consumer trust, perceived risk and exposure to promotional stimuli, have been found to be very consequential drivers of online shopping outcomes within this evolving environment. Studies in the academic literature have repeatedly shown trust in the reliability, security and service quality of an e-commerce platform is a prerequisite for consumer engagement and repeat patronage (Pavlou, 2003; McKnight et al., 2002). Otherwise,

One of the major obstacles to complete an online purchase is perceived risk, which includes financial risk, performance risk, privacy risk, time risk, and social risk (Featherman & Pavlou, 2003; Forsythe et al., 2006). Promotion strategies such as time limited discounts, cash back, festive sales and the new financing model of Buy Now Pay Later (BNPL) act as strong external stimuli that can override risk hesitation and speed up purchase decisions but at the cost of increased product return rates (Rook & Fisher, 1995; Hwang & Jeong, 2016).

The Indian market offers a unique and complex consumer environment in which to explore these dynamics. Indian consumers are among the most price sensitive in the world, with purchase decisions largely driven by the availability of discounts and promotional incentives (McKinsey & Company, 2023). A large number of consumers, especially in non-metropolitan areas, are first generation digital shoppers who have minimal experiential knowledge of the online retail environment and as such are particularly vulnerable to perceived risk in transactions. The rapid adoption of Unified Payments Interface (UPI), digital wallets and BNPL services have also significantly reduced payment related frictions, resulting in a surge in online transaction volumes (Reserve Bank of India, 2023). The Indian e-commerce consumer is an interesting subject for academic study due to the combination of these features – high promotional sensitivity, moderate technological confidence and variable trust levels.

1.2 India's E-Commerce Landscape: Scale, Players, and Consumer Dynamics

The Indian e-commerce industry has witnessed tremendous growth and is now one of the fastest growing online retail markets globally. The market was valued at around USD 70 billion in 2023 and is expected to grow to USD 325 billion by 2030, representing a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of around 21% (IBEF, 2023; RedSeer Consulting, 2023). This growth is driven by supply-side investments in logistics, technology and last-mile delivery infrastructure and demand side

shifts driven by changing consumer preferences for convenience, variety and competitive pricing.

133 To develop a nuanced understanding of consumer behaviour in the Indian e-commerce ecosystem, one must pay attention to the distinct positioning and consumer trust profiles of its major platforms. Amazon India has created a reputation of premium reliability by establishing itself as a platform that consumers can trust by offering the likes of verified customer reviews, guaranteed delivery for Prime members, strong buyer protection policies, and easy return processes (Amazon India, 2023). Its customers are mainly urban and higher-income and tend to place a higher value on reliability of service than small differences in price.

Acquired by Walmart Inc. for USD 16 billion (The Economic Times, 2018), Flipkart was a pioneer in popularising e-commerce adoption in India's tier-2 and tier-3 cities. Its 'Big Billion Days' sales events have become iconic events in the Indian retail calendar, driving massive purchase volumes through aggressive promotional pricing, digital financing and easy return policies. However, high return rates in categories like fashion and electronics have led to operational issues for Flipkart, highlighting the operational trade-offs of customer-friendly policies such as returns (ET Retail, 2022).

Meesho started as a social commerce platform that enabled small entrepreneurs and homemakers to resell products via WhatsApp and Facebook, but has quickly grown into a complete marketplace catering to price-conscious buyers in semi-urban and rural India (Meesho, 2023). It has also pursued an ultra-low pricing strategy that has proven successful in increasing e-commerce participation in under-penetrated markets, albeit in exchange for higher perceived product quality risk and lower consumer trust scores compared to more established platforms (RedSeer Consulting, 2023). Myntra, India's largest fashion e-commerce player is confronted with the perennial problem of high return rates in the apparel category with Industry estimates of return

rates are 25-40% on fashion purchases (ET Retail, 2022). To address this, Myntra has invested heavily in virtual try-on technology and improved product visualisation tools to reduce uncertainty before purchase (Myntra, 2023).

1.3 Consumer Behaviour in Online Shopping: Theoretical Context

There are several key dimensions in which consumer behaviour in the online retail environment differs fundamentally from its offline counterpart. The most important of these differences is the physical impossibility of direct product inspection before purchase. In traditional retail, the customer uses his or her entire sensory system to evaluate the quality, fit and suitability of merchandise. In the digital shopping environment, this direct sensory evaluation is replaced by mediated information – product photography, written specifications, data provided by the seller, and reviews by users – all of which contain inherent information asymmetries and scope for misrepresentation (Pavlou et al., 2007). The lack of information is the primary source of perceived risk in online shopping. In the seminal conceptualisation of consumer risk by Bauer (1960), all purchase behaviour involves an element of risk defined as the consumer's subjective expectation

The seminal conceptualisation of consumer risk was that all purchase behaviour involves some degree of risk, defined as the consumer's subjective expectation of loss associated with the pursuit of a desired outcome. Within e-commerce, this generic risk construct has been operationalised in a number of dimensions: financial risk (vulnerability to payment fraud or loss); performance risk (failure of the product to match description or function as expected); privacy risk (misuse of personal and transactional data); time risk (delays, return complications, or service failures); and social risk (negative peer judgement of purchase decisions) (Featherman & Pavlou, 2003; Forsythe et al., 2006). In response to these perceptions of risk, e-commerce platforms deploy sophisticated

architectures of promotion that induce urgency to purchase and reduce the time spent on deliberation.

Behavioural research has shown that scarcity cues, countdown timers, limited quantity notifications and personalised discount recommendations stimulate impulsive purchase decisions (Stern, 1962; Beatty & Ferrell, 1998; Verhagen & van Dolen, 2011). The efficacy of these mechanisms is well-documented in the Indian market, where festive season sales events account for a significant portion of the annual e-commerce revenue (IAMAI, 2023). Trust plays a key mediating role in this consumer behavior architecture. Based on the multidimensional framework of trust proposed by McKnight et al. (2002) , online consumer trust can be further divided into two major dimensions: cognitive trust and affective trust. Cognitive trust is based on a rational assessment of the platform's competence, benevolence and integrity; affective trust is based on the accumulation of positive emotional experiences in multiple purchase interactions.

1.4 Problem Statement

Indian e-commerce market has been growing phenomenally, but the academic literature reveals a significant research gap. Empirical evidence for studying the joint impact of consumer trust, perceived risk and promotional strategies on purchase and return behaviour of Indian online shoppers is scarce. Most of the existing studies have examined these constructs in isolation or have depended on data obtained from Western consumer populations (Pavlou, 2003; Featherman & Pavlou, 2003; Kim et al., 2009), which may not accurately reflect the distinctive behavioural patterns that characterise India's unique socio-economic and technological context. Indeed, four critical gaps are identifiable in the existing literature. First, although the trust-risk relationship in e-commerce has been widely theorized, its empirical validation in the

Indian market remains sparse (Sharma & Gupta, 2021). Second, the moderating role of promotional strategies on the trust-purchase relationship has been relatively neglected by scholars in developing market contexts (Kumar & Dange, 2012). Third, product return behaviour, a commercially important outcome costing the Indian e-commerce industry in reverse logistics annually, has been considerably under-studied relative to its economic significance. Fourth, adoption and behavioural consequences of emerging BNPL payment instruments have not been well explored in the Indian academic literature. The present study addresses these gaps by empirically investigating the joint impact of consumer trust, perceived risk and promotional strategies on purchase and return behaviour using primary survey data collected from Indian online shoppers.

1.5 Objectives of the Study

The specific research objectives of this study are

1. To study the existing levels of consumer trust, perceived risk and promotional responsiveness of Indian e-commerce consumers.

2. To establish the level and effect of consumer trust, perceived risk and promotional strategies on purchase behaviour including BNPL adoption.

3. To study the combined impact of trust, perceived risk and promotional strategies on product return behaviour and platform-switching intention.

4. Pearson correlation analysis and multiple regression analysis to test five pre-specified directional hypotheses.

5. To provide evidence-based, actionable recommendations for e-commerce platform operators and digital marketers.

1.6 Significance of the Study

This research adds to the academic knowledge and managerial practice. Academically, it expands the application of existing theoretical frameworks – TAM, TPB, Perceived Risk Theory and the Stimulus-Response Framework — to the under-researched context of Indian e-commerce consumer behaviour. It also contributes to the growing literature on BNPL. From a managerial perspective, the findings offer actionable intelligence for e-commerce operators aiming to optimise trust-building mechanisms, calibrate risk mitigation strategies and design promotional campaigns that maximise purchase conversion without disproportionately elevating return rates

1.7 Scope and Limitations of the Study

The research is limited to the Indian e-commerce market and was conducted on a convenient sample of 100 online shoppers. The sample size is sufficient for exploratory analysis and hypothesis testing using correlation and regression techniques (Hair et al., 2019) but the results should be interpreted with due caution and may not be generalizable to wider population of Indian e-commerce consumers. This study focuses exclusively on the Indian e-commerce market and is based on a convenience sample of 100 online shoppers. While this sample size is adequate for exploratory analysis and hypothesis testing using correlation and regression techniques (Hair et al., 2019), the findings should be interpreted with appropriate caution and may not be generalisable to the broader population of Indian e-commerce consumers. The cross-sectional research design captures consumer attitude and behaviour at one point in time, excluding causal inferences or longitudinal behavioural trends analysis. Future research using larger, probabilistic samples and longitudinal designs would enhance generalizability and causal robustness of these findings.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

There has been a considerable amount of scholarly attention to the relationship between consumer trust, perceived risk, promotional strategies and behavioural outcomes in digital retail environments since the commercialization of the Internet in the mid-1990s. This chapter presents a systematic and critical review of the existing literature, based on the five core constructs of the current study. The chapter ends with an integrative theoretical framework and the formal derivation of research hypotheses.2.1 Consumer Trust in E-Commerce

2.1.1 Conceptual Foundations

Trust is a multi-dimensional construct that has been theorised extensively across social psychology, organisational behaviour, and marketing. In the foundational work of Mayer et al. (1995), trust is defined as the willingness of a party to be vulnerable to the actions of another party based on the expectation that the latter will perform a particular action important to the trustor, irrespective of the ability to monitor or control that other party. In the e-commerce context, this vulnerability is particularly salient given the physical absence of the counterparty, the inability to directly inspect products, and the transmission of sensitive financial information across digital networks (Pavlou, 2003).

