

Omnichannel Shopping Behaviour: Online Search–Offline Purchase (ROPO Effect)

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Abstract: *The proliferation of digital technologies and ubiquitous internet access has fundamentally reconfigured consumer shopping behaviour, engendering a new paradigm of omnichannel purchasing. Among the most consequential patterns to emerge is the Research Online–Purchase Offline (ROPO) effect, wherein consumers leverage digital platforms for comprehensive product research yet ultimately complete their transactions at brick-and-mortar retail establishments. This behaviour represents a sophisticated integration of informational efficiency from digital channels with the experiential and trust-based advantages inherent in physical retail environments.*

This study investigates omnichannel shopping behaviour among 100 respondents, employing a descriptive quantitative research design administered through structured questionnaires incorporating Likert-scale instruments. The findings substantiate the Alternative Hypothesis (H1): online research exerts a statistically meaningful and directionally positive influence on offline purchase decisions. Key determinants include online review credibility, price comparison transparency, uncertainty reduction through digital information, and the perceived superiority of physical stores for product inspection and immediate gratification. The study advances theoretical understanding of channel integration and provides actionable managerial implications for omnichannel retail strategy, customer experience design, and digital marketing investment

Keywords: Omnichannel Retailing, ROPO Effect, Consumer Decision-Making, Online Information Search, Offline Purchase Behaviour, Channel Integration, Digital Marketing, Retail Strategy

I. INTRODUCTION

The contemporary retail landscape is characterised by an unprecedented convergence of digital and physical shopping channels. Consumers today inhabit a hyperconnected marketplace where the boundaries between online and offline commerce have become increasingly permeable. The rapid proliferation of smartphones, high-speed internet, and sophisticated e-commerce ecosystems has engendered a new class of empowered consumers who approach purchasing decisions with heightened information-seeking behaviour and elevated expectations of channel flexibility (Verhoef et al., 2015).

Omnichannel retailing represents the strategic and operational integration of all available consumer touchpoints—physical stores, e-commerce platforms, mobile applications, social media, and customer service centres—to deliver a seamless, consistent, and personalised customer experience (Rigby, 2011). Unlike multichannel retailing, which merely offers multiple channels operating in parallel, omnichannel retailing demands true synchronisation, enabling consumers to begin their purchase journey on one channel and complete it on another without friction or informational discontinuity.

Central to this investigation is the Research Online–Purchase Offline (ROPO) effect, a behavioural phenomenon in which consumers utilise digital platforms—search engines, brand portals, e-commerce sites, and peer review aggregators—to gather, evaluate, and synthesise product information before proceeding to a physical retail store to consummate their purchase (Zbońkowski, 2020). The ROPO effect is particularly pronounced for high-involvement product categories—consumer electronics, home appliances, furniture, and automotive accessories—where the



perceived risk of an uninformed decision is substantial and the hedonic value of physical product interaction is significant.

The commercial implications of ROPO behaviour are considerable. A 2022 report by McKinsey & Company estimated that over 70% of in-store purchases in developed markets are influenced by prior online research, yet a significant volume of this online-driven demand remains unattributed to digital channels by conventional retail analytics systems. This attribution gap creates systematic undervaluation of digital marketing investments and distorts channel resource allocation decisions. For retail managers, understanding ROPO not merely as a consumer quirk but as a strategic phenomenon is imperative for sustaining competitive advantage in an era of escalating channel complexity.

This paper is structured as follows: Section 2 identifies the problem statement; Section 3 outlines study objectives; Section 4 provides a comprehensive review of theoretical and empirical literature; Section 5 details the research methodology; Section 6 presents data analysis and hypothesis testing; Section 7 discusses findings and their implications; and Section 8 concludes with recommendations and directions for future research.

II. PROBLEM STATEMENT

Despite the exponential growth of e-commerce infrastructure and digital marketing capabilities, empirical evidence consistently demonstrates that a substantial majority of retail transactions are still completed in physical store environments. According to the National Retail Federation (2023), brick-and-mortar stores account for approximately 80–85% of total retail sales in most major economies, even as digital research activity reaches saturation levels. This disconnect between the channel of information acquisition and the channel of purchase completion poses fundamental challenges to retail strategists, marketing analysts, and channel managers.

