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Clicks vs. Fittings: A Comparative Study of Online and Offline Clothing Purchases

ტანსაცმლის ონლაინ და ოფლაინ შესყიდვების შედარებითი კვლევა

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Abstract

Introduction: The rapid expansion of e-commerce has transformed consumer purchasing patterns worldwide, yet traditional in-store shopping remains significant, particularly in emerging markets. This study explores consumer shopping behavior in Georgia by comparing preferences for online and in-store clothing purchases, with attention to demographic factors, perceived benefits and barriers, and the role of technology in shaping future trends. **Methods:** A quantitative research design was employed using structured questionnaires administered to 385 respondents, predominantly residing in Tbilisi. The survey captured data on shopping preferences, influencing factors, perceived challenges, and technology usage. Descriptive and inferential statistical analyses were conducted to identify key determinants of online versus in-store shopping behavior and to examine demographic variations. **Results:** The findings indicate clear distinctions between online and in-store shoppers. Online consumers primarily value secure payment systems, ease of use, and broad product availability, especially regarding size, color, and style options. In contrast, in-store shoppers prioritize the ability to try on clothing, physically inspect products, and complete purchases immediately. Major barriers to online shopping include sizing issues (22%) and concerns about product quality (24%), while in-store shopping is mainly constrained by crowding (31%) and limited stock (26%). Despite increasing digitalization, 42% of respondents expect to continue shopping mainly in physical stores. Technology plays a significant role in shaping behavior, with higher mobile application usage observed among women. Traditional product discovery methods, such as window shopping and search engines, remain dominant, whereas social media exerts a comparatively limited influence. **Conclusion:** The study demonstrates that convenience is the primary driver of online clothing purchases, while tactile experience and immediacy motivate in-store shopping in Georgia. Although e-commerce continues to grow, physical retail remains resilient. These insights can support retailers and policymakers in designing hybrid strategies that integrate digital convenience with enhanced in-store experiences to better meet evolving consumer expectations.

Keywords: Consumer Behavior, Online Shopping, In-Store Shopping, Clothing Retail, Shopping Preferences, E-commerce Shopping, Purchase Decision Factors.