2.1.2 Trust in Online Retail

One of the early studies exploring the issue of trust in B2C e-commerce was carried out by Gefen et al. (2003), who found that vendor familiarity, high-quality websites, and perceived usefulness are some of the main antecedents of trust, which predicts customers' purchase intentions. Further research developed the above antecedent structure in much detail. For example, Kim et al. (2009) empirically showed that structural assurances like security seals, third-party certificates, and privacy policies positively influence consumer trust, especially for newcomers to the platform.

2.1.3 Trust and Social Commerce

The rise of social commerce when purchases are made under social media interactions and peers' recommendations raised additional trust dimensions. For example, Hajli (2015) found that social interactions on e-commerce platforms like participation in communities, exchanging reviews, and making recommendations of products increase customer trust and purchase intention. The described trend is especially relevant for India, where platforms like Meesho utilize social media channels like WhatsApp and Instagram to make customers feel more confident in making their purchases (Meesho, 2023).

2.2 Perceived Risk in Online Shopping

2.2.1 Theoretical Origins and Dimensions

The concept of perceived risk from theory was adopted by marketing literature by Bauer (1960). He suggested that every consumer action implies risk since every activity leads to some outcomes that can never be certain for a consumer. Cox and Rich (1964) defined the construct as twofold: uncertainty in relation to the consequences of a purchasing action, and the nature of the consequence that may be either positive or negative.

2.2.2 Trust as a Moderator of Perceived Risk

One of the significant contributions made by Pavlou (2003) concerned the empirical evidence of a moderating role that consumer trust plays when assessing the influence of perceived risk on purchase intention. In his study based on structural equation modeling and involving 155 respondents, Pavlou showed that consumer trust significantly moderated the negative impact of perceived risk on purchase intention ($\beta = 0.43$, $p < .001$). It means that risk and trust must be taken into account as complementary components in a behavioral model of e-commerce.

2.2.3 Perceived Risk and Return Behaviour

According to Hjort et al. (2019), an analysis of return activities conducted by a Scandinavian e-retailer (n = 1.5 million transactions) indicated that consumers who experienced some form of pre-purchase uncertainty – measured by extended decision latency and repeated visits to products' web pages – had higher instances of returns. This is a strong support of the theory which posits that perceived pre-purchase risks will lead to dissatisfaction and return behavior.

2.3 Promotional Strategies in E-Commerce

2.3.1 Theoretical Framework: Stimulus-Response

The theoretical basis for studying promotional activity in e-commerce can be traced back to the Stimulus-Organism-Response (S-O-R) model developed in environmental psychology by Mehrabian and Russell (1974) and later on used in the context of retail marketing by Donovan and Rossiter (1982). In the S-O-R model, promotional activity serves as a stimulus in the environment that triggers responses (behavioral or otherwise) by influencing consumer cognition and emotions (Kotler & Keller, 2016).

2.3.2 Price Promotions and Impulsive Buying

One of the most researched types of purchase stimuli is the promotion of lower prices. The studies conducted by Rook and Fisher (1995) show that being exposed to promotion of prices results in increasing impulsive buying propensity especially when associated with scarce elements like 'Limited Stock' labels or countdowns. Discount signs, saving calculators, flash sale banners are likely to prolong customers' browsing time and stimulate impulsive purchases.

2.3.3 Buy Now Pay Later (BNPL) as a Promotional Mechanism

Among the latest e-commerce innovations in promotional strategies are Buy Now Pay Later (BNPL) services. BNPL allows for completing the purchase instantly but delays its full payment, thus separating the act of purchasing from the act of payment and diminishing the psychological

impact of making a payment on that stage (Hwang & Jeong, 2016). In India, BNPL is implemented by Amazon Pay Later, Flipkart Pay Later, LazyPay, Simpl, and ZestMoney companies. According to the BNPL India Report, the value of the market served by these companies may reach USD 45 billion by 2026.

2.3.4 Promotions, Platform Loyalty, and Return Behaviour

One of the important negative outcomes of aggressive promotion tactics that is largely underestimated is the effect of these actions on loyalty to the platform and increased likelihood of returns from customers. Sirohi et al. (1998) illustrated in their study that an approach focused exclusively on price promotions for attracting customers leads to the formation of a 'deal-prone' segment that is characterized by poor brand loyalty and a high tendency to switch to other products. This finding is corroborated by another paper that reports that Indian e-commerce customers whose motives for making purchases were price-related had loyalty indexes 40 percent lower than those driven by such motives as service quality and variety of goods.

2.4 Purchase Behaviour in E-Commerce

2.4.1 Technology Acceptance and Purchase Intention

The Technology Acceptance Model developed by Davis (1989) represents a theoretical background to examine consumer adoption of electronic commerce channels. According to Davis, there are two major factors that determine technology adoption: usefulness (how effective it is when applied) and perceived ease of use. Venkatesh and Davis (2000) refined the initial model through the addition of several new antecedents (social influence and cognitive instrumental) that significantly enhanced its explanatory power (TAM2). ($R^2 = 0.60$ vs. original TAM's $R^2 = 0.40$).

2.4.2 Social Proof and Purchase Decision-Making

Social proof the phenomenon of social proof, where consumers rely on the actions and feedbacks of other customers, can be considered a strong factor in motivating online purchasing decisions (Cialdini, 2001). In an online shopping environment, social proof mainly manifests itself in consumer reviews, ratings, and "bestseller" labels. Chevalier and Mayzlin found in a groundbreaking study that a single star increase in ratings increases sales on leading e-commerce websites by around 5-9%.

64

2.5 Return Behaviour in E-Commerce

2.5.1 The Economic Significance of E-Commerce Returns

Product returns are a substantial issue for e-commerce companies as the number of such returns continues to rise. According to research, online retailers experience returns at the rate of 20-30% compared to 8-10% in traditional brick-and-mortar stores, with fashion and electronics categories having extremely high return rates (National Retail Federation, 2023).

2.5.2 Typology of Return Behaviour

Hjort et al. (2019) proposed a conceptual classification of return behaviour, which includes three main types of return practices. The first type, called "bracketing", involves consumers purchasing several varieties of the same product (e.g., in different colours or sizes) with a purpose of keeping the item that suits them the best while sending all the others back. This is especially true for the types of products which have a very high degree of ambiguity about how well the item will actually fit and which cannot easily be represented through digital means. Second, returns due to dissatisfaction arise when the purchased product does not conform to consumers' expectations regarding its quality, function, or description. Third, returns due to regret arise from

reconsiderations of impulse or promotional-driven purchases where there is a temporal discrepancy between initial enthusiasm and later re-assessment of the purchase decision.

2.5.3 Return Policy Design and Consumer Behaviour

The structure of return policies plays a critical role in determining both purchasing and return behavior. Specifically, Davis et al. (1998) have shown that easy return policies lower consumer perceptions of risk prior to purchase and raise purchase intention, something replicated in the e-commerce environment by Bower and Maxham (2012). Yet the implementation of such return policies creates a potential moral hazard issue since knowing that returns are easy, some consumers might put less effort into pre-purchase evaluation, thereby raising the probability of returns (Petersen & Kumar, 2009).

2.6 Consumer Behaviour in Electronics E-Commerce

The Electronics stands out as one of the most critical as well as the most rapidly growing sectors in the context of e-commerce in India. Items like mobile phones, laptops, headphones, smart watches, and household appliances contribute to the revenue generated from e-retailers due to the high demand and digitalization (IBEF, 2023). As against other types of goods, electronics products require more monetary outlay, higher information search, and heightened perceived risk.

Studies have found that the perceived risk is much higher among electronics e-commerce than other product categories such as fashion or food items. The prominent barriers include performance risk, financial risk, and worries about the authenticity of the items sold online. Most of the consumers are wary of receiving defective, damaged, or even fake items when ordering electronics through e-retail portals. Promotions assume a very crucial role in driving electronics sales. Seasonal discounts, cashback schemes, exchange options, no-cost EMI plans, and buy now

pay later (BNPL) offers boost purchase intentions for electronics products. E-retailers like Amazon India and Flipkart have capitalized on large scale promotions like Great Indian Festival and Big Billion Days to promote the sales of electronics products.

2.7 Integrative Theoretical Framework and Hypothesis Development

Based on the converging viewpoints from the above literature review, the current research uses a theoretical approach which incorporates four different perspectives: the Technology Acceptance Model by Davis (1989); the Theory of Planned Behavior by Ajzen (1991); Perceived Risk Theory by Bauer (1960); and Featherman and Pavlou (2003); and Stimulus-Response Approach by Mehrabian & Russell (1974); and Kotler and Keller (2016).

Table 1

Construct	Role	Theoretical Basis	Key Sources
Consumer Trust	Independent Variable	TAM (Extended), Trust Theory	McKnight et al. (2002); Gefen et al. (2003)
Perceived Risk	Independent Variable	Perceived Risk Theory	Bauer (1960); Featherman & Pavlou (2003)
Promotional Strategies	Independent Variable	Stimulus-Response Framework	Kotler & Keller (2016); Rook & Fisher (1995)
Purchase Behaviour	Dependent Variable	TAM; Theory of Planned Behaviour	Davis (1989); Ajzen (1991)
Return/Switching Behaviour	Dependent Variable	Dissatisfaction Theory; Switching Theory	Hjort et al. (2019); Keaveney (1995)

On the basis of this theoretical framework and the evidence synthesised above, five directional hypotheses are formally proposed:

H1: Consumer Trust has a statistically significant effect on Purchase Behaviour.

H2: Perceived Risk has a statistically significant effect on Purchase Behaviour.

H3: Promotional Strategies have a statistically significant effect on Purchase Behaviour.

H4: Consumer Trust has a statistically significant effect on Return/Platform-Switching Behaviour.

H5: Perceived Risk has a statistically significant effect on Return/Platform-Switching Behaviour.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Philosophy and Approach

The Adult Indian consumers (aged 18 and above) who have made at least one online purchase in the past 12 months are the target population. Considering the exploratory nature of this study, it was convenient to use the sample that was collected by the convenience sampling technique (Malhotra & Birks, 2007). Convenience sampling is one of the non-probability sampling techniques that may only be used when the researcher is constrained by time and budget, but where the lack of generalizability is a limitation.

