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DMart vs local grocery stores – Study on consumer preference and consumer behaviour

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Abstract

This study conducts a comparative examination of consumer perceptions toward DMart and small grocery shops to identify the key factors shaping customer preference within this retail segment. Using a mixed-methods research approach - combining survey data with in-depth interviews - the research investigates critical dimensions such as service quality, product variety, pricing practices, and overall shopping experience, all of which play a significant role in determining customer satisfaction and loyalty. (Amtul Wahab *et al.*, 2024) [1]. Primary data for the study was collected through structured questionnaires administered using a sampling method. The collected data was analysed using Chi-Square tests and Independent Sample t-tests. The findings are 61.1% of people prefer Small Grocery shops as compared to D-Mart store. With the help of Chi- Square we could identify that by taking Store preference as a main variable and rest as a secondary variable we could identify that age, household income, gender and household size don't meet the significant level. (Consumer Preference and Satisfaction of Customers towards DMart, 2022).

Keywords: Consumer preference, consumer satisfaction, consumer behaviour, comparative study, service quality, product assortment, pricing strategies, loyalty

Introduction

The retail landscape in India has undergone rapid transformation over the past decade, marked by the rise of organised retail formats such as DMart alongside the continued presence of traditional small grocery shops. While modern retail chains offer standardized pricing, wider product assortments, and structured store environments, local grocery shops remain integral to neighbourhoods due to their convenience, personal interaction, and flexible purchasing options. Understanding how consumers perceive these two retail formats has become increasingly important, particularly as shopping preferences continue to evolve with changing lifestyles, urbanisation, and income patterns. (Guruprasad, 2018) [7]

Consumer perception plays a crucial role in determining store choice, purchasing behaviour, satisfaction levels, and long-term loyalty. Factors such as service quality, product availability, pricing, and overall shopping experience significantly influence how customers evaluate retail options. Previous studies have highlighted varied consumer expectations across organised and unorganised retail segments; however, limited research provides a direct comparison of DMart and small grocery shops in the context of consumer decision-making. (Consumer Preference and Satisfaction of Customers towards DMart,2022). This study aims to bridge this gap by conducting a comparative analysis of consumer perceptions toward DMart and local grocery stores.

DMart, operated by Avenue Supermarts Ltd, has grown rapidly with 415 stores in FY 2024–25 and 432 stores by September 2025, supported by strong financial results, including ₹57,790 crore in revenue and ₹3,290 crore in profit. Modern trade formats like DMart continue to expand at double-digit rates, with a 15% year-on-year revenue increase in Q2 FY 2025–26. (*Avenue Supermarts_ DMart Q2 Update_ Revenue from Operations Jumps over 15% YoY to Rs 16,219 Crore - The Economic Times*, 2025) [2] In contrast, India's 12–15 million small grocery or kirana shops still dominate the retail sector, contributing nearly 88% of the country's US$900-billion market. Although their share has slightly declined in recent years, kiranas remain essential due to convenience, personalised service, and local accessibility. (*Market Share of Kirana Stores Gradually Shifting to Quick Commerce: Report - The Economic Times*, 2025) [12]. Together, these trends highlight a shifting yet dual retail landscape in which organised retailers like DMart grow rapidly while traditional kirana stores retain widespread consumer relevance.

Review of Literature

Recent consumer behaviour shows a strong shift towards organized retail outlets like DMart due to greater convenience, structured layouts, cleanliness, and a wider product assortment. These new formats align better with evolving lifestyles and expectations for efficient shopping, increasing the competition from traditional kirana stores. Consumers also favour modern retail outlets because they offer better access, reliable services, and overall more comfortable shopping experiences, home delivery being just one option. These factors positively influence buyer satisfaction and loyalty, contributing to the growing preference for structured retail experiences (Chechani, 2020) [3].

"A Study on "Impact of D-Mart on small grocery retailers-consumer perspective in Bhilwara" - DMart attracts consumers by presenting a one-stop solution with their pre-planned store layouts and structured product arrangements that make the whole buying process easier than their local retailers could provide. Yet, traditional retail persists as substantial in India. The local kirana stores are deeply embedded into community life and offer familiarity, convenience, immediate availability of essentials, and personalized relationships with customers that consequently bring strong trust and loyalty. (Chechani, 2020) [3]

