

**Consumer–Kirana Merchant Relations and Buying Behaviour: A Study**

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Abstract

Kirana shops remain an important part of the retail sector, particularly for consumers who depend on nearby shops for their everyday needs. In addition to selling essential goods, kirana shopkeepers often maintain personal relationships with their customers through regular interaction, familiarity, flexible payment options, and an understanding of their customers' requirements. Such relationships can influence where consumers shop, how often they purchase, and whether they continue to prefer the same shop. The present study examines the relationship between consumers and kirana merchants and its influence on buying behaviour. It focuses on factors such as frequency of visits, length of the relationship with the shopkeeper, trust, personal attention, credit facilities, product availability, price, satisfaction, repeat purchases, and consumer loyalty. Primary data were collected from 70 consumers in Warangal District through a structured interview schedule. The data were analysed using frequencies, percentages, and Pearson's Chi-square test. The findings show that trust, personal relationships, convenience, product availability, and flexible payment facilities are important in shaping consumers' purchasing behaviour. Consumers who have established relationships with kirana merchants also show regular purchasing patterns and greater loyalty towards their preferred shops. The study highlights the continuing importance of personal relationships in local retailing and suggests that kirana merchants can retain consumers by providing reliable products, personalised attention, convenient services, and trustworthy interactions.

Keywords: Kirana Shops, Consumer Relationships, Buying Behaviour, Consumer Trust, Customer Satisfaction, Retailing, Consumer Loyalty, Personal Service, Credit Facility, Local Retailers.

Introduction

Kirana shops have long been an important part of the retail system in India. They provide consumers with groceries, household items, packaged foods, personal care products, and other goods needed for everyday life. Most kirana shops are located within or close to residential areas, making them easily accessible to local consumers. In addition to convenience, these shops often provide a familiar shopping environment where customers can interact directly with the shopkeeper. Even with the growing presence of supermarkets, shopping malls, online shopping, and quick-commerce services, many consumers continue to depend on nearby kirana shops for their regular purchases.

A notable feature of kirana retailing is the relationship that develops between shopkeepers and customers. Regular customers and shopkeepers often become familiar with each other over time. Shopkeepers may understand the usual requirements of their customers, suggest suitable products,

arrange goods according to their needs, or provide products in small quantities. In some cases, trusted customers may also receive short-term credit or flexible payment arrangements. Such interactions can create a sense of trust and familiarity and may influence consumers to continue purchasing from the same shop.

Consumer buying behaviour refers to the way individuals make decisions about what to buy, where to buy, how frequently to purchase, and whether to continue purchasing from a particular seller. In kirana shops, buying behaviour can be influenced by several factors, including price, product quality, availability, location, convenience, personal attention, trust, credit facilities, and satisfaction with the services provided. For some consumers, the relationship with the shopkeeper may be as important as the price or availability of products when deciding where to make their purchases.

At the same time, traditional kirana shops face increasing competition from organised retail outlets and online shopping platforms. Consumers today have more choices and can compare products, prices, and services through different retail channels. In this changing environment, maintaining good relationships with customers can help kirana merchants understand consumer needs and encourage repeat purchases. Personal interaction, reliable service, convenient purchasing, and familiarity with customer preferences can remain important advantages for neighbourhood retailers.

Against this background, the present study examines consumer–kirana merchant relations and buying behaviour in Warangal District. The study considers factors such as the duration of the relationship between consumers and merchants, trust, personal attention, credit facilities, product availability, convenience, satisfaction, frequency of purchase, and consumer loyalty. It also examines the association between selected aspects of consumer–merchant relationships and buying behaviour.