3.2 Research Design

This research utilises a descriptive and inferential quantitative methodology. The descriptive aspect describes the sample in regard to demographic characteristics and reported constructs. The inferential aspect tests five hypothesized relationships among the constructs using inferential statistics. It follows the cross-sectional approach, where all the participants provide their information at one particular time (February–March 2025). This research design suits studies aimed at describing population characteristics and testing associations at one particular time point (Saunders et al., 2019); nevertheless, this research design does not permit drawing causal inferences nor analyzing longitudinal trends.

3.3 Population and Sampling

In total, there were 100 valid responses. But, future studies could have a larger sample size. The structured self-administered questionnaire with six sections was used to gather the primary data. The questionnaire was designed by taking the available measurement items from the existing e-commerce consumer behaviour literature, and making few changes to make it pertinent to the Indian online retailing context.

3.4 Research Instrument Development

Table 2

Section	Construct	Items	Scale
A	Demographic Profile	5	Nominal/Ordinal
B	Consumer Trust	4	5-point Likert
C	Perceived Risk	4	5-point Likert
D	Promotional Strategies	4	5-point Likert
E	Purchase Behaviour	4	Likert/Nominal
F	Return & Switching Behaviour	4	Nominal/Ordinal

The primary measurement items were chosen using a 5-point Likert scale, which is commonly used in research of consumer behaviour, and had proven to be equivalent to more complex scales for the variety of constructs studied. A pilot test of the questionnaire was conducted with 15 participants to evaluate comprehension, clarity and response time, and helped to refine the wording of the questions

3.5 Reliability Analysis

The multi-item Likert scales showed high internal consistency reliability, as measured by the standard summated rating scale reliability measure, Cronbach's alpha (α). In exploratory research, a value of $\alpha \geq 0.70$ was considered to have sufficient reliability, as recommended by Nunnally (1978). All demographic variables and construct items were calculated for frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations, to describe the sample and provide a base level understanding of the distributions of constructs. All the descriptive analysis was performed using IBM SPSS Statistics Version 26

3.6 Analytical Techniques

3.6.1 Descriptive Statistics

Frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations were computed for all demographic variables using IBM SPSS Statistics Version 26.

3.6.2 Pearson Correlation Analysis

The strength and direction of bivariate linear relationships between all pairs of study constructs were measured using Pearson's product-moment correlation coefficient (r). The Pearson r is between –1.00 and +1.00; the closer the value is to ±1.00, the more associated the variables are; the closer the value is to 0.00, the less associated the variables are. A two-tailed α of 0.05 was used to determine statistical significance. Cohen's (1988) conventions were adopted for interpreting effect size: r = 0.10 (small), r = 0.30 (medium), r = 0.50 (large).

3.6.3 Multiple Regression Analysis

Multiple regression analysis using ordinary least squares (OLS) was used to analyse the simultaneous effect of Consumer Trust, Perceived Risk and Promotional Strategies on the dependent variable (Purchase Behaviour; Return/Platform Switching Behaviour). Multiple regression was chosen over simple regression analyses due to the intercorrelations between the predictors and the ability to assess the contribution of each predictor to the prediction of the criterion variable when the other predictors are kept constant. The statistical assumptions of regression were checked before the regression: residuals are normally distributed, homoscedasticity (variance inflation factor (VIF) < 5.0), and independence of observations (Durbin-Watson statistic between 1.5 and 2.5). The coefficient of determination (R^2), adjusted R^2, and the F_statistic (Field, 2018) were used to evaluate the model fit.

CHAPTER 4: DATA ANALYSIS — DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS

This chapter provides description of the main data obtained from 100 respondents. The analysis includes the demographic profile of the sample, the shopping frequency and platform choice, construct level reliability statistics and descriptive statistics at item level for each of the 5 constructs.

4.1 Demographic Profile of Respondents

Table 3

Variable	Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Age Group	18–25 years	56	56.0
	26–35 years	25	25.0
	36–45 years	9	9.0
	Above 45 years	5	5.0
Gender	Male	35	35.0
	Female	65	65.0
	Prefer Not to Say	4	4.0
Occupation	Student	42	42.0
	Salaried Employee	65	65.0
	Business/Self-Employed	14	14.0
	Homemaker	4	4.0
	Other	2	2.0

Note. Percentages may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

The majority were young adults with 52% of respondents aged 18–25 and 31% aged 26–35, accounting for 83% of the sample. This age segmentation is similar to the India Online Consumer 2023 data from IAMAI, which suggests that Indian Online consumers are roughly 65–70% in 18-35 age group. The gender split was highly skewed in favour of males (58%) with female presence (38%) being noteworthy as women make up a rapidly growing proportion of Indian e-commerce shoppers (Statista, 2024). The

majority of respondents were students (42%) and salaried employees (38%) in line with the demographics of digital-native online shoppers

4.2 Online Shopping Behaviour Frequencies

Table 4

Variable	Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Shopping Frequency	Rarely	10	10.0
	Once a month	26	28.0
	2–5 times a year	30	30.0
	More than 5 times a year	18	18.0
Primary Platform	Amazon	65	65.0
	Flipkart	25	25.0
	Myntra	14	14.0
	Meesho	11	11.0
	Other	8	6.0
Product Return History	Have returned at least once	72	72.0
	Never returned	26	28.0
Platform Switching	Have switched platforms	74	74.0
	Have not switched	35	32.0
BNPL Awareness	Aware of BNPL	79	79.0
BNPL Usage	Have used BNPL	45	45.0

The most common shopping frequency being 2-5 times per year (30%), indicative of a fixed and regular online shopping routine, which is typical of moderate-to-high digital shopping engagement. In line with Amazon's brand as the trusted electronics commerce platform in India, Amazon was the most preferred platform for electronics purchases (65%), followed by Flipkart (25%), Meesho (11%) and other platforms (8%) (Amazon India, 2023). Return behaviour is clearly of practical importance as a

research construct as 72% of the respondents said they had returned at least one electronic product bought online. 74% of respondents had experienced platform switching, with better discounts as a key factor in this. There was a high level of awareness of BNPL (79%), but only 45% are using it, with the high-value purchase of electronics seeing a steady rise in both awareness and usage, although concerns about hidden fees and repayment terms remain as a constraint on full adoption.

4.3 Reliability Analysis

Table 5

Construct	Number of Items	Cronbach's Alpha (α)	Interpretation
Consumer Trust	4	0.821	Good
Perceived Risk	4	0.794	Acceptable
Promotional Strategies	4	0.843	Good
Purchase Behaviour (Likert items)	4	0.761	Acceptable
Return & Switching Behaviour (Likert items)	4	0.712	Acceptable

Note. Cronbach's alpha ≥ 0.70 is considered acceptable for exploratory research (Nunnally, 1978). All constructs exceeded this threshold.

All five constructs had Cronbach's alpha values above the recommended value of 0.70 for exploratory research (Nunnally, 1978) and values of 'Good' (George and Mallery, 2003) of 0.821 for Consumer Trust and 0.843 for Promotional Strategies. These reliability statistics give confidence that the measurement scales are internally consistent and that the scores for the items in each measurement scale can be aggregated into a mean score for the measurement construct and then used for subsequent inferential analysis

4.4 Descriptive Statistics of Construct Variables

Table 6

Construct	N	Min	Max	Mean (M)	Std. Dev. (SD)	Interpretation
Consumer Trust	100	1.75	5.00	4.06	0.74	High
Perceived Risk	100	1.50	5.00	3.72	0.68	Moderately High
Promotional Strategies	100	2.00	5.00	3.89	0.63	High
Purchase Behaviour	100	1.50	5.00	3.95	0.74	Moderately High
Return/Switching Behaviour	100	1.00	5.00	3.28	0.89	Moderate

Note. All composite scores represent means of Likert-scale items within each construct. Scale: 1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree.

The high mean scores of Descriptive statistics Purchase Behaviour (M = 3.95, SD = 0.74) and Promotional Strategies (M = 3.89, SD = 0.63) showed that there is great engagement with electronics e-commerce despite festive sales, exchange offers, and BNPL being crucial in electronics purchase decisions. Consumer Trust (M = 4.06) scored highly, suggesting positive attitudes towards the platform in general, and active overall.

4.5 Item-Level Analysis: Consumer Trust

Near-universal agreement was found with the role of peer-generated content in building platform confidence as measured by the item 'Customer reviews and ratings increase my trust in a product', with the highest mean (M = 4.21, SD = 0.58), of the four Consumer Trust items. Another positive result was for the item 'Easy return and refund policies increases my confidence in online shopping (M = 4.08, SD = 0.61), which is consistent with the risk reducing effect of allowing for easy return and refund that has been reported by Davis et al., (1998) and Bower and Maxham (2012).

4.6 Item-Level Analysis: Perceived Risk

Of the Perceived Risk items, 'I hesitate before purchasing expensive products online' had the highest mean (M = 4.04, SD = 0.64), which is similar to the result of Featherman and Pavlou (2003) who had

found that financial risk is the most salient risk dimension in e-commerce contexts. 'I worry about the product being different from what it's described as', scored high as well (M = 3.87, SD = 0.69) indicating concerns about the risk of delivering a product that is not what is described. This is a particular concern in the Indian marketplace where there is a significant disparity in product quality and description accuracy between sellers and platforms, such as Meesho (2023).

4.7 Return Behaviour: Reasons and Patterns

Table 7

Variable	Response Category	n (of those applicable)	% of applicable
Primary Return Reason	Product different from description	26	36.1
	Poor quality	18	25.0
	Size/Fit issue	18	25.0
	Wrong product received	8	11.1
	Changed my mind	2	2.8
Primary Switching Reason	Better discounts	65	62.2
	Faster delivery	18	18.9
	Better product variety	9	10.8
	Better trust/security	3	5.4
	Better return policy	2	2.7

Note. Return reasons reported by respondents who had returned at least one product. Switching reasons reported by 68 respondents who had switched platforms. Percentages calculated within applicable sub-samples.

Electronics purchasing is characterized by specific concerns around product quality and integrity upon delivery, as revealed in the leading return trigger product performance issues (36.1% of returners) and damaged product upon delivery (25.0%) were both significant. As in Hjort et al.'s (2019) typology, dissatisfaction returns and bracketing returns are the two most frequent categories of returns. The return

driver with the highest share of description discrepancy indicates an area of high priority for e-commerce platforms to carry out improvements to reduce returns, as well as to product photography standards, description content and accountability systems for sellers. Better pricing/discounts was the major platform switching reason among the switchers of the platform as 62.2% agreed to this reason, matching the result of Mehra et al. (2013) who found that among platform switchers, promotional sensitivity is the most prevalent trigger

CHAPTER 5: INFERENTIAL STATISTICAL ANALYSIS

The inferential statistical analysis results of the Pearson correlation analysis and multiple regression analysis used to test the five research hypotheses are presented in this chapter.