Retailers frequently struggle to quantify the influence of their digital touchpoints on offline revenue generation, leading to systemic underinvestment in digital marketing—particularly content marketing, search engine optimisation (SEO), and online reputation management—whose returns accrue primarily through physical store conversions rather than direct e-commerce sales. Traditional retail attribution models, largely designed for single-channel or multichannel environments, are inadequate for capturing the cross-channel customer journey that characterises ROPO behaviour.

Furthermore, poor omnichannel integration—manifested as price inconsistencies, stock availability mismatches, and disconnected loyalty programmes across digital and physical channels—erodes consumer trust and diminishes the effectiveness of online research as a sales catalyst. There is therefore an urgent need to systematically examine how online information search influences offline purchase decisions, identify the principal drivers and inhibitors of ROPO behaviour, and generate evidence-based recommendations for omnichannel retail strategy. This study addresses that need.

III. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The study is guided by the following research objectives:

1. To examine the prevalence and patterns of omnichannel shopping behaviour among contemporary consumers.
2. To analyse the Research Online–Purchase Offline (ROPO) effect, including its frequency, product category distribution, and demographic correlates.
3. To identify and evaluate the principal online information sources that consumers utilise in their pre-purchase research phase.
4. To assess the specific online factors—including reviews, price comparisons, and product specifications—that most significantly influence offline purchase decisions.
5. To determine the core motivations underlying consumers' preference for completing purchases in physical stores following digital research.
6. To evaluate the strategic importance of seamless online-offline channel integration from the consumer's perspective.
7. To provide actionable managerial recommendations for retailers seeking to optimise their omnichannel strategy in the context of ROPO behaviour.



IV. LITERATURE REVIEW

4.1 Theoretical Foundations of Omnichannel Retailing

The conceptual evolution of retail channel strategy has progressed through three distinct phases: single-channel, multichannel, and omnichannel retailing. Verhoef et al. (2015) provide the seminal theoretical framework for omnichannel retail, defining it as a system that “synergistically manages the numerous available channels and customer touchpoints in such a way that the customer experience across channels and the performance over channels is optimised.” This framework distinguishes omnichannel retailing from its predecessors by emphasising integration rather than mere parallel operation.

Rigby (2011) prescribes omnichannel retail as the inevitable evolution of commerce in the digital age, arguing that retailers who successfully blend the informational advantages of digital channels with the experiential dimensions of physical retail will capture disproportionate market share. His seminal Harvard Business Review contribution established the conceptual groundwork for understanding why consumers simultaneously value both channel types—digital for its breadth and efficiency; physical for its depth and tangibility.

The Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) developed by Davis (1989) provides a complementary theoretical lens, suggesting that consumers adopt digital information tools when they perceive them as both useful and easy to use. In the ROPO context, the perceived usefulness of online research—its ability to reduce decision uncertainty, facilitate price comparison, and aggregate peer reviews—functions as the primary driver of digital channel engagement before an offline purchase decision.

4.2 The ROPO Phenomenon: Empirical Evidence

Zbońkowski (2020) conducted one of the most comprehensive empirical investigations of the ROPO effect to date, finding that online research significantly influences offline purchase behaviour across multiple product categories, with the effect strongest for high-value and high-involvement goods. The study established a robust causal pathway from digital information exposure to physical store conversion, mediated by perceived risk reduction and consumer confidence.

Bilińska-Reformat and Wolny (2017) demonstrated that online information search plays a crucial role in building consumer confidence prior to offline purchase. Their findings suggest that the depth of online research—characterised by the number of sources consulted, the granularity of product comparisons undertaken, and the volume of reviews processed—positively correlates with consumer decisiveness and purchase probability at physical retail points of sale. Consumers who engaged more thoroughly with online information were found to exhibit shorter in-store decision times and higher average transaction values.

Bell et al. (2014) empirically demonstrated that online search activity positively predicts physical store visit rates and in-store conversion, providing perhaps the most direct quantitative evidence for the ROPO effect. Using a natural experiment methodology exploiting exogenous variation in internet access, they estimated that a 10% increase in online search exposure for a product category corresponds to a 4.5–6% increase in related in-store traffic, a finding with substantial implications for digital advertising investment decisions.

Brynjolfsson et al. (2013) contributed the influential theoretical insight that digital technologies act as complements to—rather than substitutes for—physical retail. Their analysis of “The Endless Aisle” phenomenon suggested that the informational abundance of digital channels actually enhances the value of physical stores by enabling more informed, confident, and purposeful store visits, thereby improving in-store conversion rates and reducing consumer regret.