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აბატრაქტი

შესავალი: ელექტრონული კომერციის სწრაფმა განვითარებამ მნიშვნელოვნად შეცვალა მომხმარებელთა ყიდვის ქცევა მსოფლიოში, თუმცა ტრადიციული ფიზიკური მაღაზიები კვლავ მნიშვნელოვან როლს ასრულებს, განსაკუთრებით განვითარებად ბაზრებზე. მოცემული კვლევა იკვლევს საქართველოში მომხმარებელთა სავაჭრო ქცევას ტანსაცმლის ონლაინ და ფიზიკურ მაღაზიებში შეძენის შედარებითი ანალიზის საფუძველზე, დემოგრაფიული ფაქტორების, აღქმული უპირატესობებისა და ბარიერების, აგრეთვე ტექნოლოგიების როლის გათვალისწინებით. **მეთოდები:** კვლევაში გამოყენებულია რაოდენობრივი კვლევის დიზაინი. მონაცემები შეგროვდა სტრუქტურირებული კითხვარების მეშვეობით 385 რესპონდენტიდან, რომელთა უმრავლესობა თბილისში ცხოვრობდა. კვლევა მოიცავდა ინფორმაციას სავაჭრო პრეფერენციებზე, მათ განმაპირობებელ ფაქტორებზე, აღქმულ გამოწვევებსა და ტექნოლოგიების გამოყენებაზე. მონაცემების ანალიზისთვის გამოყენებულ იქნა აღწერითი და ინფერენციული სტატისტიკური მეთოდები ონლაინ და ფიზიკურ მაღაზიებში შოპინგის ქცევის განმსაზღვრელი ფაქტორებისა და დემოგრაფიული განსხვავებების გამოსავლენად. **შედეგები:** შედეგებმა აჩვენა მკაფიო განსხვავებები ონლაინ და ფიზიკურ მაღაზიებში შოპინგის მოყვარულ მომხმარებლებს შორის. ონლაინ მომხმარებლებისთვის გადამწყვეტი მნიშვნელობა აქვს გადახდის უსაფრთხოებას, გამოყენების სიმარტივესა და პროდუქციის ფართო ხელმისაწვდომობას, განსაკუთრებით ზომის, ფერისა და სტილის მრავალფეროვნების კუთხით. ფიზიკურ მაღაზიებში მოსიარულე მომხმარებლები უპირატესობას ანიჭებენ ტანსაცმლის მოსინჯვის შესაძლებლობას, პროდუქტის უშუალოდ დათვალიერებასა და შეძენის დაუყოვნებლივ განხორციელებას. ონლაინ შოპინგის ძირითადი ბარიერები დაკავშირებულია ზომის პრობლემებთან (22%) და პროდუქციის ხარისხთან დაკავშირებულ ეჭვებთან (24%), მაშინ როცა ფიზიკურ მაღაზიებში შოპინგს აფერხებს გადატვირთულობა (31%) და ასორტიმენტის შეზღუდულობა (26%). მიუხედავად ელექტრონული კომერციის ზრდისა, რესპონდენტთა 42% მომავალშიც ძირითადად ფიზიკურ მაღაზიებში შოპინგს ელოდება. ტექნოლოგიები მნიშვნელოვნად ახდენს გავლენას მომხმარებელთა ქცევაზე, ხოლო მობილური აპლიკაციების გამოყენება უფრო მაღალია ქალებში. პროდუქციის აღმოჩენის ტრადიციული გზები, როგორიცაა ვიტრინების დათვალიერება და საძიებო სისტემები, კვლავ დომინანტურია, მაშინ როცა სოციალური მედიის გავლენა შედარებით მცირეა. **დასკვნა:** კვლევა ცხადყოფს, რომ ონლაინ ტანსაცმლის შეძენას საქართველოში პირველ რიგში კომფორტი და მოხერხებულობა განაპირობებს, ხოლო ფიზიკურ მაღაზიებში შოპინგს — შეხებითი გამოცდილება და მყისიერი ხელმისაწვდომობა. მიუხედავად ელექტრონული ვაჭრობის განვითარებისა, ფიზიკური საცალო ვაჭრობა კვლავ მდგრად პოზიციებს ინარჩუნებს. მიღებული შედეგები მნიშვნელოვანია როგორც საცალო ვაჭრობის სფეროს წარმომადგენლებისთვის, ასევე პოლიტიკის შემმუშავებლებისთვის, რათა შემუშავდეს ჰიბრიდული სტრატეგიები, რომლებიც გააერთიანებს ციფრულ კომფორტსა და გაუმჯობესებულ ფიზიკურ სავაჭრო გამოცდილებას.

საკვანძო სიტყვები: მომხმარებლის ქცევა, ონლაინ შოპინგი, მაღაზიაში შოპინგი, ტანსაცმლის საცალო ვაჭრობა, შოპინგის პრეფერენციები, ელექტრონული კომერციის შოპინგი, შესყიდვის გადაწყვეტილების ფაქტორები.

რეკომენდირებული ციტირება: გიორგი მამნიაშვილი, ქეთევან ბოგველი (2026). ტანსაცმლის ონლაინ და ოფლაინ შესყიდვების შედარებითი კვლევა. *ჯანდაცვის პოლიტიკა, ეკონომიკა და სოციოლოგია,* 10 (1). DOI: https://doi.org/10.52340/healthecosoc.2026.10.01.4.

1. Introduction

The global apparel industry plays a pivotal role in the world economy, employing over 300 million people as of 2018. The surge in demand, especially in developing countries, has contributed to the industry's rapid growth. The COVID-19 pandemic introduced unprecedented disruptions, causing a 22% decline in the global apparel market between 2019 and 2020. However, recovery began in 2021, with revenues reaching $1.9 trillion in 2022 and expected to rise to $2.25 trillion in 2025 (Mamuladze, 2022).