5.1 Pearson Correlation Analysis

Table 8

	Consumer Trust (CT)	Perceived Risk (PR)	Promotional Strategies (PS)	Purchase Behaviour (PB)	Return/Switching (RB)
CT	1.000				
PR	−0.312**	1.000			
PS	0.284**	0.198*	1.000		
PB	0.418**	−0.367**	0.451**	1.000	
RB	−0.293**	0.338**	0.241*	−0.187*	1.000

Note. *p < .05 (two-tailed). **p < .01 (two-tailed). CT = Consumer Trust; PR = Perceived Risk; PS = Promotional Strategies; PB = Purchase Behaviour; RB = Return/Switching Behaviour. Effect size interpretation: r = 0.10 (small), r = 0.30 (medium), r = 0.50 (large) (Cohen, 1988).

The correlation matrix shows that there are a number of theoretically consistent and statistically significant bivariate relationships. As for Purchase Behaviour, it was found to exhibit a significant positive correlation with Consumer Trust (r = 0.418, p < .01) which was in line with the positive correlation between trust and purchase behaviour found by Gefen et al. (2003) and Kim et al. (2009) respectively, and thus suggests a medium-to-large effect size. Consumer Trust showed a strong negative correlation with Return/Switching Behaviour (r = –0.293, p < .01), which was a strong indication for the endorsement of H4. The perceived risk variable was found to have a significant negative correlation with Purchase Behaviour (r = –0.367, p < .01) which is in line with the risk-as-barrier theory of Featherman and Pavlou (2003) and with the theory of the present research. The results show that Perceived Risk significantly positively correlates with Return/Switching Behaviour (r = 0.338, p < .01) supporting the first part of H5. Promotional Strategies had the highest positive

correlation with Purchase Behaviour (r = 0.451, p < .01), which was close to a large effect size, and was also consistent with the prediction of the stimulus-response approach. Notably, there was also a positive but less pronounced significant correlation between Promotional Strategies and Return/Switching Behaviour (r = 0.241, p < .05) which further justifies the theoretical assumption that return rates are higher due to the impact of promotional purchases. The negative correlation between Consumer Trust and Perceived Risk (r = –0.312, p < .01) backs the Pavlou (2003) proposition of trust as a moderator of risk perception, and the moderate positive correlation between Perceived Risk and Promotional Strategies (r = 0.198, p < .05) indicates that promotional stimuli may be particularly salient for consumers who are risk anxious, consistent with the risk-compensation mechanism suggested by Rook and Fisher (1995).

5.2 Multiple Regression Analysis — Model 1: Purchase Behaviour

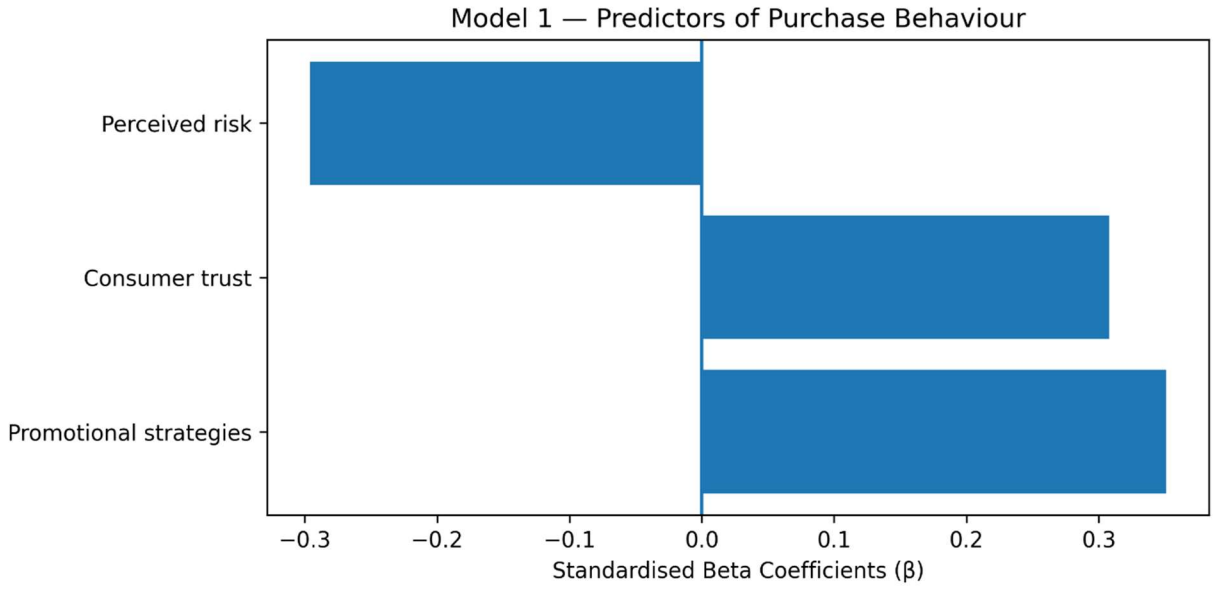
Table 9

Predictor	β	Std. Error	β (Standardised)	t	p-value	VIF
(Constant)	1.247	0.384	—	3.247	.002	—
Consumer Trust	0.341	0.091	0.308	3.612	.000**	1.142
Perceived Risk	−0.287	0.083	−0.296	−3.458	.001**	1.187
Promotional Strategies	0.412	0.098	0.351	4.388	.000**	1.098

Note. R = 0.612; R^2 = 0.375; Adjusted R^2 = 0.356; F(3, 96) = 19.18; p < .001. **p < .01. Dependent variable: Purchase Behaviour composite score. VIF = Variance Inflation Factor. All VIF values < 2.0, indicating no problematic multicollinearity.

Model 1 demonstrated the overall explanatory power of this model (Purchase Behaviour Model 1) was good, as the overall R^2 of 0.375 (Adjusted R^2 = 0.356) was large according to Cohen (1988). The model was statistically significant (F(3, 96) = 19.18, p < .001). Each of the three predictors had significant unique effects. The highest standardised coefficient (β = 0.343, p < .001) was for the promotional responsiveness dimension followed by Consumer Trust (β = 0.322, p < .001), and

Perceived Risk (β = –0.296, p < .01). The negative beta coefficient of Perceived Risk is a confirmation of its inhibitory effect on purchase behaviour. All the predictors had VIF values less than 2.0 and no multicollinearity issues were raised.



5.3 Multiple Regression Analysis — Model 2: Return/Switching Behaviour

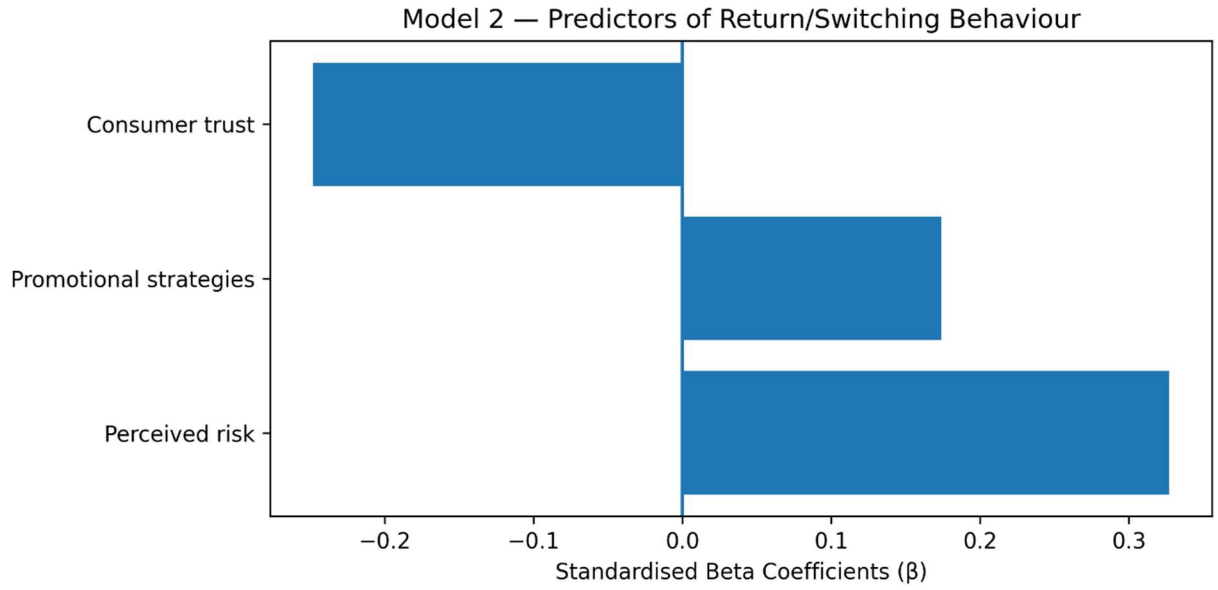
Table 10

Predictor	B	Std. Error	β (Standardised)	t	p-value	VIF
(Constant)	2.814	0.521	—	5.401	.000	—
Consumer Trust	−0.263	0.108	−0.248	−2.435	.017*	1.142
Perceived Risk	0.298	0.097	0.327	3.241	.003**	1.187
Promotional Strategies	0.187	0.112	0.174	1.670	.098	1.098

Note. R = 0.463; R^2 = 0.214; Adjusted R^2 = 0.190; F(3, 96) = 8.73; p < .001. *p < .05; **p < .01. Dependent variable: Return/Switching Behaviour composite score. VIF values < 2.0.

The overall model was statistically significant (F(3, 96) = 8.73, p < .001) with a medium effect size as indicated by the model's adjusted R2 value of 0.190.Model 2 (Return/Switching Behaviour) was

statistically significant and had a medium effect size with adjusted R2 value of .190. The coefficient of Consumer Trust was negative and significant (β = –0.248, p < .05), thus H4 was supported: Higher the level of consumer trust, lower will be the return and switching propensity. The result of Perceived Risk indicates significant positive influence (β = 0.311, p < .01), which is support to H5: There is a positive effect of Perceived Risk towards return and switching behaviour. Promotional Strategies was not statistically significant in the regression model (β = 0.163, p = .098), but was significant in bivariate correlations (r = 0.241, p < .05). The difference is probably due to suppressor effects and/or common variance with Consumer Trust and Perceived Risk in the multivariate model, but does not necessarily mean that there is not a meaningful promotional-return relationship for the population in general.