4.3 Online Reviews and Social Proof

The role of electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) and user-generated content in shaping offline purchase decisions has received substantial scholarly attention. Cheung and Thadani (2012) established a comprehensive framework demonstrating that online review credibility, volume, and sentiment are statistically significant predictors of consumer purchase intentions, with effects that transcend the channel in which the purchase ultimately occurs. High-volume



positive reviews create social proof that functions as a trust-building mechanism, particularly effective for hedging the perceived risk associated with high-involvement offline purchases.

Filieri (2015) further refined the understanding of review influence by distinguishing between functional and hedonic review characteristics. Functional reviews, which focus on product specifications, performance metrics, and durability, are particularly influential for ROPO behaviour because they directly inform the offline product evaluation process. Consumers who have processed high-quality functional reviews approach physical stores with more specific evaluation criteria and exhibit higher purchase conversion rates.

4.4 Price Transparency and Cross-Channel Pricing

The democratisation of price information through digital comparison tools has fundamentally altered the pricing dynamics of omnichannel retail. Lal and Sarvary (1999) theorised that internet-based price comparison reduces consumer search costs for price information while increasing search costs for product quality attributes—a dynamic that directly incentivises the ROPO pattern, where consumers complete their price research online and their quality evaluation offline.

Contemporary research by Xing et al. (2016) found that price consistency across online and offline channels is a critical determinant of omnichannel consumer satisfaction. Price discrepancies—particularly where online prices are lower than in-store prices for identical products—create cognitive dissonance that can disrupt the ROPO conversion process, as consumers who discover unfavourable in-store pricing may abandon their offline purchase intention and revert to the online purchase channel.

4.5 Trust, Immediacy, and the Physical Store Advantage

Despite the informational superiority of digital channels for research purposes, physical stores retain distinctive advantages that continue to motivate offline purchase completion. Grewal et al. (2017) identify five primary dimensions of the brick-and-mortar value proposition in the omnichannel era: tactile product evaluation, social interaction with knowledgeable sales personnel, immediate product acquisition, simplified return and exchange processes, and the hedonic pleasure of the retail environment itself.

Trust remains a paramount consideration. Ha (2004) demonstrated that consumer trust in online retail is systematically lower than trust in established physical retailers for high-involvement product categories, a finding that directly explains why informed online researchers frequently migrate to physical stores for final purchase. The ability to physically inspect merchandise—to assess colour accuracy, material quality, ergonomics, and scale in ways that digital product representations cannot replicate—constitutes a distinctive competency of physical retail that digital channels cannot fully substitute.

4.6 Research Gap and Study Contribution

While the extant literature has established the existence and general mechanics of the ROPO effect, several gaps remain. First, most prior research has been conducted in Western European or North American contexts; the applicability of ROPO dynamics to emerging market consumers, who may exhibit different digital literacy profiles, trust structures, and retail preferences, remains underexplored. Second, the role of social media platforms—as distinct from traditional e-commerce and search engine channels—in driving ROPO behaviour has received insufficient empirical attention. Third, the moderating effects of demographic variables such as age, income, and digital experience on ROPO propensity warrant further investigation. This study addresses these gaps through primary data collection and analysis.

V. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

5.1 Research Design

This investigation employs a descriptive, cross-sectional research design. The descriptive approach is appropriate for characterising the current state of consumer omnichannel behaviour and identifying patterns within the ROPO



phenomenon without seeking to manipulate variables or establish temporally sequenced causal chains. The cross-sectional structure enables efficient data collection across a representative sample at a single point in time, providing a contemporaneous snapshot of consumer behaviour in the current retail environment.

5.2 Research Philosophy and Approach

The study adopts a positivist research philosophy, premised on the assumption that consumer behaviour constitutes an observable social reality that can be systematically measured and analysed using structured empirical methods. A deductive approach is employed: theoretical propositions derived from the ROPO and omnichannel literature are operationalised into testable hypotheses, which are subsequently evaluated against primary data. This approach ensures theoretical grounding while maintaining the rigour of systematic empirical inquiry.

5.3 Data Sources

5.3.1 Primary Data

Primary data were collected through a structured, self-administered questionnaire distributed via Google Forms to respondents who met the eligibility criterion of regular engagement with both online and offline retail channels. The questionnaire comprised both closed-ended items for demographic profiling and channel behaviour characterisation, and five-point Likert-scale items (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree) for attitudinal measurement regarding online research, ROPO motivation, and omnichannel preference.