Review of Literature

1. **Aradhya et al. (2021)** studied consumer purchase behaviour during the COVID-19 lockdown, with special reference to Kirana stores in Bengaluru. The study showed that Kirana shops played an important role in meeting consumers' everyday requirements during a period of restricted movement. The close proximity of the shops and the familiarity between customers and shopkeepers helped consumers obtain essential products. The study indicates that local relationships and accessibility continue to be important characteristics of Kirana retailing.
2. **Pathak and Kandathil (2022)** examined the strategies adopted by small informal retailers in India, with particular attention to home delivery services. The study highlighted the importance of close relationships between retailers and their customers in understanding local needs and providing flexible services. It showed that the familiarity developed through regular interaction enables small retailers to respond to customers' requirements more effectively. The study also suggests that personal relationships and customer understanding can help informal retailers retain regular customers and sustain their business in a competitive retail environment.
3. **Shankaraiah and Shekhar (2022)** studied consumer buying behaviour towards grocery products in the offline market in Hyderabad, Telangana. The study examined how consumers make purchasing decisions in physical grocery stores in the context of the growing use of online shopping. The findings indicated that offline grocery stores continue to have an important place

in consumers' daily purchasing. For Kirana shops, factors such as easy accessibility, regular interaction with customers and familiarity with the shopkeeper can influence consumers to continue purchasing from the same store.

4. **Alex, Hussain and Kirmani (2023)** examined customer attachment to unorganised Kirana shops in India. The study focused on the factors that contribute to the continued relationship between customers and small grocery retailers. It found that customer attachment is associated with purchase intention and loyalty towards Kirana shops. The study suggests that customers may develop a sense of familiarity and attachment through repeated visits and interaction with shop owners and staff. Thus, the relationship between a Kirana shop owner and customer is not limited to individual buying transactions but can develop into a continuing relationship that encourages repeat purchases and customer loyalty.

Objectives

1. To examine the frequency of consumers' visits to Kirana shops and the duration and nature of their relationship with Kirana merchants.
2. To assess the level of trust and personal attention received by consumers from Kirana merchants and identify the major factors influencing their buying behaviour.
3. To examine the relationship between consumer–merchant relations and consumers' buying behaviour, particularly in terms of satisfaction, repeat purchases and loyalty.

Research Methodology

The study was conducted among 70 consumers from Warangal who purchase products from kirana shops. A purposive sampling method was used to select respondents who regularly purchase household and daily-use products from local kirana shops. Primary data were collected through a structured interview schedule covering demographic characteristics, frequency of visits, duration of relationship with merchants, trust, personal attention, credit facilities, product availability, price perception, satisfaction, buying frequency, and consumer loyalty. The collected data were organised and analysed using frequencies and percentages. The study is descriptive and analytical in nature.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

Table 1: Age Distribution

Age Group	Number	Percentage
18–30 Years	24	34.3%
31–45 Years	21	30.0%
46–60 Years	17	24.3%
Above 60 Years	8	11.4%

Total	70	100%
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Source: Field data

The respondents represent different age groups, with 34.3% belonging to the 18–30 years category and 30.0% falling in the 31–45 years group. Another 24.3% are between 46 and 60 years, while 11.4% are above 60 years. The distribution indicates that the study includes consumers from different age groups, providing a broader view of purchasing experiences with Kirana shops.

Table 2: Frequency of Visiting Kirana Shops

Frequency	Number	Percentage
Daily	25	35.7%
Several Times a Week	24	34.3%
Once a Week	14	20.0%
Occasionally	7	10.0%
Total	70	100%

Source: Field data

Regular visits to Kirana shops are common among the respondents. About 35.7% visit their Kirana shop daily, while another 34.3% visit several times a week. One-fifth of the respondents visit once a week, whereas only 10.0% visit occasionally. This pattern suggests that Kirana shops continue to be an important source of everyday purchases for many consumers.