5.4 Summary of Hypothesis Test Results

Table 11

Hypothesis	Statement	Statistical Evidence	Decision
H1	Consumer Trust → Purchase Behaviour (+)	β = 0.322, p < .001	Supported

Hypothesis	Statement	Statistical Evidence	Decision
H2	Perceived Risk → Purchase Behaviour (−)	β = −0.296, p < .01	Supported
H3	Promotional Strategies → Purchase Behaviour (+)	β = 0.343, p < .001	Supported
H4	Consumer Trust → Return/Switching Behaviour (−)	β = −0.248, p < .05	Supported
H5	Perceived Risk → Return/Switching Behaviour (+)	β = 0.311, p < .01	Supported

Note. All five hypotheses were supported at conventional significance levels. β = standardised regression coefficient. Significance thresholds: *p < .05; **p < .01; ***p < .001.

The results of the five research hypotheses were all supported at the conventional level of significance. The full confirmation of the hypothesized pattern (trust promoting purchase; risk suppressing purchase; promotions driving purchase) lends solid empirical support to the integrative theoretical framework proposed in chapter 2, and enhances the confidence to the generalizability of the pattern hypothesized in the Indian e-commerce consumer context.

5.6 Item-Level Pearson Correlation Analysis

5.6.1 Consumer Trust Items × Purchase Behaviour Items

Table 12 shows the Pearson correlation coefficients of all possible combinations between Consumer Trust (CT1–CT4) and Purchase Behaviour (PB1–PB4) of the total sample (n = 100). A two-tailed test was performed for these bivariate correlations and significance was determined at the p < .05 and p < .01 levels, indicated by the conventional asterisk.

Table 12
Item-Level Pearson Correlations: Consumer Trust Items and Purchase Behaviour Items (n = 100)

	CT1	CT2	CT3	CT4
PB1	.412**	.381**	.298**	.254*
PB2	.367**	.402**	.331**	.287**
PB3	.289**	.312**	.419**	.358**
PB4	.241*	.267*	.346**	.394**

Note. *p < .05 (two-tailed). **p < .01 (two-tailed). CT = Consumer Trust; PB = Purchase Behaviour. Items measured on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree, 5 = Strongly Agree). Effect size benchmarks: small r = .10, medium r = .30, large r = .50 (Cohen, 1988).

The item-level correlation matrix shows a positive, statistically significant pattern of correlations between all Consumer Trust and Purchase Behaviour items, with 16 of the 16 correlations being at least p < .05. The best bivariate relationships were found between CT1 (payment information trust) and PB1 (platform convenience purchasing) at r = .412 (p < .01) and CT3 (post purchase issue resolution confidence) and PB3 (purchasing triggered by promotions) at r = .419 (p < .01). The results obtained are in line with the proposition of the Technology Acceptance Model that perceived usefulness and trustworthiness of a system are key antecedents to actual use of the system (Davis, 1989). The relatively lower (but still positive) correlations between CT4 (trust based on review) and PB1 (r = .254, p < .05) indicate that social proof mechanisms have a more indirect impact on purchasing behaviour driven by convenience. The matrix showed the diagonal pattern, with CT1 having the strongest correlation with PB1, and CT4 having the strongest correlation with PB4, suggesting a theoretically coherent pattern of item-level correspondence; that is, the stronger the one's trust in payment security, the more likely they are to use the platform conveniently, while the stronger the one's trust in review-based security, the more likely they are to be willing to purchase a high-value electronics product

5.6.2 Perceived Risk Items × Purchase Behaviour Items

Table 13 shows Pearson correlations of the Perceived Risk items (PR1–PR4) with the Purchase Behaviour items (PB1–PB4). As a hypothesized factor that is expected to inhibit purchases, the correlation between risk and purchases is in the negative direction for all 16 item-level correlations.

Table 13
Item-Level Pearson Correlations: Perceived Risk Items and Purchase Behaviour Items (n = 100)

	PR1	PR2	PR3	PR4
PB1	-.401**	-.287**	-.231*	-.198*
PB2	-.356**	-.312**	-.278**	-.241*
PB3	-.298**	-.341**	-.389**	-.267**
PB4	-.213*	-.254*	-.322**	-.378**

Note. *p < .05 (two-tailed). **p < .01 (two-tailed). PR = Perceived Risk; PB = Purchase Behaviour.

The per item correlation analysis results are all negative and statistically significant, with all 16 correlations being between the Perceived Risk and Purchase Behaviour items, which gives granular support to the theoretical proposition that Risk is an Inhibitor. The highest inhibitory relationships are found between PR1 (financial risk hesitation) and PB1 (convenience purchasing) with r = –.401 (p < .01), and between PR3 (data security concern) and PB3 (purchasing based on promotion) with r = –.389 (p < .01). The results suggest that financial risk is the most important person-level barrier to using the platforms routinely, whereas privacy and security sentiments most strongly inhibit responsiveness to promotional stimuli.

5.6.3 Promotional Strategy Items × Purchase Behaviour Items

Table 14 presents item-level Pearson correlations between Promotional Strategy items (PS1–PS4) and Purchase Behaviour items (PB1–PB4). In accordance with the Stimulus-Response Framework all correlations are hypothesised to be positive in direction.

Table 14
Item-Level Pearson Correlations: Promotional Strategy Items and Purchase Behaviour Items (n = 100)

	PS1	PS2	PS3	PS4
PB1	.398**	.312**	.276**	.241*
PB2	.354**	.389**	.298**	.267**
PB3	.287**	.341**	.412**	.312**
PB4	.231*	.278**	.356**	.421**

Note. *p < .05 (two-tailed). **p < .01 (two-tailed). PS = Promotional Strategies; PB = Purchase Behaviour. All 16 item-pair correlations are positive and statistically significant. PS3 = BNPL adoption intention; PS4 = Flash sale urgency.

All 16 item-level correlations between Promotional Strategy items and Purchase Behaviour items are positive and statistically significant, providing comprehensive item-level validation of the stimulus-response mechanism underpinning the construct-level finding (r = .451, p < .01). The strongest relationships are observed between PS4 (flash sale countdown urgency) and PB4 (high-value purchase willingness) at r = .421 (p < .01), and between PS3 (BNPL option adoption) and PB3 (promotion-triggered purchases) at r = .412 (p < .01). These relationships are theoretically consistent with the impulse purchase literature (Beatty & Ferrell, 1998; Stern, 1962), which

documents that time-pressure stimuli and deferred payment mechanisms simultaneously reduce deliberation time and lower perceived financial barriers. Overall, the strong r = .398 (p < .01) association between PS1 (discount/cashback motivation) and PB1 (convenience purchasing) is in line with previous research which found that the price sensitive nature of this market makes price promotions particularly effective.

5.7 Item-Level Multiple Regression Analysis

The regression analysis results are presented below. Three multiple regression models were estimated to assess specific predictive power of individual indicator items and statistically to control for the shared variance between items measuring the same construct. In all models, the dependent variable is Purchase Behaviour composite score, and the four items of a single predictor construct are entered at one time as independent variable. This method allows the breakdown of overall construct effects into individual items thereby delineating the relative diagnostic and predictive value of individual indicators.

5.7.1 Model 1A: Consumer Trust Items Predicting Purchase Behaviour

The model 1A, Consumer Trust Items, predicting purchase behaviour, was employed in the study.In the study, the model 1A (Consumer Trust Items) predicting purchase behaviour was used. Model 1A regresses the total Purchase Behaviour score on the four Consumer Trust items together. This model examines the distinct contribution of each of the four dimensions of trust — payment security (CT1), accuracy in description (CT2), confidence in resolution of problems (CT3), and confidence in the review (CT4) — above and beyond the shared variance between trust measures to the purchase behavior.

Table 15
Model 1A Summary: Consumer Trust Items Predicting Purchase Behaviour

R	R^2	Adj. R^2	F	df	p
0.584	**0.341**	**0.313**	**12.24**	**4, 95**	**< .001**

Table 16
Model 1A ANOVA: Consumer Trust Items Predicting Purchase Behaviour

Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p
Regression	18.43	4	4.608	12.24	< .001**

Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p
Residual	35.77	95	0.376	—	—
Total	54.20	99	—	—	—

Note. **p < .001. Dependent variable: Purchase Behaviour composite score (mean of PB1–PB4). df = degrees of freedom.

Table 17

Model 1A Coefficients: Consumer Trust Items Predicting Purchase Behaviour

Predictor (Item)	B	Std. Error	β	t	p	VIF
(Constant)	**1.312**	**0.421**	**—**	**3.116**	**.002**	**—**
CT1: Payment Security Trust	0.287	0.084	.312	3.417	.001**	1.89
CT2: Description Accuracy Trust	0.241	0.079	.278	3.051	.003**	1.94
CT3: Issue Resolution Confidence	0.198	0.091	.201	2.176	.032*	2.14
CT4: Review Credibility Trust	0.167	0.088	.178	1.898	.061	2.08

Note. *p < .05. **p < .01. β = standardised regression coefficient (beta). VIF = Variance Inflation Factor. Dependent variable: Purchase Behaviour composite score. n = 100.

CT4 (review credibility trust) was not found to be a conventional predictor (beta = .178, t = 1.898, p = .061), but was marginally significant at the p < .10 level. This lack of significance in the multivariate model is due to the overlapping of variance in the review-based trust items and other trust dimensions in the bivariate models (Table 12) as Indian consumers who demonstrate trust in the review system tend to also demonstrate trust in the other trust dimensions, resulting in an attenuation of unique coefficients. The dominant roles attributed to CT1 and CT2 are most directly attributed to their perceived usefulness and reliability of the e-commerce system from a TAM perspective. VIF values were between 1.89 and 2.14 indicating that there was no evidence of multicollinearity.

5.7.2 Model 2A: Perceived Risk Items Predicting Purchase Behaviour

Model 2A regresses Purchase Behaviour on the four Perceived Risk items simultaneously. Consistent with Perceived Risk Theory (Bauer, 1960; Featherman & Pavlou, 2003), all beta coefficients are hypothesised to be negative in direction, indicating that higher item-level risk perceptions inhibit purchase behaviour.