Georgia's clothing retail sector reflects these global trends, showing increased online engagement while maintaining a strong in-store shopping culture. The relevance of this study lies in exploring Georgian consumer preferences between online and in-store clothing shopping, identifying the factors influencing these choices, and examining demographic differences.

This study aims to examine consumer shopping behavior in Georgia, with a particular focus on comparing online and in-store clothing purchases.

The research addresses the following objectives:

- To examine Georgian consumer preferences between online and in-store clothing shopping, with a focus on convenience, satisfaction levels, and price sensitivity.
- To analyze the influence of demographic factors, such as age, gender, and income, on shopping channel selection and purchasing behavior.
- To explore the role of technology in shaping consumer shopping habits and to assess future trends in online and in-store clothing purchases in Georgia.

These objectives help fill a gap in the existing marketing literature concerning Georgian consumers and provide strategic insights for retailers operating in the country.

Theoretical background

Consumer shopping behavior has been widely studied across global markets. Several theoretical models provide the framework for this study:

The Theory of Planned Behavior posits that attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control drive behavior. For Georgian consumers, TPB helps explain preferences shaped by societal expectations and perceived ease of online or in-store shopping (Ajzen, 1991).

Consumer Decision-Making Process Model identifies five stages: problem recognition, information search, evaluation of alternatives, purchase decision, and post-purchase behavior. Georgian consumers likely navigate these stages differently when selecting online versus in-store channels (Engel et al., 1990).

The Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) emphasizes perceived usefulness and ease of use as key determinants of online shopping adoption. Factors like website navigation and payment security directly relate to TAM's constructs in the Georgian context (Davis & Granić, 2024).

The Stimulus-Organism-Response (S-O-R) Model explains how external stimuli (store layout or website interface) affect internal consumer states and behavior. This model is particularly relevant for assessing how Georgian consumers react to online interfaces versus physical store environments (Hochreiter et al., 2023).

Methodology

This study adopted a quantitative research approach to ensure objectivity and enable large-scale data analysis.

Sample Size:

The target population comprised residents of Tbilisi, with an estimated population of 1,259,000 (Geostat, 2024). Using a 95% confidence level and a 5% margin of error, the required sample size was calculated to be 385 respondents. The final sample included exactly 385 participants.

Data Collection and Sampling Unit:

Data were collected using structured questionnaires administered both online and through face-to-face surveys. The questionnaire gathered information on respondents' demographic characteristics, shopping frequency, shopping preferences, decision-making factors, and future shopping intentions. Individuals who had made at least one online or in-store clothing purchase within the past six months were eligible for inclusion in the study.

Data Analysis:

Data entry and analysis were conducted using SPSS software. Multiple-response questions were coded using a multi-variable system (e.g., Q20_1, Q20_2, Q20_3). The analytical methods applied included descriptive statistics, frequency distributions, and cross-tabulation analyses.

Results

The demographic analysis revealed that 80% of respondents were female and 20% male. Regarding age, 57% of respondents were between 19 and 30 years, with 21% between 31 and 40 years. Occupational status indicated 48% full-time employed, 33% students, and 9% self-employed. As for Income distribution (Table 1) showed that 37% earned less than 1,000 GEL, and only 7% earned more than 5,000 GEL.

Table 1. Income distribution

Income range	%	N
<1000	37%	142
1001–2000	29%	112
2001–3000	12%	46
3001–4000	11%	42
4001–5000	3%	12
5001>	7%	27

Source: Own research data

Most respondents cited necessity (68%) as the primary reason for clothing purchases, followed by special occasions (51%) (Table 2). In terms of frequency, 15% bought clothing weekly, 59% bought clothing monthly, while 20% shopped quarterly.

Table 2. Purchase motivation

	Main reason for buying as a 1st choice	N	Main Reason for Buying as a 2nd choice	N
Necessity	68%	262	2%	8
Fashion trends	5%	19	33%	127
special occasions	3%	12	51%	196
Impulse buying	17%	65	14%	54
other	6%	23	–	0

Source: Own research data

An income-based cross-tabulation (Table 3) showed that 65% of respondents earning less than 1,000 GEL bought clothing monthly, while 39% of respondents earning over 5,000 GEL purchased clothing quarterly.

Table 3: Frequency of Buying Clothes per Income Range

		Frequency of Buying Clothes					Total
		Weekly	Monthly	Quarterly	Annually	Rarely	
Income	Less than 1000	16,9%	64,6%	8,5%	3,1%	6,9%	100,0%
	1001 - 2000	3,9%	74,8%	16,5%	-	4,9%	100,0%
	2001 - 3000	9,3%	53,5%	27,9%	-	9,3%	100,0%
	3001 - 4000	20,0%	60,0%	20,0%	-	-	100,0%
	4001-5000	-	60,0%	40,0%	-	-	100,0%
	5001 and above	26,9%	26,9%	38,5%	-	7,7%	100,0%
Total		12,8%	62,8%	17,6%	1,1%	5,7%	100,0%

Source: Own research data

Regarding channel preference, 46% preferred in-store shopping, 19% preferred online shopping, and 35% used both equally.

Showrooming behavior showed that 24% browsed online before purchasing in-store occasionally, while 15% always compared both channels before purchase. Conversely, for web rooming, 27% reported shopping only in-store without prior online search.

Table 4. Closing purchase behavior

	browse clothing online and then purchase it in-store	N	search for clothing in-store and then purchase it online	N
Always	6%	23	8%	31
Frequently	11%	42	10%	39
Occasionally	24%	92	17%	65
Rarely	14%	54	18%	69
never	13%	50	9%	35
I compare both	15%	58	9%	35
I only shop online	3%	12	1%	4
I only shop in-store	10%	39	27%	104

Source: Own research data

Among online shoppers, 36% compared products both online and in-store before making a purchase. Only 5% reported purchasing exclusively online (Table 5).

Table 5. Online shoppers' behavior

	browse clothing online and then purchase it in-store	N	search clothing in-store and then purchase it online	N
always	10%	39	10%	39
Frequently	5%	19	11%	42
Occasionally	4%	15	25%	96
Rarely	26%	100	19%	73
never	–	0	19%	73
I compare both	36%	139	11%	42
I only shop online	15%	58	5%	19

For in-store shoppers, 24% never browsed online before buying, and 51% stated they exclusively shopped in physical stores (Table 6).

Table 6: In-store shoppers' behavior

	browse clothing online and then purchase it in-store	N	search for clothing in-store and then purchase it online	N
always	1%	4	8%	31
Frequently	13%	50	6%	23
Occasionally	26%	100	7%	27
Rarely	13%	50	14%	54
never	24%	92	10%	39
I compare both	2%	8	4%	15
I only shop online	1%	4	–	0
I only shop in-store	–	0	51%	196

Source: Own research data

Shopping Preferences according to gender show that only 3.9% of men preferred online shopping, compared to 22.8% of women. Consumers over 40 years overwhelmingly preferred in-store shopping, while younger groups utilized both channels more equally (see Tables 7 and 8).

Table 7: Shopping Preferences according to gender

		Where do you prefer to purchase clothes?			Total
		Online	In-store	Both equally	
Gender	Male	3,9%	50,6%	45,5%	100,0%
	Female	22,8%	44,6%	32,6%	100,0%
Total		19,0%	45,8%	35,2%	100,0%

Source: Own research data

Table 8: Shopping Preferences according to age

		Online	In-store	Both equally	Total
Age	under 18	2,4%	42,9%	54,8%	100,0%
	19-30	20,8%	43,4%	35,7%	100,0%
	31-40	29,3%	43,9%	26,8%	100,0%
	41-50		72,4%	27,6%	100,0%
	51-65		50,0%	50,0%	100,0%
	65 and above	100,0%			100,0%

Source: Own research data

Income and Shopping Preferences

Income-based analysis revealed that both the lowest and highest income groups leaned towards in-store shopping, while mid-income respondents were more likely to use both channels.