Table 3: Duration of Relationship with Kirana Merchant

Duration	Number	Percentage
Less than 1 Year	10	14.3%
1–3 Years	18	25.7%
4–6 Years	20	28.6%
More than 6 Years	22	31.4%
Total	70	100%

Source: Field data

The duration of consumer–merchant relationships indicates a considerable level of continuity. About 31.4% of respondents have been associated with their Kirana merchant for more than six years, followed by 28.6% who have maintained the relationship for four to six years. Another 25.7% have a relationship of one to three years, while 14.3% have been associated with their merchant for less than one year. The figures suggest that many consumers have established long-term relationships with their local shopkeepers.

Table 4: Level of Trust in Kirana Merchant

Level of Trust	Number	Percentage
High	27	38.6%

Moderate	29	41.4%
Low	10	14.3%
No Trust	4	5.7%
Total	70	100%

Source: Field data

Trust appears to be an important part of the consumer–merchant relationship. While 38.6% of respondents reported a high level of trust, 41.4% expressed moderate trust. Only 14.3% reported low trust and 5.7% reported no trust. Thus, a large majority of respondents have at least a moderate level of confidence in their Kirana merchants. This may reflect the familiarity that develops through repeated transactions and regular interaction.

Table 5: Personal Attention from Kirana Merchant

Response	Number	Percentage
Frequently	30	42.9%
Sometimes	27	38.6%
Rarely	9	12.9%
Never	4	5.7%
Total	70	100%

Source: Field data

Personal interaction is another noticeable feature of Kirana retailing. Around 42.9% of respondents stated that they frequently receive personal attention from the merchant, while 38.6% receive such attention sometimes. Only 12.9% receive it rarely and 5.7% reported that they never receive personal attention. The responses indicate that personalised interaction remains common in neighbourhood Kirana shops.

Table 6: Nature of Relationship with Kirana Merchant:

Nature of Relationship	Number	Percentage
Customer Only	12	17.1%
Familiar Customer	20	28.6%
Friend/Neighbour	15	21.4%
Family Acquaintance	8	11.4%
Long-term Trusted Customer	15	21.5%
Total	70	100%

Source: Field data

The nature of the relationship extends beyond a simple buyer–seller connection for many respondents. About 28.6% described themselves as familiar customers, making this the largest group. Another 21.5% considered themselves long-term trusted customers, while 21.4% described the merchant as a friend or neighbour. About 11.4% reported a family acquaintance relationship, whereas 17.1% maintained only a customer relationship. These responses suggest that familiarity and social

interaction form an important part of relationships between Kirana merchants and their regular customers.

Table 7: Availability of Credit Facility

Response	Number	Percentage
Frequently Available	18	25.7%
Sometimes Available	27	38.6%
Rarely Available	15	21.4%
Not Available	10	14.3%
Total	70	100%

Source: Field data

Credit facilities are available to varying degrees among the respondents. About 25.7% stated that credit is frequently available, while 38.6% receive credit sometimes. Another 21.4% reported that credit is rarely available, and 14.3% do not receive such facilities. The findings indicate that flexible payment arrangements continue to be available to a substantial section of customers, particularly those who have an established relationship with the shopkeeper.

Table 8: Major Factor Influencing Purchase from Kirana Shops

Major Factor	Number	Percentage
Convenience/Location	20	28.6%
Personal Relationship	18	25.7%
Product Availability	14	20.0%
Price	11	15.7%
Credit Facility	7	10.0%
Total	70	100%

Source: Field data

Convenience and location are the most frequently reported factors, accounting for 28.6% of responses. Personal relationships with the merchant come next at 25.7%, followed by product availability at 20.0%. Price influences 15.7% of respondents, while 10.0% identify credit facilities as their main consideration. The responses indicate that consumers do not base their Kirana purchases only on price. Accessibility, personal relationships and availability of products also have an important place in their purchasing decisions.