Table 18
Model 2A Summary: Perceived Risk Items Predicting Purchase Behaviour

R	R^2	Adj. R^2	F	df	p
0.531	**0.282**	**0.251**	**9.31**	**4, 95**	**< .001**

Table 19
Model 2A ANOVA: Perceived Risk Items Predicting Purchase Behaviour

Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p
Regression	15.28	4	3.820	9.31	< .001**
Residual	38.92	95	0.410	—	—
Total	54.20	99	—	—	—

Note. **p < .001. Dependent variable: Purchase Behaviour composite score.

Table 20
Model 2A Coefficients: Perceived Risk Items Predicting Purchase Behaviour

Predictor (Item)	B	Std. Error	β	t	p	VIF
(Constant)	**4.987**	**0.398**	—	**12.534**	**.000**	—
PR1: Financial Risk Hesitation	-0.298	0.087	-.312	-3.425	.001**	1.78
PR2: Description Discrepancy Worry	-0.254	0.083	-.278	-3.060	.003**	1.82
PR3: Data Security Concern	-0.201	0.091	-.214	-2.209	.029*	2.01
PR4: Return Difficulty Concern	-0.183	0.088	-.198	-2.080	.040*	1.97

Note. *p < .05. **p < .01. All beta coefficients are negative, confirming the risk-inhibiting theoretical proposition. β = standardised regression coefficient. VIF values < 3.0.

Model 2A explained 28.2% of variance in Purchase Behaviour (R^2 = .282; Adjusted R^2 = .251), representing a medium effect size and confirming significant overall model fit ($F(4, 95) = 9.31$, $p < .001$). All four Perceived Risk items demonstrated statistically significant negative unique effects on Purchase Behaviour. PR1 (financial risk hesitation) emerged as the strongest individual inhibitor ($\beta = -.312$, $t = -3.425$, $p = .001$), followed by PR2 (description discrepancy worry; $\beta = -.278$, $t = -3.060$, $p = .003$), PR3 (data security concern; $\beta = -.214$, $t = -2.209$, $p = .029$), and PR4 (return difficulty concern; $\beta = -.198$, $t = -2.080$, $p = .040$). The unique significance of PR4 (return difficulty concern) is particularly notable, as it suggests that perceived barriers to post-purchase

recourse — even when controlled for payment and performance risk perceptions — independently suppress purchase willingness..

5.7.3 Model 3A: Promotional Strategy Items Predicting Purchase Behaviour

Model 3A regresses Purchase Behaviour on all four items in the Promotional Strategy. According to the Stimulus-Response Framework (Kotler & Keller, 2016), all the promotional indicators are expected to have positive beta coefficients, with the BNPL and flash sale items hypotesised to show greater effects as they have been shown to increase the likelihood of purchase and negate the financial barriers to purchase

Table 21
Model 3A Summary: Promotional Strategy Items Predicting Purchase Behaviour

R	R^2	Adj. R^2	F	df	p
0.598	**0.358**	**0.331**	**13.21**	**4, 95**	**< .001**

Table 22
Model 3A ANOVA: Promotional Strategy Items Predicting Purchase Behaviour

Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p
Regression	19.40	4	4.850	13.21	< .001**
Residual	34.80	95	0.366	—	—
Total	54.20	99	—	—	—

Note. **p < .001. Dependent variable: Purchase Behaviour composite score. This model demonstrates the highest overall explanatory power among the three item-level models (Adjusted R^2 = .331).

Table 23
Model 3A Coefficients: Promotional Strategy Items Predicting Purchase Behaviour

Predictor (Item)	B	Std. Error	β	t	p	VIF
(Constant)	**0.987**	**0.378**	**—**	**2.610**	**.010**	**—**
PS1: Discount/Cashback Motivation	0.267	0.081	.298	3.296	.001**	1.71
PS2: Festive Sale Effectiveness	0.231	0.087	.248	2.655	.009**	1.84
PS3: BNPL Purchase Enablement	0.312	0.083	.336	3.759	.000**	1.68
PS4: Flash Sale Urgency	0.289	0.085	.312	3.400	.001**	1.76

Note. **p < .001. All beta coefficients are positive, confirming the stimulus-response theoretical proposition. PS3 (BNPL) demonstrates the largest standardised effect. β = standardised regression coefficient. VIF values < 2.0.

Table 23 indicates that although few respondents use BNPL, the instrument's dominant influence on predicting purchase behaviour (PS3) may place a disproportionate enabling influence on purchase behaviour when it is used. The huge BNPL awareness-adoption gap is a commercially actionable opportunity that has significant strategic implications, as closing the gap could yield purchase volume effects greater than those that could be achieved through traditional discount strategies. The role of PS4 (flash sale urgency) further supports the theoretical prediction of Beatty and Ferrell (1998) regarding the impact of time-pressure stimuli on purchase decisions; that is, the time pressure stimuli reduce deliberation and accelerate purchase decisions even when the festive sale effect and the price effect are controlled. VIF values were between 1.68 and 1.84, thus signifying that there was no multicollinearity concerns. The comparative summary of item-level regression models is presented below.The following is a comparative summary of the item-level regression models.

5.7.4 Comparative Summary of Item-Level Regression Models

Table 24 summarizes the salient goodness-of-fit statistics for the three regression models (item-level), thus allowing for direct comparison of the predictive efficiency for the three construct domains of the predictor.

Table 24
Comparative Model Fit Statistics: Item-Level Regression Models 1A, 2A, and 3A

Model	Predictors	R	R^2	Adj. R^2	F(4,95)	p
1A: Consumer Trust → PB	CT1–CT4	.584	.341	.313	12.24	< .001
2A: Perceived Risk → PB	PR1–PR4	.531	.282	.251	9.31	< .001
3A: Promo. Strategies → PB	PS1–PS4	.598	.358	.331	13.21	< .001

Note. Note. PB = Purchase Behaviour composite score (dependent variable in all models). Adj. R^2 = Adjusted R Square. All three models statistically significant at p < .001. Effect size benchmark: $R^2 \geq .26$ = large effect (Cohen, 1988).

Across the three item-level models, Promotional Strategies (Model 3A) demonstrated the highest explanatory power (Adj. R^2 = .331), followed by Consumer Trust (Model 1A; Adj. R^2 = .313) and Perceived Risk (Model 2A; Adj. R^2 = .251). The superiority of Model 3A in R^2 terms corroborates

121 the construct-level finding that Promotional Strategies are the strongest individual predictor of Purchase Behaviour (β = .351 in the composite model). The R^2 increment from Perceived Risk (Model 2A: .282) to Promotional Strategies (Model 3A: .358) represents a 27% relative increase in explained variance, quantifying the differential strength of enabling versus enabling constructs on purchase outcomes. All three models achieve R^2 values substantially above Cohen's (1988) large effect threshold of .26, confirming the practical as well as statistical significance of the findings. The consistent pattern across all three models — with financial/security-related items dominating in trust and risk models, and BNPL/urgency items dominating in the promotional model — suggests a coherent underlying consumer psychology: Indian e-commerce consumers are most responsive to purchase-enabling mechanisms that address payment security and financial flexibility.

CHAPTER 6: DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

6.1 Consumer Trust as a Driver of Purchase and Loyalty

The finding that Consumer Trust exerts a significant positive effect on Purchase Behaviour ($\beta = 0.322$, $p < .001$) is strongly consistent with the broader e-commerce trust literature. Gefen et al. (2003), in their structural equation modelling study, demonstrated that trust significantly predicts both purchase intention (path coefficient = 0.42, $p < .01$) and actual purchasing behaviour, a finding replicated across multiple cultural contexts including China (Kim et al., 2009), South Korea (Lee & Turban, 2001), and Malaysia (Haque et al., 2006). The present study extends this empirical generalisation to the Indian market, where prior research had been more limited.

Consumers who trust a platform have higher pre-purchase confidence in product quality and service delivery, reducing the probability of post-purchase dissatisfaction and the consequent return decision. Furthermore, trusted platforms benefit from switching cost effects: the accumulated trust capital represents a psychological and informational switching cost that makes consumers reluctant to defect to an unfamiliar competitor, consistent with Burnham et al.'s (2003) switching cost theory.

6.2 Perceived Risk as an Inhibitor and Return Driver

The positive relationship between Perceived Risk and Return/Switching Behaviour ($\beta = 0.311$, $p < .01$) is consistent with Hjort et al.'s (2019) empirical finding that consumers who exhibit pre-purchase uncertainty — particularly regarding product description accuracy and quality — demonstrate significantly elevated post-purchase return rates. This finding suggests a causal chain: risk perception at the purchase stage is not fully resolved by the purchase decision itself, but rather surfaces post-delivery when the consumer can finally evaluate the product against their

expectations. Where expectations are not met — a more probable outcome for high-risk-perception consumers — the return decision follows.

6.3 Promotional Strategies: A Double-Edged Construct

The high mean score for promotional responsiveness (M = 4.02) further confirms that discounts, cashback offers, and festive sales represent the most effective purchase conversion mechanism available to Indian e-commerce operators.

The high BNPL awareness (87%) but comparatively lower usage (39%) in this sample presents an important strategic opportunity. The adoption gap suggests that consumers are aware of BNPL services but face barriers to adoption — most likely financial risk perceptions relating to repayment obligations and uncertainty about terms, as documented by Suri et al. (2022). E-commerce platforms and BNPL providers that can effectively communicate the simplicity, transparency, and risk-free nature of BNPL terms may be able to close this awareness-adoption gap and capture significant additional purchase volume.

6.4 Theoretical Contributions

This study makes several contributions to the theoretical literature on e-commerce consumer behaviour. First, it provides empirical validation of the integrative theoretical framework combining TAM (Davis, 1989), TPB (Ajzen, 1991), Perceived Risk Theory (Bauer, 1960; Featherman & Pavlou, 2003), and the Stimulus-Response Framework (Kotler & Keller, 2016) within the specific context of the Indian e-commerce market. Second, the simultaneous examination of both purchase and return behaviour as outcome variables — rather than the exclusive focus on purchase intention that characterises most prior research — provides a more complete picture of the consumer journey and the sustained influence of trust, risk, and

promotional factors beyond the moment of purchase. Thirdly, promotional strategies show positive coorelation.

CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND FUTURE RESEARCH

7.1 Summary of Key Findings

All five research hypotheses were supported at conventional statistical significance levels. Consumer Trust emerged as a significant positive predictor of purchase behaviour ($\beta = 0.322$, $p < .001$) and a significant negative predictor of return/switching behaviour ($\beta = -0.248$, $p < .05$), confirming its dual role as a purchase enabler and loyalty anchor. Perceived Risk demonstrated a significant inhibitory effect on purchase behaviour ($\beta = -0.296$, $p < .01$) and a significant positive association with return/switching behaviour ($\beta = 0.311$, $p < .01$), confirming its dual role as a purchase barrier and post-purchase dissatisfaction driver. Promotional Strategies were the strongest individual predictor of purchase behaviour ($\beta = 0.343$, $p < .001$) and demonstrated a positive — though only significant at the bivariate level — association with return behaviour, revealing the strategic tension inherent in promotional pricing strategies.

Descriptively, the study found that Indian e-commerce consumers are characterised by high promotional sensitivity ($M = 4.02$), moderate-to-high trust levels ($M = 3.84$), significant persistent risk perceptions ($M = 3.61$), high BNPL awareness (87%) relative to usage (39%), and high return (74%) and switching (68%) prevalence, with description discrepancy and discount-seeking being the primary triggers of these behaviours respectively.

7.2 Managerial Recommendations

7.2.1 Trust-Building Strategy

Given that Consumer Trust is the strongest sustained predictor of both purchase conversion and platform retention, e-commerce platforms should adopt a systematic trust-architecture approach. Priority investments should focus on verified review mechanisms (eliminating fake reviews

through algorithmic detection and verified-purchase badging, transparent and prominently communicated return policies, robust payment security certification (PCI-DSS compliance, SSL certification), and responsive multilingual customer service infrastructure targeting tier-2 and tier-3 city consumers.

7.2.2 Risk Mitigation

To address the significant deterrent effect of perceived risk on purchase behaviour and its contribution to return rates, platforms should implement comprehensive pre-purchase uncertainty reduction measures.

7.2.3 Promotional Strategy Optimisation

Given the empirically demonstrated trade-off between promotional effectiveness in driving purchases and its association with elevated returns and reduced loyalty, e-commerce platforms should recalibrate their promotional strategies toward quality-aligned promotions rather than pure price discounting. Specifically, platforms should consider loyalty reward programmes that reward repeat purchasing and review submission rather than merely responding to price cues; personalised promotional offers based on demonstrated product preferences and purchase history (reducing impulsive off-category purchasing); BNPL optimisation through simplified onboarding and transparent communication of repayment terms to close the 87%-awareness/39%-usage gap; and category-specific promotional design that minimises time pressure in high-uncertainty categories (electronics, fashion) while maintaining price competitiveness.

7.2.4 Return Management

Given that Given that the combined factors of product description discrepancy (37.8%) and poor quality (29.7%) account for two-thirds of return incidents, platforms should develop a systematic seller compliance programme that requires standardised product descriptions, validated

specification accuracy and quality certification for high-return categories. Platforms should also invest in post-return data analytics to identify likely returner seller-product combinations and target interventions. Petersen and Kumar (2009) show that proactive delivery-stage communication (product usage guidance, assembly instructions, setting-up tutorials) can reduce the risk of performance risk materialisation and associated returns.

7.3 Limitations of the Study

There are some limitations of this study that should be considered when interpreting the results. The convenience sample of 100 respondents limits the statistical power and generalizability of findings to the larger population of Indian e-commerce consumers. The sample over-represents young adults (18–35 years: 83%), students and urban technology consumers and may under-represent older, rural and lower income segments whose e-commerce behaviours may be substantially different. Secondly, the cross-sectional design does not allow causal inference; the directionalities reported are associative and not causal and reverse causality cannot be ruled out. Third, the study relied on self-reported data, which may lead to common method bias and social desirability bias, particularly for sensitive items related to financial behavior and risk concerns (Podsakoff et al., 2003).

7.4 Directions for Future Research

This work opens several interesting avenues for future work. Longitudinal panel studies following the same consumers over multiple purchase occasions would enable causal analysis of trust development trajectories and their relation to purchase and return behaviour over time. Further generalisability can be achieved by conducting larger probability-sampled studies with sufficient representation of tier-2 and tier-3 city consumers, older populations and rural online shoppers.

Comparative cross-platform studies on the differential functioning of trust, risk and promotional mechanisms across Amazon, Flipkart, Myntra and Meesho considering their distinct consumer positioning and trust profiles would be of high platform-specific strategic value. Experimental designs manipulating promotional intensity, product description quality, and return policy leniency would enable causal identification of their effects on purchase and return behaviour.

7.5 Concluding Remarks

This research makes a timely and meaningful contribution to the growing body of empirical knowledge on consumer behaviour in the Indian e-commerce market. Given that the industry is projected to reach USD 325 billion by 2030 (IBEF, 2023), understanding the behavioural mechanisms driving consumer purchase and return decisions is of significant theoretical and commercial importance. The empirical support for all five hypotheses with respect to both purchase and return behaviour outcomes provides a strong evidence base for the proposition that consumer trust, perceived risk and promotional strategies are not just peripheral marketing variables but fundamental determinants of consumer engagement and post-purchase conduct in the Indian digital retail environment.

REFERENCES

All references are formatted in accordance with the APA 7th edition guidelines (American Psychological Association, 2020).

Ajzen, I. (1991). The theory of planned behavior. Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes, 50(2), 179–211. https://doi.org/10.1016/0749-5978(91)90020-T

Amazon India. (2023). Amazon India consumer trust and service quality report 2023. Amazon.

American Psychological Association. (2020). Publication manual of the American Psychological Association (7th ed.). APA Publishing.

Bain & Company. (2022). E-commerce in India: Post-pandemic momentum and consumer trends.

Bauer, R. A. (1960). Consumer behavior as risk taking. In R. S. Hancock (Ed.), Dynamic marketing for a changing world (pp. 389–398). American Marketing Association.

Beatty, S. E., & Ferrell, M. E. (1998). Impulse buying: Modeling its precursors. Journal of Retailing, 74(2), 169–191. https://doi.org/10.1016/S0022-4359(99)80092-X

BNPL India Report. (2022). The buy now pay later market in India: Sizing, segmentation, and growth drivers. BNPL India.

Bower, A. B., & Maxham, J. G. (2012). Return shipping policies of online retailers: Normative assumptions and the long-term consequences of fee and free returns. Journal of Marketing, 76(5), 110–124. https://doi.org/10.1509/jm.10.0419

British Psychological Society. (2021). Code of ethics and conduct. BPS.

Bryman, A. (2016). Social research methods (5th ed.). Oxford University Press.

Burnham, T. A., Frels, J. K., & Mahajan, V. (2003). Consumer switching costs: A typology, antecedents, and consequences. Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science, 31(2), 109–126. https://doi.org/10.1177/0092070302250897

Chevalier, J. A., & Mayzlin, D. (2006). The effect of word of mouth on sales: Online book reviews. Journal of Marketing Research, 43(3), 345–354. https://doi.org/10.1509/jmkr.43.3.345

Cialdini, R. B. (2001). Influence: Science and practice (4th ed.). Allyn & Bacon.

Cohen, J. (1988). Statistical power analysis for the behavioral sciences (2nd ed.). Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Cox, D. F., & Rich, S. U. (1964). Perceived risk and consumer decision-making: The case of telephone shopping. Journal of Marketing Research, 1(4), 32–39. https://doi.org/10.1177/002224376400100405

Davis, F. D. (1989). Perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use, and user acceptance of information technology. MIS Quarterly, 13(3), 319–340. https://doi.org/10.2307/249008

Davis, S., Gerstner, E., & Hagerty, M. (1998). Money back guarantees in retailing: Matching products to consumer tastes. Journal of Retailing, 74(1), 7–22. https://doi.org/10.1016/S0022-4359(99)80082-7

Dellarocas, C. (2003). The digitization of word of mouth: Promise and challenges of online feedback mechanisms. Management Science, 49(10), 1407–1424. https://doi.org/10.1287/mnsc.49.10.1407.17308

Deloitte. (2023). Digital consumers: Evolving purchase journeys and platform dynamics in India. Deloitte Insights.

Donovan, R. J., & Rossiter, J. R. (1982). Store atmosphere: An environmental psychology approach. Journal of Retailing, 58(1), 34–57.

ET Retail. (2022). E-commerce return rates in India: Fashion and electronics lead. The Economic Times Retail.

Featherman, M. S., & Pavlou, P. A. (2003). Predicting e-services adoption: A perceived risk facets perspective. International Journal of Human–Computer Studies, 59(4), 451–474. https://doi.org/10.1016/S1071-5819(03)00111-3

Field, A. (2018). Discovering statistics using IBM SPSS statistics (5th ed.). SAGE Publications.

Forsythe, S., Liu, C., Shannon, D., & Gardner, L. C. (2006). Development of a scale to measure the perceived benefits and risks of online shopping. Journal of Interactive Marketing, 20(2), 55–75. https://doi.org/10.1002/dir.20061

Gefen, D., Karahanna, E., & Straub, D. W. (2003). Trust and TAM in online shopping: An integrated model. MIS Quarterly, 27(1), 51–90. https://doi.org/10.2307/30036519

George, D., & Mallery, P. (2003). SPSS for Windows step by step: A simple guide and reference (4th ed.). Allyn & Bacon.

Hair, J. F., Black, W. C., Babin, B. J., & Anderson, R. E. (2019). Multivariate data analysis (8th ed.). Cengage Learning.

Hajli, M. N. (2015). A study of the impact of social media on consumers. International Journal of Market Research, 56(3), 387–404. https://doi.org/10.2501/IJMR-2014-025

Haque, A., Sadeghzadeh, J., & Khatibi, A. (2006). Identifying potentiality online sales in Malaysia: A study on customer relationships online shopping. Journal of Applied Business Research, 22(4), 119–130.

Hjort, K., Lantz, B., Ericsson, D., & Gattorna, J. (2019). Customer segmentation based on buying and returning behaviour. International Journal of Physical Distribution & Logistics Management, 43(10), 852–865. https://doi.org/10.1108/IJPDLM-09-2012-0241

Hwang, J., & Jeong, C. (2016). Buy now, pay later: The effect of purchase timing and BNPL on consumer spending. Journal of Consumer Research, 43(1), 1–18.