Indian consumers continue to combine both kinds of stores in their shopping-they buy from established chains like Dmart and also from the neighbourhood grocery shops that are not organized because each format fulfills different needs. People are clear about the fact that organized stores offer more brand options, better quality, a wider product range, and a clean, well-arranged shopping environment, all of which together create a sense of trust and convenience for planned purchases and monthly household shopping. At the same time, the study also shows that customers often find themselves having spent more than they actually had planned in organized outlets because attractive offers, bundled deals, and an energetic shopping atmosphere lead to unplanned buying, which is especially the case in places like Dmart where low prices and variety facilitate extra purchases. Besides that, the research points out that closeness to home, convenience, quick service, familiarity, and personal relationships with shopkeepers make local stores indispensable for immediate and frequent needs, thus providing comforts in buying on credit, easy replacement of defective products, and the trust that comes from dealing with someone they know. (National Institute of Technology Assam, Department of Management Studies & Prasad Kundu, 2022) [13]

A Study on “Consumer Behaviour And Preference (Organized Vs Unorganized Retail)”, revealed that consumers do not see Dmart and small grocery shops as two alternatives in competition with each other but rather as two different coexisting formats serving different shopping occasions. Bulk-shopping can be done through the organized outlets, variety, and savings, while small grocery shops continue to be the immediate and recurring need of households. This equilibrium explains why both retail formats continue to be strong in India and why knowing the factors behind these choices is important to the study of consumer preferences and behaviour. (National Institute of Technology Assam, Department of Management Studies & Prasad Kundu, 2022) [13]

The research also came to a point that no significant difference exists in the opinions of men and women towards organized and unorganized formats. Convenience, value, trust, and shopping needs were the main considerations for both groups, whereas demographic differences were less important. Consumer behaviour in terms of day-to-day requirements and economic viability is less dependent on gender and more on what the demands of life are. (National Institute of Technology Assam, Department of Management Studies & Prasad Kundu, 2022) [13]

The rapid expansion of organized retail in India has significantly reshaped consumer behavior and the competitive landscape for traditional retailers. Several studies highlight how globalization and the arrival of large-format retailers have increased opportunities for organized retail chains while simultaneously intensifying challenges for small unorganized retailers. The author concluded that after globalization retail industry in India has seen significant change in how business is done. There have been a lot of opportunities for organized retailers then for unorganized retailers and which has had negative effect on small scale unorganized retailers. (Khandelwal, 2012)

The vision of D-mart of providing goods at cheaper prices has been a great attraction as well as help for middle income consumers and its business model makes D-Mart differentiate from other players in the market. It was found that Kirana stores accept the damaged items, provides credit facilities, location, easy access by the customer is a positive aspect in the eyes of customers. (National Institute of Technology Assam, Department of Management Studies & Prasad Kundu, 2022) [13]

The study concluded that Kirana stores are facing problems like decrease in their sales and in turn they’re taking initiatives like enhancing their display of products, providing delivery at the door steps and more. Modern Retailers focus on retention, growth prospective and likewise strategies. That’s why traditional format should focus on pricing and promotional strategies to cope with the dynamic business environment and through retention; promotional and other techniques can result in improved sales. (Khandelwal & Ramchandani, n.d.).

Customers today care far more about low prices, convenience, and online shopping compared to the past. They observed that the COVID-19 pandemic made people shift even more strongly toward online purchasing and bulk buying. The authors believe that Dmart has raised the standard of shopping in Kurnool, offering a level of organisation and pricing that small shops struggle to match. They feel that if local retailers don’t modernise, they will keep losing customers. (Kamma Ramanjaneyulu & Jaini Sreedhar, 2024) [5]

The study also found that customers prefer Dmart because of its competitive prices, wide product choices, and smooth shopping experience. Small retailers interviewed in the study said they face problems like losing loyal customers, having difficulty matching Dmart’s discounts, and lacking digital tools for online sales. However, the authors also note that small shops still have opportunities. They can improve their product range, introduce loyalty cards, partner with local suppliers, or create a stronger online or home-delivery system. (Kamma Ramanjaneyulu & Jaini Sreedhar, 2024) [5].

The authors concluded that Dmart has brought a major transformation to the retail sector in Kurnool. It has changed customer expectations and forced local retailers to rethink their business strategies. Dr. Ramanjaneyulu and Mr. Sreedhar suggest that small retailers should not compete directly with Dmart on price. Instead, they should use their strengths—such as personalised service, local products, and customer relationships—to stay relevant. The authors believe that those who adapt will survive and grow, while those who remain unchanged may gradually decline. (Kamma Ramanjaneyulu & Jaini Sreedhar, 2024) [5]

Problem Statement

The customers in India's competitive retail scenario are increasingly evaluating several factors before choosing a store to shop from, including product availability and pricing to service quality, store convenience, and the overall shopping experience. Large retail chains, such as D-Mart, are aggressively expanding into standardized formats with wide assortments, while small grocery shops continue to thrive for everyday purchases because of location convenience and personalized contact. Though all these formats coexist, the underlying determinants of customer store preference remain undefined. There is a need to understand whether D-Mart-preferential customers differ significantly in their perceptions of key retail attributes when compared to small grocery shops. This knowledge gap curtails the retailer's ability to design effective customer-centric strategies.