Table 9: Consumer Satisfaction with Kirana Shop Services

Satisfaction Level	Number	Percentage
Highly Satisfied	24	34.3%
Satisfied	31	44.3%
Dissatisfied	11	15.7%
Highly Dissatisfied	4	5.7%

Total	70	100%
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Source: Field data

Consumer satisfaction is relatively high among the respondents. About 44.3% reported that they are satisfied with the services provided by their Kirana shop, while 34.3% are highly satisfied. In contrast, 15.7% are dissatisfied and 5.7% are highly dissatisfied. Overall, the responses indicate a generally positive level of satisfaction with Kirana shop services. This may be related to factors such as convenience, personal interaction and familiarity with the merchant.

Table 10: Frequency of Purchasing from the Same Kirana Shop

Frequency	Number	Percentage
Very Frequently	29	41.4%
Frequently	27	38.6%
Occasionally	10	14.3%
Rarely	4	5.7%
Total	70	100%

Source: Field data

Repeat purchasing is common among the respondents. About 41.4% purchase very frequently from the same Kirana shop, while 38.6% do so frequently. Another 14.3% purchase occasionally and only 5.7% purchase rarely from the same shop. The pattern indicates that most respondents tend to return to the same Kirana shop for their regular requirements rather than changing shops frequently.

Table 11: Consumer Loyalty towards Kirana Shop

Level of Loyalty	Number	Percentage
High	26	37.1%
Moderate	32	45.7%
Low	9	12.9%
No Loyalty	3	4.3%
Total	70	100%

Source: Field data

The responses indicate a moderate to high level of loyalty towards preferred Kirana shops. About 45.7% of respondents reported moderate loyalty, while 37.1% reported high loyalty. Only 12.9% indicated low loyalty and 4.3% reported no loyalty. This pattern suggests that established relationships, convenience, trust and satisfactory service may contribute to customers continuing with their preferred Kirana shops.

Table 12: Convenience of Shopping at Kirana Shops

Level of Convenience	Number	Percentage
Highly Convenient	30	42.9%

Moderately Convenient	24	34.3%
Slightly Convenient	11	15.7%
Not Convenient	5	7.1%
Total	70	100%

Source: Field data

Convenience is an important advantage of Kirana shops. About 42.9% of respondents consider shopping at their Kirana shop highly convenient, while 34.3% find it moderately convenient. Another 15.7% consider it slightly convenient and only 7.1% find it inconvenient. Thus, a substantial majority of respondents experience Kirana shopping as convenient, which may be related to the proximity of these stores and the ease of making regular purchases.

Table 13: Reasons for Preferring Kirana Shops

Reason for Preference	Number	Percentage
Nearness to Home	18	25.7%
Trust in Shopkeeper	14	20.0%
Credit Facility	9	12.9%
Product Availability	12	17.1%
Personal Relationship	10	14.3%
Quick Service	7	10.0%
Total	70	100%

Source: Field data

Nearness to home is the most commonly reported reason for preferring Kirana shops, accounting for 25.7% of respondents. Trust in the shopkeeper is the second major reason at 20.0%, followed by product availability at 17.1%. Personal relationships account for 14.3%, while 12.9% prefer Kirana shops because of credit facilities. Quick service is mentioned by 10.0%. The findings indicate that both practical considerations and personal relationships influence consumers' preference for neighbourhood Kirana shops.

Key Findings

1. **Regular Visits to Kirana Shops:** A considerable proportion of respondents visit their local Kirana shops regularly. About 35.7% visit daily and 34.3% visit several times a week. This indicates that Kirana shops continue to be an important source for consumers' routine and everyday purchases.
2. **Long-Term Consumer–Merchant Relationships:** The findings show that many consumers have maintained relationships with the same Kirana merchants for several years. About 31.4% of respondents have been associated with their merchant for more than six years, while 28.6% have

maintained the relationship for four to six years. This suggests that continuity and familiarity are important features of local retailing.