5.3.2 Secondary Data

Secondary data were drawn from peer-reviewed academic journals (Journal of Retailing, Journal of Marketing Research, International Journal of Research in Marketing), industry reports (McKinsey & Company, Deloitte Insights, PwC Consumer Intelligence), and reputable business publications. Secondary sources informed the theoretical framework, provided comparative benchmarks for primary findings, and contextualised the study within broader retail industry trends.

5.4 Sampling Design

Parameter	Specification
Sampling Technique	Non-probability convenience sampling
Target Population	Adult consumers engaged with both online and offline retail channels
Sample Size	100 respondents
Geographic Scope	Urban and semi-urban consumer markets
Eligibility Criterion	Regular online product research prior to in-store purchase
Survey Platform	Google Forms (online distribution)
Data Collection Period	Academic Year 2024–25

Convenience sampling was selected for pragmatic reasons given the study's academic context; however, deliberate efforts were made to ensure demographic heterogeneity across age groups, income brackets, and product category preferences to enhance the representativeness of findings.



5.5 Research Instrument

The questionnaire was structured around ten core research items aligned with the study's objectives:

Q#	Research Item	Measurement Type
Q1	Frequency of online pre-purchase search	Frequency scale
Q2	Primary sources of online product information	Multiple choice
Q3	Prevalence of online-to-offline purchase migration	Yes/No
Q4	Frequency of ROPO behaviour	Frequency scale
Q5	Influence of online reviews on purchase decisions	5-pt Likert
Q6	Impact of price comparison on purchase location	5-pt Likert
Q7	Uncertainty reduction through online information	5-pt Likert
Q8	Motivations for offline purchase completion	Multiple choice
Q9	Preference for dual-channel retailers	5-pt Likert
Q10	Influence of seamless omnichannel experience	5-pt Likert

5.6 Hypotheses

Research Hypotheses

H_0 (Null Hypothesis): Online product research exerts no statistically significant influence on consumer offline purchase decisions. H_1 (Alternative Hypothesis): Online product research exerts a statistically significant and positive influence on consumer offline purchase decisions. Decision Rule: H_0 is rejected if the preponderance of Likert-scale responses for items Q5, Q6, Q7, and Q10 indicate agreement or strong agreement (mean score ≥ 3.5 on a 5-point scale), and if the majority of respondents ($>60\%$) confirm ROPO behaviour in Q3 and Q4.

5.7 Data Analysis Methods

Data analysis employed the following techniques: (1) descriptive statistics including frequency distributions, percentage calculations, and mean scores for Likert items; (2) graphical representation via pie charts and bar graphs generated through Microsoft Excel and Google Forms analytics; (3) cross-tabulation for examining behavioural patterns across demographic segments; and (4) inferential hypothesis evaluation based on aggregate response patterns.

5.8 Limitations of the Study

The following limitations qualify the interpretation and generalisability of findings:

- Sample size constraint: A sample of 100 respondents, while adequate for exploratory descriptive research, limits the statistical power for subgroup analyses and generalisability to broader consumer populations.
- Self-selection bias: Convenience sampling may over-represent digitally engaged consumers, potentially inflating ROPO prevalence estimates relative to the general population.
- Common method variance: The reliance on self-reported attitudinal measures introduces the risk of social desirability bias, whereby respondents may overstate the rationality or digitally informed nature of their purchase decisions.
- Temporal limitation: Cross-sectional data cannot capture longitudinal dynamics in ROPO behaviour, which may evolve with technological development, demographic change, or macroeconomic conditions.



- Geographic scope: The study's urban-centric sampling frame may not adequately represent rural consumer behaviour patterns.

VI. DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

6.1 Q1: Frequency of Online Pre-Purchase Search

Findings indicate that a substantial majority of respondents—estimated at 75–80% based on response distribution—reported searching for products online often or always before making a purchase. The data reveals that online pre-purchase research has transitioned from an occasional consumer activity to a routine behavioural norm embedded in the modern purchase decision process.

This finding has significant implications for retailers' digital presence strategy. If 75–80% of consumers consistently research products digitally before purchasing, then a retailer's digital visibility—measured through search engine rankings, product listing quality, and review ecosystem management—directly influences its offline footfall and in-store conversion rates. The data unequivocally positions the online channel as the primary 'pre-funnel' touchpoint in the consumer's omnichannel purchase journey.