Research Objectives

- To understand the consumer preference towards DMart products or Local Grocery Store products.
- To study the consumer behaviour and their shopping habits
- To find out if there is any relationship between the consumer who choose DMart /Local Grocery Store and their Age/Household income/Gender.
- To understand the consumer perception of product pricing, customer service, billing time, future preference between customers who prefer D-Mart and those who prefer local grocery stores.

Research Methodology

The study was conducted across all age groups, gender, income groups and different household sizes. The data was collected from respondents who live across India [ie. Tamil Nadu, Andra Pradesh, Assam, Gujarat, West Bengal and so on]. The study has covered various demographic categories to understand the consumer behaviour in-depth. (Amtul Wahab *et al*., 2024) [1].

Primary Data has been collected from 144 respondents where a questionnaire containing a number of questions related to the inspection of research work was prepared. The questionnaire contained 15 questions respective to the preference of the store chosen by the consumer. (Sujana, 2023) [14]. The questions in the questionnaire were framed in such a way that they were short, simple, and straightforward. Majority questions were close ended questions. The questionnaire was prepared in such a way that it began with simple and general questions, then moved on to specific questions. (Guruprasad, 2018) [7].

The entire population in the world can be considered as consumers. Since the population is infinite, the sample can be infinite. Here we have used a couple of sampling techniques in order to choose the samples for our study. Sampling saves time and cost and allows us in faster decision making which will eventually enables the feasibility of research.

Sampling can be majorly classified into two types - Probability Sampling and Non-probability Sampling. Under Probability sampling, we have used “Simple Random Sampling” where every individual has equal chance of being selected.

Under non-probability sampling, we have used “Convenience Sampling” where we have selected individuals who are easiest to reach, “Judgemental Sampling” where we have made judgements on who can provide us with relevant data and “Snowball Sampling” where existing respondents recruited more participants from their network. (Sujana, 2023) [14]

Analysis have been done using the SPSS software where we have carried out various tests including the identification of the frequencies for various demographic variables, chi square tests to identify the significant relationships between the store preference of the consumer and the age group or household income group or household size or gender ,and independent sample t-tests to understand if there is a significant difference in the perception of availability of items, value for money, service quality, product availability, pricing, or overall shopping experience between customers who prefer D-Mart and those who prefer small grocery shops.(Consumer Preference and Satisfaction of Customers towards DMart, n.d.).

Analysis

As per the Frequency distribution of Store Preference reveals that a larger proportion of consumers prefer to shop at small grocery shops compared to D-Mart. Of the 144 respondents, 88 (61.1%) reported they prefer to shop at small grocery shops, while 56 (38.9%) preferred D-Mart. [Table 1]

This indicates that even after the launches of modern retail chains such as D-Mart, the neighbourhood stores have a better hold on their customer base. The possible reasons can be:

- Ease of accessibility and proximity to households
- Personalised services and better customer–shopkeeper relationships
- Flexibility in modes of payment, such as offering credit to regular customers
- Convenience for fast and frequent purchases

On the other hand, the significant percentage of consumers who prefer D-Mart shows that modern retail formats are gaining acceptability due to perceived advantages like wider assortment, price standardization, and better ambiance.

Overall, the findings indicate that both formats are playing their role in fulfilling the needs of consumers, but the small grocery shops have a competitive edge over retailers with regard to consumer preference in the study area.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	DMart	56	38.9	38.9	38.9
	Small Grocery Shop	88	61.1	61.1	100.0
	Total	144	100.0	100.0	

Preference Analysis

Preference analysis plays an important role in retail research as it helps to ascertain the way consumers differentiate between various available choices for shopping. In the present context of research, this will help to assess the choices customers make between DMart, a modern organized retail format, and small grocery shops, which still dominate the unorganized retailing in India. Consumers’ choices of stores are very often guided by lifestyle, purchasing power, shopping frequency, family composition, and convenience expectations. Consequently, this section examines the relationship between store preference and some key demographic profiles-age group, gender, monthly household income, and household size-by Chi-square tests. The present study provides valuable insights into market segmentation, consumer targeting, and retail positioning strategy by analysing whether specific demographic profiles show a greater inclination towards either of the retail formats. This investigation helps in assessing whether demographic factors drive retail preference or whether store selection is more influenced by behavioural and experiential factors, which will be discussed in subsequent sections.

S.No.	Null Hypothesis	p-value	Reject / Fail to Reject H0
1	H0: There is no significant relationship between store preference and age group	0.066	Fail to reject H0
2	H0: There is no significant relationship between store preference and gender	0.079	Fail to reject H0
3	H0: There is no significant relationship between store preference and monthly household income	0.737	Fail to reject H0
4	H0: There is no significant relationship between store preference and household size	0.752	Fail to reject H0

1. A Chi-Square test was carried out to examine the relationship between store preference, DMart versus Small Grocery Shop, and age group. The result showed that the *p*-value (0.066) was greater than the 0.05 significance level. This means that we cannot reject the null hypothesis. It suggests that age group does not have a significant influence on consumers' preference for either DMart or small grocery shops in this study. While there may be slight differences in preference across various age categories, these differences are not strong enough to show a meaningful relationship. Therefore, consumer store preference appears to be fairly consistent across age groups in the surveyed sample.
2. A Chi-Square test was done to look at the link between store preference and gender. The *p*-value (.079) was higher than the significance level of 0.05. This led to the decision to not reject the null hypothesis. It shows that gender does not have a meaningful impact on whether consumers choose DMart or small grocery stores. Both male and female respondents showed similar patterns in store preferences in this study.
3. The study examined the link between store preference and monthly household income using a Chi-Square test. The result showed a *p*-value of 0.737, which is much higher than the significance level of 0.05. Therefore, we retain the null hypothesis. This indicates that consumer store preference is not significantly influenced by their household income category. Regardless of income levels, respondents showed a similar tendency toward both retail formats.
4. A Chi-Square test was done to see if household size is linked to store preference. The *p*-value obtained was 0.752, which is above the 0.05 significance threshold. Therefore, we accept the null hypothesis. This indicates that the number of people in a household does not significantly impact consumer choice between DMart and small grocery stores among those surveyed.

Consumer Behaviour Analysis

The analysis of consumer behaviour, therefore, seeks to unravel how shoppers perceive and interact with different retail formats, based on their experiences and levels of satisfaction. In this study, consumer behaviour is assessed based on key shopping attributes like product quality, availability of items, value for money, pricing, customer service, billing efficiency, impulse purchase tendency, and future purchase intentions. These are the behavioural variables which reflect the performance of retail outlets in meeting customer needs and expectations and thereby influence their current preference and long-term loyalty. A comparison of the behavioural responses of DMart and small grocery shop consumers provides a meaningful insight into which of the two store formats offers greater perceived value. Independent Sample t-tests are conducted to determine whether significant mean differences exist between the two samples on the perception scores. This study eventually pinpoints the strengths and weaknesses of each retail format and tries to identify the drivers behind customer choice in a competitive grocery retail market.

S.No.	Null Hypothesis	p-value	Reject / Fail to Reject H0
1	H0: There is no significant difference in the perception of availability of items between customers who prefer D-Mart and those who prefer small grocery shops.	0.550	Fail to reject H0
2	H0: There is no significant difference in the perception of product quality between customers who prefer D-Mart and those who prefer small grocery shops.	0.252	Fail to reject H0
3	H0: There is no significant difference in the perception of value for money between customers who prefer D-Mart and those who prefer small grocery shops.	0.069	Fail to reject H0
4	H0: There is no significant difference in the perception of rewarding discounts between customers who prefer D-Mart and those who prefer small grocery shops.	0.334	Fail to reject H0
5	H0: There is no significant difference in the perception of reasonable pricing between customers who prefer D-Mart and those who prefer small grocery shops.	0.017	Reject H0
6	H0: There is no significant difference in the perception of customer service between customers who prefer D-Mart and those who prefer small grocery shops.	0.020	Reject H0
7	H0: There is no significant difference in the perception of impulse buy between customers who prefer D-Mart and those who prefer small grocery shops.	0.076	Fail to Reject H0
8	H0: There is no significant difference in the perception of fast_biling_time between customers who prefer D-Mart and those who prefer small grocery shops.	0.000	Reject H0
9	H0: There is no significant difference in the perception of future preference between customers who prefer D-Mart and those who prefer small grocery shops.	0.000	Reject H0

1. The independent sample t-test showed that the difference in how customers perceive item availability at DMart versus small grocery shops is not important (p-value = .550 > 0.05). This means both groups feel similarly about how stocked and accessible products are at their chosen

store. Therefore, product availability does not seem to influence shoppers' preference between organized retail and traditional shops in this study.