3. **Trust in Kirana Merchants:** Trust is an important element of the consumer–merchant relationship. About 38.6% of respondents reported high trust and 41.4% reported moderate trust. The relatively high level of trust may be associated with repeated transactions, familiarity and regular interaction between consumers and shopkeepers.
4. **Personal Attention:** Personal attention is commonly experienced by the respondents. About 42.9% reported receiving personal attention frequently, while 38.6% received it sometimes. This indicates that personalised interaction remains an important feature of Kirana shops and can distinguish them from more impersonal retail formats.
5. **Nature of Consumer–Merchant Relationship:** The relationship between consumers and Kirana merchants is not limited to buying and selling. Many respondents described themselves as familiar customers, friends or neighbours, or long-term trusted customers. This reflects the social nature of neighbourhood retailing and the familiarity that develops through regular interaction.
6. **Availability of Credit Facilities:** Credit facilities continue to be available to a considerable section of consumers. About 25.7% reported that credit was frequently available and 38.6% stated that it was available sometimes. Such flexibility can be useful for regular customers and may strengthen established relationships with merchants.
7. **Factors Influencing Buying Behaviour:** Convenience and location were the most commonly reported factors influencing purchases, followed by personal relationships and product availability. This indicates that consumers consider both practical factors and relationship-based factors when deciding where to purchase their everyday requirements.
8. **Consumer Satisfaction:** Satisfaction levels were generally positive. About 44.3% of respondents were satisfied and 34.3% were highly satisfied with their Kirana shopping experience. This suggests that convenient service, familiarity, personal attention and product availability contribute to a positive consumer experience.
9. **Repeat Purchase Behaviour:** Repeat purchasing from the same Kirana shop is common. About 41.4% of respondents purchase very frequently and 38.6% purchase frequently from the same shop. This pattern indicates a considerable degree of continuity in consumers' purchasing behaviour.
10. **Consumer Loyalty:** The findings show moderate to high levels of loyalty towards preferred Kirana shops. About 45.7% reported moderate loyalty and 37.1% reported high loyalty. Established relationships, trust, convenience and satisfactory service may contribute to consumers continuing with the same shop.
11. **Convenience of Kirana Shopping:** Convenience is one of the major advantages of Kirana shops. About 42.9% of respondents considered their Kirana shop highly convenient and 34.3% considered it moderately convenient. Proximity to residential areas and easy access to daily-use products may explain this preference.
12. **Reasons for Preference:** Nearness to home was the most frequently reported reason for preferring Kirana shops, followed by trust in the shopkeeper and product availability. Personal relationships and credit facilities were also mentioned by respondents. The findings therefore show that consumer preference is shaped by a combination of accessibility, service and interpersonal relationships.

Conclusion

Kirana shops continue to hold a significant position in the everyday retail life of consumers, particularly because they combine accessibility with personal and relationship-based service. The findings indicate that consumer buying behaviour is influenced not only by price and product availability but also by trust, familiarity, personal attention, convenience and the quality of interaction with the merchant. The presence of long-term relationships and frequent repeat purchases demonstrates the continuing importance of neighbourhood-based retailing. The study highlights that a strong consumer–merchant relationship contributes to consumer satisfaction, repeated purchasing and continued preference for the same Kirana shop. Consumers value merchants who understand their requirements, provide products conveniently, maintain reliable service and offer appropriate flexibility in payment. Thus, the strength of Kirana retailing lies not only in selling products but also in building and maintaining meaningful consumer relationships.

For Kirana merchants, the findings provide a clear direction for strengthening their businesses. Maintaining trust, improving product availability, ensuring fair and transparent pricing, providing quick and courteous service, adopting digital payment methods and understanding changing consumer expectations can help sustain customer relationships. At the same time, merchants need to respond to competition from supermarkets, online shopping and quick-commerce platforms through better service and greater convenience. Consumer relationships remain an important foundation of Kirana retailing. Although the retail environment is changing rapidly, personal trust, familiarity and local accessibility continue to influence purchasing practices. Kirana merchants who combine relationship-based service with modern retail practices can strengthen customer satisfaction, encourage repeat purchases and maintain long-term consumer connections.

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