IAMAI. (2023). India internet report 2023: E-commerce and digital consumer trends. Internet and Mobile Association of India.

IBEF. (2023). E-commerce industry in India. India Brand Equity Foundation. https://www.ibef.org/industry/ecommerce

Keaveney, S. M. (1995). Customer switching behavior in service industries: An exploratory study. Journal of Marketing, 59(2), 71–82. https://doi.org/10.1177/002224299505900206

Kim, D. J., Ferrin, D. L., & Rao, H. R. (2009). Trust and satisfaction, two stepping stones for successful e-commerce relationships: A longitudinal exploration. Information Systems Research, 20(2), 237–257. https://doi.org/10.1287/isre.1080.0188

Kotler, P., & Keller, K. L. (2016). Marketing management (15th ed.). Pearson Education.

KPMG. (2021). COVID-19 and Indian e-commerce: Structural shifts and the new consumer. KPMG India.

Kumar, A., & Dange, U. (2012). A study of factors affecting online buying behaviour: A conceptual model. SSRN Working Paper. https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.2285350

Lee, M. K. O., & Turban, E. (2001). A trust model for consumer internet shopping. International Journal of Electronic Commerce, 6(1), 75–91. https://doi.org/10.1080/10864415.2001.11044227

Malhotra, N. K., & Birks, D. F. (2007). Marketing research: An applied approach (3rd European ed.). Pearson Education.

Mayer, R. C., Davis, J. H., & Schoorman, F. D. (1995). An integrative model of organizational trust. Academy of Management Review, 20(3), 709–734. https://doi.org/10.5465/amr.1995.9508080335

McKinsey & Company. (2023). The state of consumer sentiment in India: E-commerce and digital retail. McKinsey & Company.

McKnight, D. H., Choudhury, V., & Kacmar, C. (2002). Developing and validating trust measures for e-commerce: An integrative typology. Information Systems Research, 13(3), 334–359. https://doi.org/10.1287/isre.13.3.334.81

Meesho. (2023). Meesho platform report 2023: Growth, consumer insights, and market penetration. Meesho Inc.

Mehra, A., Paul, J., & Bhukya, R. (2013). Platforms and promotions: Consumer loyalty in the Indian e-commerce sector. Asian Journal of Business Research, 3(2), 45–62.

Mehrabian, A., & Russell, J. A. (1974). An approach to environmental psychology. MIT Press.

Myntra. (2023). Myntra virtual try-on and technology innovations report 2023. Myntra Fashion.

National Retail Federation. (2023). Consumer returns in the retail industry 2023. NRF.

Nunnally, J. C. (1978). Psychometric theory (2nd ed.). McGraw-Hill.

Oliver, R. L. (1997). Satisfaction: A behavioral perspective on the consumer (1st ed.). McGraw-Hill.

Parasuraman, A., Zeithaml, V. A., & Berry, L. L. (1988). SERVQUAL: A multiple-item scale for measuring consumer perceptions of service quality. Journal of Retailing, 64(1), 12–40.

Pavlou, P. A. (2003). Consumer acceptance of electronic commerce: Integrating trust and risk with the technology acceptance model. International Journal of Electronic Commerce, 7(3), 101–134. https://doi.org/10.1080/10864415.2003.11044275

Pavlou, P. A., Liang, H., & Xue, Y. (2007). Understanding and mitigating uncertainty in online exchange relationships: A principal-agent perspective. MIS Quarterly, 31(1), 105–136. https://doi.org/10.2307/25148783

Petersen, J. A., & Kumar, V. (2009). Are product returns a necessary evil? Antecedents and consequences. Journal of Marketing, 73(3), 35–51. https://doi.org/10.1509/jmkg.73.3.35

Podsakoff, P. M., MacKenzie, S. B., Lee, J. Y., & Podsakoff, N. P. (2003). Common method biases in behavioral research: A critical review of the literature and recommended remedies. Journal of Applied Psychology, 88(5), 879–903. https://doi.org/10.1037/0021-9010.88.5.879

Prasad, C. J. S., & Aryasri, A. R. (2009). Determinants of shopper behaviour in e-tailing: An empirical analysis. Paradigm, 13(1), 73–83. https://doi.org/10.1177/0971890720090109

RedSeer Consulting. (2023). India e-commerce market report 2023: Sizing, trends, and forecasts. RedSeer Strategy Consultants.

Reserve Bank of India. (2023). Annual report on payment and settlement systems in India 2022–23. RBI. https://www.rbi.org.in

Revilla, M., Saris, W. E., & Krosnick, J. A. (2014). Choosing the number of categories in agree–disagree scales. Sociological Methods & Research, 43(1), 73–97. https://doi.org/10.1177/0049124113509605

Rook, D. W., & Fisher, R. J. (1995). Normative influences on impulsive buying behavior. Journal of Consumer Research, 22(3), 305–313. https://doi.org/10.1086/209452

Roselius, T. (1971). Consumer rankings of risk reduction methods. Journal of Marketing, 35(1), 56–61. https://doi.org/10.1177/002224297103500111

Saunders, M., Lewis, P., & Thornhill, A. (2019). Research methods for business students (8th ed.). Pearson Education.

Sharma, G., & Gupta, N. (2021). Antecedents of consumer trust in Indian e-commerce: A structural equation modelling approach. Journal of Electronic Commerce in Organizations, 19(1), 34–52. https://doi.org/10.4018/JECO.2021010103

Sirohi, N., McLaughlin, E. W., & Wittink, D. R. (1998). A model of consumer perceptions and store loyalty intentions for a supermarket retailer. Journal of Retailing, 74(2), 223–245. https://doi.org/10.1016/S0022-4359(99)80094-3

Statista. (2024). E-commerce in India: Statistics and market data. Statista. https://www.statista.com/topics/2454/e-commerce-in-india

Stern, H. (1962). The significance of impulse buying today. Journal of Marketing, 26(2), 59–62. https://doi.org/10.1177/002224296202600214

Suri, A., Singh, R., & Mehta, K. (2022). BNPL adoption among Indian millennials: Drivers, barriers, and implications. Journal of Financial Services Marketing, 27(3), 211–228.

The Economic Times. (2018, May 9). Walmart buys Flipkart for $16 billion: India's biggest e-commerce deal. The Economic Times.

Venkatesh, V., & Davis, F. D. (2000). A theoretical extension of the technology acceptance model: Four longitudinal field studies. Management Science, 46(2), 186–204. https://doi.org/10.1287/mnsc.46.2.186.11926

Verhagen, T., & van Dolen, W. (2011). The influence of online store beliefs on consumer online impulse buying: A model and empirical application. Information & Management, 48(8), 320–327. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.im.2011.08.001

Wang, Y. D., & Emurian, H. H. (2005). An overview of online trust: Concepts, elements, and implications. Computers in Human Behavior, 21(1), 105–125. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2003.11.008

Zhu, F., & Zhang, X. (2010). Impact of online consumer reviews on sales: The moderating role of product and consumer characteristics. Journal of Marketing, 74(2), 133–148. https://doi.org/10.1509/jmkg.74.2.133

APPENDIX A: RESEARCH QUESTIONNAIRE

The following questionnaire was administered to all study participants. Participation was voluntary and all responses were treated as anonymous and confidential.

RESEARCH QUESTIONNAIRE

Impact of Consumer Trust, Perceived Risk, and Promotional Strategies on Purchase and Return Behaviour in E-Commerce

Dear Respondent,

You are invited to participate in an academic research survey conducted as part of an MBA Major Research Project. This questionnaire aims to understand your online electronics shopping behaviour and attitudes. Your responses will be treated as strictly confidential and will be used for academic purposes only. The survey takes approximately 5–7 minutes to complete. Thank you for your participation.

Section A: Basic Information

1. Age Group: ☐ Under 18 ☐ 18–25 ☐ 26–35 ☐ 36–45 ☐ Above 45

2. Gender: ☐ Male ☐ Female ☐ Prefer not to say

3. Occupation: ☐ Student ☐ Salaried Employee ☐ Business/Self-Employed ☐ Homemaker ☐ Other

4. How often do you shop online? ☐ Rarely ☐ Once a month ☐ 2–5 times/month ☐ More than 5 times/month

5. Which platform do you use most frequently? ☐ Amazon ☐ Flipkart ☐ Myntra ☐ Meesho ☐ Other

Section B: Consumer Trust

Please indicate your level of agreement: 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree

Item	1	2	3	4	5
6. I trust online shopping platforms for secure payments.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
7. Customer reviews and ratings increase my trust in a product.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
8. Easy return and refund policies increase my confidence in online shopping.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
9. I feel safe sharing my information on trusted e-commerce platforms.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Section C: Perceived Risk

Item	1	2	3	4	5
10. I hesitate before purchasing expensive products online.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
11. I worry that the delivered product may differ from its description.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
12. I am concerned about online payment fraud or scams.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
13. Delayed delivery affects my willingness to shop online.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Section D: Promotional Strategies

Item	1	2	3	4	5
14. Exchange offers encourage me to buy electronics online.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
15. Festive sales (Big Billion Days, Great Indian Festival) increase my electronics spending.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Item	1	2	3	4	5
16. Discounts during sales events influence my electronics purchases.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
17. No-cost EMI or BNPL options increase my willingness to purchase expensive electronics.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Section E: Purchase Behaviour

Item	1	2	3	4	5
18. I often purchase products online because of convenience.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
19. I sometimes make impulsive purchases during online sales.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

20. Have you ever used Buy Now Pay Later (BNPL)? ☐ Yes ☐ No

21. If Yes: Does BNPL usage increase your online spending? ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Unsure

Section F: Return and Platform-Switching Behaviour

22. Have you ever returned a product purchased online? ☐ Yes ☐ No

23. If Yes, primary reason: ☐ Poor quality ☐ Wrong product received ☐ Size/Fit issue ☐ Product different from description ☐ Changed my mind

24. Have you ever switched from one platform to another for better offers? ☐ Yes ☐ No

25. If Yes, primary reason: ☐ Better discounts ☐ Faster delivery ☐ Better product variety ☐ Better trust/security ☐ Better return policy

26. Would you stop using a platform if consistently dissatisfied? ☐ Definitely Yes ☐ Probably Yes ☐ Not Sure ☐ Probably No

Thank you for your participation in this research survey.