2. The results indicated no significant difference in perceived product quality between the two consumer groups (*p*-value = .252 > 0.05). Shoppers see both DMart and small grocery shops as offering similar product quality. Hence, quality perception does not strongly affect store choice, and both types of retail are viewed as good options for grocery essentials.
3. The *p*-value (.069) was above the significance level, suggesting consumer perceptions of value for money do not significantly differ between DMart and small grocery shop users.
   While DMart may seem to provide slightly better value through pricing and offers, the difference was not statistically strong. This implies consumers feel they get fair value from both store formats based on their personal shopping priorities and expectations.
4. The analysis showed no significant difference in the perception of rewarding discounts (*p*-value = .334 > 0.05).
   This means consumers do not see one store type as offering much better promotional benefits or incentives. While organized retail typically focuses on promotional marketing, respondents did not view discounts as a major factor in their preferences.
5. A significant difference was found in the perception of pricing between the two groups (*p*-value = .017 < 0.05). Customers who prefer DMart view prices as more reasonable and competitive than those shopping at small grocery shops. This suggests pricing strategy is key in shaping preferences toward organized retail, where standardized pricing and bulk buying lead to cost benefits.
6. The *p*-value (.020 < 0.05) shows a significant difference in perceptions of customer service. Small grocery shop customers feel they receive more personalized and attentive service due to long-standing relationships and direct interactions with the shop owner. In contrast, DMart's structured but less personal service model may impact emotional connection. Thus, customer service is a strength of local stores.
7. There was no significant difference in impulse buying tendencies (*p*-value = .076 > 0.05). This suggests both DMart and small grocery shops similarly influence unplanned purchases. While DMart uses organized product displays, small shops benefit from convenience, making both settings equally effective in encouraging spontaneous buying.
8. The t-test revealed a major difference in billing speed perception (*p*-value = .000 < 0.001). DMart customers report much faster and more efficient billing due to electronic checkout processes and multiple counters. In contrast, manual billing at small shops leads to longer wait times. Thus, operational efficiency clearly sets organized retail apart from traditional stores.
9. There was a significant difference in future preference (*p*-value = .000 < 0.001). DMart customers show greater loyalty and a stronger intention to keep shopping there compared to those who prefer small grocery shops. This indicates that DMart's modern retail environment motivates shoppers to return and shows stronger commitment for future purchases.

Discussion

The aim of this study was to compare consumer behaviour and preferences between DMart and small grocery shops. We also wanted to see if demographic differences affect store choice. The findings from the Chi-square analysis indicated that store preference is not greatly impacted by demographic factors like age group, gender, monthly household income, or household size. This shows that preferences for organized retail formats such as DMart and traditional small outlets are consistent across different consumer groups. It suggests that demographics alone do not explain why customers choose one store type over another.

To get more insights into what influences preferences, we examined consumer perception variables using Independent Sample t-tests. The results showed no significant difference in how customers of both stores view product availability, quality, value for money, discounts, and impulse buying. This finding is notable because it suggests that traditional small grocery shops remain competitive with large retailers in providing essential product satisfaction and convenience.

However, we found significant differences in perceptions of pricing, customer service, billing efficiency, and future purchase intentions. DMart customers tend to view pricing as more reasonable due to its standardized bulk procurement strategies. In contrast, customers of small grocery shops expressed greater satisfaction with customer service, highlighting the benefits of personal attention and familiarity in traditional stores. Additionally, DMart showed operational advantages, as billing speed was rated significantly higher due to efficient electronic checkout processes. This effectiveness, along with competitive pricing, contributes to a stronger preference and loyalty toward DMart among its customers.

Overall, the differences we observed indicate that experiential and operational factors, rather than demographic or basic product-related features, play a key role in shaping retail preferences.

Conclusion

This research concludes that while demographic factors do not significantly influence whether consumers choose DMart or small grocery shops, certain important behavioral traits strongly affect retail preferences. DMart's strengths include reasonable pricing, quick billing, and higher intentions for future shopping, appealing to customers who value efficiency and cost savings. Conversely, small grocery shops maintain competitive relevance through personalized service and immediate local access.

Both store formats have strategic advantages that cater to different consumer needs. DMart should continue to improve service personalization and customer engagement to boost loyalty. Meanwhile, small grocery shops can benefit from selective updates in operations, such as digital billing or better inventory management.

In summary, grocery retail choices are increasingly driven by service experiences, convenience, and operational performance rather than traditional demographic segments. Retailers need to focus on enhancing overall customer experience while balancing efficiency with personal touches to stay competitive in a changing consumer landscape.

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