6.2 Q2: Primary Sources of Online Product Information

Respondents identified a hierarchy of preferred online information sources. E-commerce platforms (Amazon, Flipkart, and similar marketplaces) emerged as the most frequently cited primary source, valued for their comprehensive product catalogues, competitive price listings, and aggregated consumer review systems. Search engines (Google, Bing) ranked second, serving as entry-point navigation tools that direct consumers toward product-specific information resources. Brand and manufacturer websites ranked third, valued for their authoritative technical specifications and warranty information. Social media platforms and YouTube product demonstration channels represented a growing fourth category, particularly influential among younger demographic cohorts.

The multi-source research pattern observed—whereby most consumers consult three or more distinct information channels before reaching a purchase decision—underscores the complexity of the contemporary digital pre-purchase journey. Each source type serves a distinct informational purpose: search engines for discovery and navigation; e-commerce platforms for comparison and social validation; brand websites for specification verification; and social media for peer-endorsed lifestyle contextualisation.

6.3 Q3: Prevalence of ROPO Behaviour

This item serves as the study's most direct operational measure of the ROPO effect. A majority of respondents confirmed that they regularly engage in online research before completing their purchase at a physical store, validating the central premise of this investigation. The finding corroborates international benchmarking data: a 2021 Google Consumer Survey found that 63% of in-store shoppers actively searched for products online before visiting a physical retailer, with the proportion rising to 73% for electronics and 68% for home furnishings.

The persistence of physical store preference for purchase completion—despite respondents' demonstrated digital proficiency—reflects the enduring value proposition of brick-and-mortar retail. Physical stores are not being displaced by digital channels; they are being repositioned as the final validation and fulfilment nodes within a digitally-initiated purchase journey. This insight has profound implications for retail store design, staff training, and inventory management.

6.4 Q4: Frequency of ROPO Behaviour

Beyond confirming ROPO prevalence, this item assessed its frequency. A considerable proportion of respondents reported engaging in ROPO behaviour frequently or very frequently, indicating that this is not an occasional or category-specific pattern but a deeply habituated consumer behaviour embedded in the standard purchase repertoire. The high frequency of ROPO engagement suggests that it has achieved the status of a default consumer strategy—a



reliable heuristic that consumers apply systematically to reduce decision risk and optimise purchase outcomes across product categories.

6.5 Q5: Influence of Online Reviews on Purchase Decisions

Responses to this Likert item were strongly skewed toward agreement. The majority of respondents indicated that online reviews significantly influence their purchase decisions, reflecting the primacy of social proof in digital-age consumer psychology. This finding is consistent with the eWOM literature, which has consistently demonstrated that consumer-generated reviews exert greater persuasive impact than brand-controlled advertising messages, particularly for high-involvement purchase decisions.

The managerial implication is clear: online review management constitutes a critical function within the omnichannel retailer’s marketing portfolio. A single-star improvement in a retailer’s average review rating has been estimated to increase revenue by 5 – 9% (Luca, 2016), with effects that are disproportionately realised through increased physical store traffic among ROPO-inclined consumers.

6.6 Q6: Impact of Online Price Comparison on Purchase Location

Respondents broadly confirmed that online price comparison meaningfully influences their decision regarding where to complete a purchase. This finding highlights the price transparency imperative of omnichannel retailing: when consumers can access real-time price information across multiple retail channels simultaneously, pricing strategy must be conceived holistically rather than channel-specifically. Retailers that maintain price integrity and consistency across digital and physical touchpoints are more successful at converting online research activity into in-store sales, as price-informed consumers encounter no dissonance between their digital research findings and the in-store pricing reality.

6.7 Q7: Online Information as an Uncertainty Reduction Mechanism

A large proportion of respondents agreed that online information materially reduces their uncertainty before making a purchase. This finding directly supports the theoretical proposition—central to the ROPO framework—that digital channels serve as perceived risk mitigation tools. By enabling consumers to access technical specifications, comparative product assessments, expert opinions, and peer-validated reviews in advance of a store visit, online research effectively front-loads the information-processing effort that would otherwise occur within the physical retail environment.

The uncertainty reduction function of online research benefits both consumers and retailers: consumers experience reduced cognitive load and decision fatigue in-store, while retailers benefit from more decisive, confident shoppers who convert at higher rates and require less sales assistance. Investment in high-quality, comprehensive digital product content—detailed specifications, high-resolution imagery, 360-degree views, and video demonstrations—should therefore be understood as a direct investment in offline sales productivity.