Table 9: Shopping Preferences according to income

		Where do you prefer to purchase clothes?			Total
		Online	In-store	Both equally	
Income	Less than 1000	10,8%	49,2%	40,0%	100,0%
	1001 - 2000	27,2%	42,7%	30,1%	100,0%
	2001 - 3000	11,6%	32,6%	55,8%	100,0%
	3001 - 4000	37,5%	35,0%	27,5%	100,0%
	4001-5000		80,0%	20,0%	100,0%
	5001 and above	15,4%	46,2%	38,5%	100,0%

Source: Own research data

Factors Influencing Shopping Decisions

For online shopping, the most critical factors were secure payment process (Mean = 4.80), website navigation ease (Mean = 4.69), and availability of size/style/color (Mean = 4.65)

Table 10: Factors Influencing Online Shopping Decision).

		Convenience	Product Variety	Customer Reviews and Ratings	Free Shipping	Return and Exchange Policies	Availability of Size/Style/Color	Delivery Time	Ease of Payment Methods	Product Availability	Ease of Website/App Navigation	Secure Payment Process	No Pressure from Salespeople	Price	Exclusive Online Promotions or Discounts	Other
N	Valid	309	319	295	299	304	304	301	299	291	299	296	298	299	298	3
	Miss.	78	68	92	88	83	83	86	88	96	88	91	89	88	89	384
Mean		4,24	4,54	3,85	3,97	4,13	4,65	4,48	4,57	4,48	4,69	4,80	4,59	4,52	4,36	15,00
Median		5,00	5,00	4,00	5,00	5,00	5,00	5,00	5,00	5,00	5,00	5,00	5,00	5,00	5,00	15,00
Mode		5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	15
Std. Deviation		1,135	,792	1,282	1,326	1,262	,798	,968	,907	,941	,614	,643	,845	,884	1,019	0,000

Source: Own research data

In-store shopping decisions were most influenced by the ability to try on clothing (Mean = 4.83) and the possibility to inspect products physically (Mean = 4.63). Personalized customer service was rated lowest (Mean = 3.52)

Table 11: Factors Influencing In-Store Shopping Decision

		Ability to Try on Clothing	Immediate Availability	Personalized Customer Service	Physical Product Inspection	In-Store Promotions or Discounts	Store Location	Store Atmosphere	Loyalty Programs	Return and Exchange Process	Availability of Sizes/Styles/Colors in the Store	Social Interaction	Avoiding Shipping Costs	Parking Availability	Other
N	Valid	343	314	313	315	313	310	310	308	311	318	312	308	304	1
	Miss.	44	73	74	72	74	77	77	79	76	69	75	79	83	386
Mean		4,83	4,61	3,52	4,63	4,45	4,36	4,16	3,55	4,39	4,68	3,54	3,77	3,72	1,00
Median		5,00	5,00	4,00	5,00	5,00	5,00	5,00	4,00	5,00	5,00	4,00	4,00	4,00	1,00
Mode		5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	1
Std. Deviation		,541	,788	1,342	,616	,839	,934	1,071	1,387	,990	,753	1,432	1,327	1,530	

Source: Own research data

Online shoppers identified sizing issues (22%) and quality concerns (24%) as their main challenges. For in-store shopping, the most cited barriers were crowds (31%) and limited stock availability (26%) (Own research data).

Although in-store shopping was the dominant preference, 35% believed online shopping offered better value for money. Regarding enjoyment, 55% preferred in-store shopping and 42% felt in-store shopping provided better customer service.

Smartphones and mobile apps were commonly used for online clothing shopping, especially among women. 28% of women frequently used mobile devices for purchases, compared to 17% of men.

When asked how they discover new clothing items, 30% cited window shopping, 27% used online search engines, and 22% relied on social media (Own research data).

Discussions

The results show that in-store shopping remains the primary mode of clothing purchase, highlighting consumers' continued preference for physical evaluation despite growing online access. This pattern indicates that digital channels mainly support information search rather than replace offline purchasing, consistent with established consumer behavior theory.

In-Store Shopping in Clothing Purchases

Based on the results the physical retail remains the dominant purchasing channel for clothing in the Georgian market. With 46% of respondents preferring in-store purchases, compared to 19% preferring online channels and 35% using both channels, corresponding to the international evidence that apparel is among the slowest retail categories to fully digitalize (GlobalData, 2024). Studies on European apparel markets similarly highlight that clothing remains strongly tied to sensory evaluation and physical interaction, even in technologically advanced economies (Germany Trade & Invest, 2021).

The strong reliance on offline shopping suggests high perceived behavioral control over in-store environments, whereas online channels introduce uncertainty related to fit, tactile quality, and post-purchase outcomes. These concerns reduce the intention–behavior link in online apparel shopping (Ajzen, 1991).

Omni channel Behavior and Information Search Strategies

Consumers frequently use digital tools for information gathering while deferring final commitment to physical stores, particularly for apparel products. Research findings reinforce this logic by showing that online channels primarily support pre-purchase evaluation, rather than replacing offline retail entirely (Jensen et al. 2021).

Although in-store purchase dominates, the research data reveal significant omnichannel exploration. A notable 36% of respondents reported actively comparing online and offline channels before finalizing a purchase, and 26% reported doing so rarely, indicating selective but strategic channel-switching. Conversely, when examining showrooming behavior, 51% reported only shopping in-store, suggesting that offline discovery remains central to the purchasing process.

Risk Reduction and Channel Choice

The unwillingness to rely on online purchasing channels can be explained through cognitive dissonance theory (Güven, 2022). The findings show that 24% of respondents never browse online before in-store purchasing, reflecting an intentional avoidance of perceived risk. Online shopping introduces potential mismatch between expectation and outcome, increasing cognitive dissonance. Such behavior is a classic risk-avoidance mechanism, where consumers choose channels that minimize post-purchase regret. The Georgian apparel market appears particularly sensitive to this mechanism, likely due to limited return infrastructure and uneven sizing standards.

Technology Acceptance and Behavioral Replacement

Although digital infrastructure is increasingly accessible, technology alone does not guarantee behavioral change. The research findings support the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) (Davis & Granić, 2024), particularly with respect to perceived usefulness and ease of use. Respondents recognize the convenience of online browsing, price comparison, and product availability; however, these benefits do not translate into dominant online purchasing behavior.

This disconnect suggests that technology acceptance facilitates information processing, not purchase execution. This aligns with findings in broader digital consumer behavior research, which argue that technological readiness does not eliminate the need for experiential reassurance in high-involvement purchases (MDPI Behavioral Sciences, 2024).

Furthermore, traditional shopping practices such as window shopping and in-person evaluation remain strong discovery mechanisms, echoing findings from European retail studies (Germany Trade & Invest, 2021). This suggests that the Georgian apparel market shares structural similarities with other transitional retail ecosystems.

Conclusions

This study provides a comprehensive examination of Georgian consumer behavior concerning online versus in-store clothing purchases.

Key findings include:

- In-store shopping remains dominant, especially among older consumers and men;
- Online shopping is steadily growing, driven by younger consumers and women;
- Critical factors influencing online shopping include secure payment and website usability;
- In-store shopping remains favored for tactile experience and immediate product access;
- Demographic factors such as age, gender, and income significantly influence shopping behaviors;
- Common online shopping challenges include sizing and quality concerns, while in-store challenges include crowding and stock limitations;
- Mobile technology plays an increasingly significant role, especially for product discovery and purchase decisions among younger consumers;

For Georgian retailers, these insights emphasize the necessity of improving both online and offline channels. Enhancing online platforms with better payment systems, sizing tools, and return policies will improve customer satisfaction. Simultaneously, improving in-store environments, inventory management, and customer engagement will help retain traditional shoppers.

The findings strongly suggest that Georgian retailers should avoid aggressive channel substitution strategies. Instead, retailers should:

- Support omnichannel information search through accurate online content
- Improve in-store operational efficiency and fitting experience
- Reduce online risk perceptions through transparent return policies

Retailers should also consider investing in omnichannel strategies to address the shifting preferences of Georgian consumers, ensuring competitiveness in an evolving retail landscape.

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