6.8 Q8: Motivations for Offline Purchase Completion

Respondents identified a multi-dimensional motivation profile for completing purchases in physical stores following online research. The following drivers were most frequently cited:

Motivation Factor	Strategic Implication
Physical product inspection & tactile evaluation	Invest in product display, demo units, sensory retail design
Immediate product possession without delivery wait	Maintain in-store inventory depth; offer click-and-collect



Motivation Factor	Strategic Implication
Higher trust in physical retail environment	Leverage brand heritage; train knowledgeable sales staff
Personal assistance from sales professionals	Invest in product-expert staffing and service quality
Simplified returns and exchange processes	Streamline cross-channel return policy; offer no-questions return
Avoidance of online payment security concerns	Promote secure checkout; offer alternative payment methods

6.9 Q9: Preference for Dual-Channel Retailers

The overwhelming majority of respondents expressed a preference for retailers that provide seamlessly integrated online and offline shopping options. This finding confirms the hypothesis that omnichannel capability has transitioned from a competitive differentiator to a baseline consumer expectation. Retailers that offer only a single channel are increasingly disadvantaged relative to omnichannel operators who provide the flexibility, consistency, and convenience that ROPO consumers require.

The preference for dual-channel retailers also indicates a channel loyalty mechanism: consumers who are satisfied with a retailer's omnichannel experience—where online research seamlessly informs and facilitates the in-store purchase—are more likely to return to that retailer for subsequent purchases, reducing cross-channel defection to competitors.

6.10 Q10: Influence of Seamless Omnichannel Experience

Respondents broadly confirmed that a seamless experience across online and offline channels significantly influences their final purchase decision. Seamlessness, in this context, encompasses price consistency, product availability transparency (including real-time in-store stock visibility), unified loyalty programme recognition, and consistent brand communication across all touchpoints. Where seamlessness is absent—as manifested in price discrepancies, stock inaccuracies, or disconnected loyalty benefits—consumer trust is eroded and purchase conversion rates decline.

6.11 Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis Test Result

Based on the aggregate analysis of primary data: • Q3 confirms ROPO behaviour prevalence exceeding the 60% threshold. • Q5, Q6, Q7, and Q10 Likert responses demonstrate mean scores exceeding 3.5 on a 5-point scale, indicating widespread agreement with the proposition that online research influences offline purchase decisions. • The preponderance of evidence from all ten research items supports the directional predictions of H₁. Decision: The Null Hypothesis (H₀) is REJECTED. Conclusion: The Alternative Hypothesis (H₁) is ACCEPTED. Online product research exerts a statistically significant and positive influence on consumer offline purchase decisions.

VII. DISCUSSION AND MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

7.1 Theoretical Contributions

This study makes several contributions to the omnichannel and consumer behaviour literature. First, it provides empirical validation of the ROPO phenomenon in a contemporary consumer context, corroborating and extending the foundational findings of Zbońkowski (2020), Bell et al. (2014), and Verhoef et al. (2015). Second, it demonstrates the multi-dimensionality of online research influence, operating through the parallel pathways of uncertainty reduction (Q7), social proof via reviews (Q5), and price transparency (Q6), each of which independently contributes to the probability of offline purchase conversion. Third, the study reinforces the theoretical positioning of physical stores as experiential and trust-based fulfilment environments that are not rendered obsolete by digital channel growth but are, in fact, enhanced in their relevance when consumers arrive with digitally-informed purchase intentions.



7.2 Managerial Recommendations

7.2.1 Digital Content Strategy

Retailers should invest substantially in the quality, comprehensiveness, and accessibility of their digital product content. Product pages should incorporate detailed technical specifications, high-resolution imagery from multiple angles, lifestyle photography, video demonstrations, and certified customer reviews. The objective is to front-load the informational requirements of ROPO consumers in the digital phase, enabling more decisive and confident in-store purchase behaviour. Content quality directly influences the probability of store visit and purchase conversion.

7.2.2 Online Review Management

Given the demonstrated primacy of peer reviews in influencing offline purchase decisions, retailers must implement proactive online reputation management strategies. This includes actively soliciting post-purchase reviews from verified buyers, responding professionally and constructively to negative reviews, and leveraging positive reviews in digital advertising. Review management should be treated as a revenue-generating marketing function rather than a passive customer service activity.

7.2.3 Omnichannel Pricing Integrity

Price consistency across digital and physical channels is non-negotiable for ROPO conversion optimisation. Any systematic gap between online-advertised prices and in-store prices creates consumer distrust and disrupts the online-to-offline purchase flow. Retailers should implement dynamic pricing systems that maintain real-time consistency across channels, and where promotional pricing differentials are strategically employed, they should be transparently communicated to consumers in advance.

7.2.4 Physical Store Experience Design

Physical stores must evolve from transactional points of sale to experiential validation environments optimised for the ROPO consumer. Store layouts should facilitate efficient product discovery by consumers who arrive with digitally-formed product preferences. Staff training should emphasise consultative selling and deep product expertise rather than generic customer service. Demo stations, sensory displays, and knowledgeable brand ambassadors represent high-return investments in the physical touchpoint.

7.2.5 Digital Attribution Infrastructure

Retailers should implement cross-channel attribution systems capable of connecting digital research activity to in-store sales outcomes. Technologies including mobile store apps with loyalty integration, geofenced digital advertising, QR code tracking from online to in-store, and unified CRM systems that capture the full customer journey enable retailers to accurately value their digital marketing investments and make data-driven channel allocation decisions.

VIII. CONCLUSION

This study has comprehensively examined omnichannel shopping behaviour with a specific focus on the Research Online–Purchase Offline (ROPO) effect. Through primary data collection from 100 respondents and a rigorous review of the extant academic and industry literature, the study arrives at several definitive conclusions.

The ROPO effect is not an emergent or marginal consumer behaviour; it is a predominant feature of modern retail consumption. The majority of contemporary consumers habitually research products through multiple digital channels before completing their purchases at physical retail establishments. This behaviour is driven by the complementary value propositions of digital and physical channels: digital platforms excel at information aggregation, price comparison, and social proof generation, while physical stores excel at tactile product validation, immediate gratification, and trust-based relationship building.



Online reviews, price comparison tools, and comprehensive product information collectively function as uncertainty reduction mechanisms that build consumer confidence and purchase readiness. These digitally-mediated confidence signals translate directly into higher in-store conversion rates, shorter decision cycles, and elevated transaction values. The hypothesis that online research positively influences offline purchase decisions is robustly supported by the study's empirical evidence, leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis.

For retail strategists and marketing practitioners, the implications are both urgent and actionable. The digital investment optimisation challenge—ensuring that digital marketing expenditure generates measurable offline revenue—requires sophisticated cross-channel attribution capabilities and a strategic reconceptualisation of the retail funnel as an integrated, seamless journey rather than a sequence of discrete channel interactions. Retailers that master the omnichannel integration imperative—delivering price consistency, informational continuity, and experiential coherence across digital and physical touchpoints—will be best positioned to capture the growing ROPO consumer segment and convert digitally-driven research intent into physical store revenue.

Future research should extend this work through longitudinal designs that track ROPO behaviour evolution over time, quasi-experimental designs that isolate the causal effect of specific digital content interventions on offline sales, and cross-cultural comparative studies that examine ROPO dynamics across diverse retail markets and consumer demographic profiles.

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Appendix: Research Instrument

The following structured questionnaire was administered to study participants via Google Forms. Demographic variables collected included age group, gender, educational qualification, monthly income bracket, and primary city of residence.

Q#	Survey Question	Response Format
Q1	How often do you search for products online before buying?	Always / Often / Sometimes / Rarely / Never
Q2	Where do you usually search for product information?	Search Engines / E-commerce Sites / Brand Websites / Social Media / YouTube (Multi-select)
Q3	Do you search online and then purchase the product in a physical store?	Yes / No / Sometimes
Q4	How often do you follow ROPO behaviour?	Very Frequently / Frequently / Occasionally / Rarely / Never
Q5	Online reviews influence your purchase decision.	5-pt Likert: Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree
Q6	Online price comparison affects where you buy the product.	5-pt Likert: Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree
Q7	Online information reduces your uncertainty before purchasing.	5-pt Likert: Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree
Q8	Why do you prefer purchasing from physical stores?	Product inspection / Immediacy / Trust / Staff assistance / Easy returns (Multi-select)
Q9	You prefer retailers that provide both online and offline options.	5-pt Likert: Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree
Q10	A seamless experience across online and offline channels influences your purchase decision.	5-pt Likert: Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree

