
Consumer Behaviour in the Era of Digital Payments Assessing the Impact of Online Payment Adoption

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Abstract

The widespread adoption of digital payment systems has significantly transformed contemporary consumption by reshaping how consumers complete transactions and make purchasing decisions. This study empirically examines consumer behaviour in the era of digital payments using primary data collected through a structured survey. Responses from 120 consumers were analysed to assess patterns of online payment usage, perceived convenience, trust in digital payment platforms, and changes in spending behaviour. Descriptive statistical techniques and graphical analysis were employed to interpret the data. The findings reveal that high levels of convenience and ease of use drive frequent adoption of digital payment systems, while reduced transaction friction is associated with increased spending for many consumers. Trust in payment platforms emerges as a key moderating factor influencing usage intensity and behavioural outcomes. The study contributes to consumer behaviour and digital finance literature by providing empirical evidence on how digital payment adoption shapes consumer behaviour; while emphasising the importance of payment system designs that balance convenience with security, transparency, and consumer protection.

Keywords

Online payments, consumer behaviour, digital payment adoption, impulse buying, payment salience

Introduction

The rapid advancement of digital technologies has transformed payment systems worldwide, fundamentally altering the way consumers conduct transactions. Online payment systems, including mobile wallets, internet banking, unified payment interfaces, and card-based digital platforms, have become integral to modern consumption environments. The increasing penetration of smartphones, improved internet infrastructure, and supportive regulatory initiatives have accelerated the adoption of digital payments across both developed and emerging economies. As a result, payment processes that were once perceived as auxiliary to purchasing decisions have now emerged as critical determinants of consumer behaviour, influencing not only how transactions are completed but also when, where, and how consumers choose to purchase goods and services.

From a consumer behaviour perspective, online payment adoption reshapes purchasing decisions by enhancing convenience, reducing transaction time, and lowering perceived effort associated with payment completion. Prior research suggests that ease of payment significantly influences purchase intention and transaction completion, particularly in online and mobile commerce contexts (Dahlberg et al., 2015). The availability of multiple digital payment options has reduced friction in the checkout process, contributing to increased impulse buying and higher transaction frequency. At the same time, perceived security, privacy, and trust in payment systems remain central to consumer acceptance and continued usage. These factors interact with individual attitudes, prior experience, and technological familiarity to shape consumer responses to online payment mechanisms.

The expansion of online payments has also contributed to structural changes in consumption patterns and financial behaviour. Digital payment systems enable seamless integration with e-commerce platforms, subscription services, and on-demand applications, facilitating continuous and automated

consumption. Studies indicate that consumers using digital payments are more likely to engage in frequent low-value transactions and exhibit reduced sensitivity to immediate monetary outflows due to the intangible nature of cashless payments (Soman, 2003). This behavioural shift raises important questions regarding spending control, financial awareness, and consumer decision-making in cashless environments. Moreover, the integration of loyalty programmes, cashback incentives, and personalised offers within digital payment platforms further influences consumer attitudes and purchasing behaviour. Despite the widespread adoption of online payment systems, empirical understanding of their impact on consumer behaviour remains fragmented across disciplines such as marketing, information systems, and behavioural economics. Existing research often focuses on adoption drivers or technological acceptance, with limited integration of behavioural outcomes such as purchase frequency, spending patterns, and post-purchase satisfaction. As digital payments continue to evolve and expand into everyday consumption contexts, it becomes increasingly important to assess their broader behavioural implications. Against this background, the present study examines consumer behaviour in the era of digital payments by assessing the impact of online payment adoption on purchasing decisions and consumption patterns. By synthesising existing empirical evidence, the study aims to contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of how digital payment systems shape contemporary consumer behaviour.

Need Of the Study

The rapid growth of digital payment systems has fundamentally altered the transaction environment in which consumers make purchasing decisions, creating a clear need to examine their impact on consumer behaviour. As online payments become embedded in everyday consumption through e-commerce platforms, mobile applications, and service subscriptions, payment mechanisms are no longer neutral tools but influential factors shaping purchasing frequency, spending levels, and decision-making processes. Understanding these behavioural effects is essential, as digital payments reduce transaction friction and alter consumers' perception of monetary outflow, potentially encouraging higher spending and impulsive purchases.

From an academic perspective, the study is needed to address gaps in existing consumer behaviour and digital finance literature. While a substantial body of research has focused on the adoption and acceptance of digital payment technologies, comparatively fewer studies have examined their behavioural consequences after adoption. The influence of online payment systems on variables such as purchase intention, payment satisfaction, spending control, and post-purchase evaluation remains underexplored, particularly from a consumer behaviour standpoint. By focusing on behavioural outcomes rather than adoption drivers alone, the study contributes to a more holistic understanding of digital payment systems within consumption contexts.

The study is also important from a practical and policy perspective. Businesses increasingly rely on digital payment options to enhance customer convenience and conversion rates, yet lack comprehensive insight into how these systems influence consumer decision-making. Similarly, policymakers and financial regulators require evidence on the behavioural implications of cashless transactions to design consumer protection and financial literacy initiatives. By examining the impact of online payment adoption on consumer behaviour, this study responds to the growing need for informed decision-making among businesses, regulators, and consumers in an increasingly cashless economy.

Scope of the research

The scope of the present research is focused on examining the impact of online payment adoption on consumer behaviour in contemporary digital consumption environments. The study concentrates on how the use of digital payment systems influences consumer purchasing decisions, spending patterns, transaction frequency, and payment-related attitudes. It considers various forms of online payments,

including mobile wallets, internet banking, card-based digital payments, and integrated payment systems used in e-commerce and service platforms. By maintaining this focus, the research aims to understand online payments as behavioural influencers rather than merely technological tools.

The study adopts a secondary research approach and is therefore limited to the analysis and synthesis of existing empirical studies and scholarly literature published up to 2022. Peer-reviewed journal articles and academic research indexed in Google Scholar constitute the primary data sources. The research does not involve primary data collection, surveys, or experimental methods. Instead, it focuses on interpreting documented behavioural outcomes associated with online payment usage, such as changes in purchase intention, convenience perception, trust, and spending behaviour.

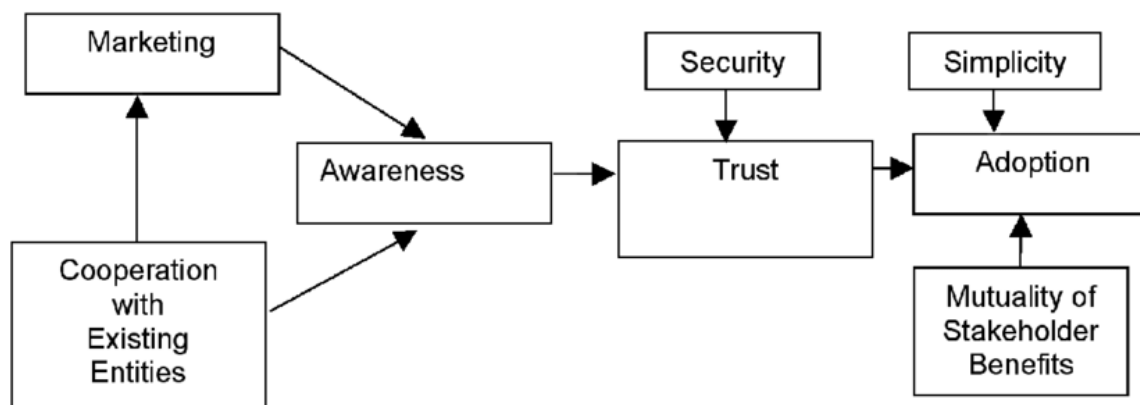


Figure 1 Conceptual Framework Linking Marketing, Trust, and Stakeholder Adoption

The conceptual framework linking marketing, trust, and stakeholder adoption explains how organisational efforts translate into successful acceptance of a product, service, or strategy by stakeholders. In this model, marketing activities and cooperation with existing entities play a foundational role in creating awareness among stakeholders. Awareness is essential because it allows stakeholders to understand the value, purpose, and functionality of the offering. As awareness increases, it contributes to the development of trust, which is further strengthened by perceptions of security, reliability, and transparency. Trust acts as the key mediating factor between awareness and adoption. When stakeholders feel confident that their interests and data are protected, they are more willing to engage. Finally, adoption is influenced not only by trust but also by simplicity of use and mutual benefits for all stakeholders, ensuring long-term acceptance and sustainability.

In terms of contextual coverage, the research examines consumer behaviour across digital and online retail contexts without restricting analysis to a specific country or industry. However, it does not undertake detailed cross-national comparisons or analyse regulatory and technological infrastructure differences in depth. The emphasis remains on consumer-level behavioural responses to online payment adoption. Within these boundaries, the study aims to contribute to consumer behaviour and digital finance literature by clarifying the scope and relevance of online payment systems in shaping modern consumption patterns.

Literature review

The expansion of online and digital payment systems has generated extensive academic interest across consumer behaviour, marketing, information systems, and behavioural economics. Digital payments, including mobile wallets, online banking, card-based payments, and platform-integrated payment solutions, have transformed the transactional environment in which consumers make purchasing decisions. Earlier consumer behaviour literature treated payment mechanisms as neutral instruments; however, subsequent research has demonstrated that payment methods significantly influence spending

behaviour, purchase intention, and consumption patterns. This shift in understanding has positioned online payments as active behavioural drivers rather than passive transaction tools.

Foundational research on payment mechanisms established that the mode of payment affects consumers' psychological perception of spending. Soman (2001) introduced the concept of payment salience and argued that payment methods differ in the degree to which they make consumers aware of monetary outflows. Cash payments, which are immediate and tangible, generate a higher "pain of paying," whereas electronic and delayed payments reduce this psychological discomfort. Building on this, Prelec and Simester (2001) demonstrated that consumers exhibit a higher willingness to pay when using credit cards compared to cash, highlighting how decoupling payment from consumption alters value perception. These early findings form the theoretical basis for understanding behavioural changes associated with modern digital payment systems.

Subsequent studies extended this framework to examine the effects of cashless and electronic payments on spending behaviour. Raghurir and Srivastava (2008) introduced the concept of "monopoly money," suggesting that abstract payment forms reduce the psychological connection between money and consumption, leading to increased spending. This abstraction effect is particularly relevant to online payments, where transactions involve minimal physical or cognitive effort. Empirical research consistently shows that consumers using digital payments tend to spend more per transaction and engage in more frequent purchases than those using cash-based methods, especially in online retail environments.

With the rise of mobile commerce, scholars began to focus specifically on online and mobile payment adoption. Dahlberg et al. (2015) provided a comprehensive review of mobile payment research and identified convenience, speed, and ease of use as critical determinants of adoption. However, beyond adoption, they noted that mobile payments reshape post-adoption behaviour by lowering transaction friction and facilitating continuous purchasing. This perspective was reinforced by studies showing that seamless checkout processes reduce cart abandonment and increase purchase completion rates, thereby directly influencing consumer behaviour rather than merely facilitating transactions.

Empirical evidence from observational and field studies further supports the behavioural impact of digital payments. Bounie et al. (2020) found that merchant adoption of contactless payment systems resulted in significant increases in transaction volume and average sales value. Similar findings have been reported in studies of mobile wallets, which indicate that consumers using e-wallets are more likely to engage in low-value, high-frequency transactions. These behavioural shifts are attributed to reduced transaction time and diminished cognitive evaluation at the point of payment, reinforcing the role of digital payments in encouraging habitual and impulse-driven consumption.

Impulse buying has emerged as a key theme in the literature on online payments. Research indicates that the reduced friction and immediacy associated with digital payments increase impulsive purchasing tendencies, particularly in mobile and app-based environments. Studies show that when payment is integrated into a single-click or biometric authentication process, consumers are less likely to reassess their purchase decisions, leading to spontaneous buying behaviour (Chen, 2017). This effect is amplified when digital payments are combined with promotional cues such as limited-time offers, cashback incentives, and personalised recommendations embedded within payment platforms.

Trust and perceived security represent another important dimension in understanding the impact of online payments on consumer behaviour. While convenience drives adoption and usage, concerns related to data privacy, fraud, and unauthorised transactions can moderate consumer responses. Research suggests that consumers' trust in payment platforms significantly influences not only adoption but also usage intensity and spending behaviour (See-To et al., 2019). Secure authentication mechanisms, regulatory assurance, and positive prior experiences reduce perceived risk and encourage repeated use,

thereby reinforcing behavioural dependence on digital payments.

The integration of rewards and incentives within online payment systems has also been widely examined. Cashback offers, loyalty points, and discounts linked to digital payments function as behavioural nudges that encourage usage and spending. Studies indicate that such incentives not only increase adoption rates but also alter spending patterns by encouraging consumers to choose specific payment methods even when alternatives are available. Over time, repeated exposure to rewards can normalise higher spending levels and reduce expenditure monitoring, particularly among younger consumers and digitally native cohorts.

Recent literature has also explored the role of digital payments in shaping financial awareness and spending control. While some studies argue that online payments weaken budgetary discipline by obscuring real-time expenditure, others suggest that digital tools such as transaction alerts, spending summaries, and budgeting dashboards can enhance financial awareness when actively used. The behavioural outcome therefore depends on the design of payment interfaces and the extent to which consumers engage with expenditure-tracking features (Khando et al., 2022). This dual effect highlights that online payments can either exacerbate or mitigate overspending depending on system design and user behaviour.

The COVID-19 pandemic further accelerated research on digital payments and consumer behaviour. Studies conducted during and after the pandemic document a sharp increase in contactless and online payment usage due to hygiene concerns and mobility restrictions. This period revealed that forced adoption often leads to habit formation, with consumers continuing to use digital payments even after restrictions were lifted. Research suggests that this sustained usage has resulted in lasting changes in purchasing frequency, platform loyalty, and channel preference, particularly in e-commerce and on-demand service sectors.

Another emerging stream of literature focuses on advanced digital payment models such as Buy Now, Pay Later (BNPL) services. These systems intensify the temporal separation between consumption and payment, further reducing the immediate pain of paying. Empirical studies indicate that BNPL adoption increases average order value and purchase frequency but may also contribute to post-purchase regret and financial stress if not accompanied by clear disclosures and affordability checks. This has prompted growing scholarly and policy interest in the consumer welfare implications of digital payment innovation.

Despite extensive research, several gaps remain in the literature. Many studies focus on short-term behavioural outcomes such as spending increases or impulse buying, with limited attention to long-term financial wellbeing and saving behaviour. Cross-country comparative studies remain relatively scarce, particularly those examining cultural and regulatory influences on digital payment behaviour. Additionally, the ethical implications of algorithm-driven nudges and personalised incentives embedded within payment ecosystems are still underexplored. These gaps indicate the need for integrative research that combines behavioural, technological, and policy perspectives.

Overall, the literature up to 2023 demonstrates that online payment systems significantly influence consumer behaviour by altering payment salience, reducing transaction friction, and reshaping spending patterns. Digital payments affect not only how consumers pay but also how they evaluate purchases, control spending, and engage with digital marketplaces. While convenience and efficiency drive positive consumer experiences, the behavioural consequences raise important questions regarding impulse buying, financial awareness, and consumer protection. These insights provide a strong foundation for examining consumer behaviour in the era of digital payments and highlight the importance of balanced system design that supports both efficiency and responsible consumption.

Methodology

The present study adopts a primary research methodology to assess the impact of online payment adoption on consumer behaviour in the digital economy. This approach is appropriate as it allows for the direct examination of consumer experiences, perceptions, and behavioural changes associated with the use of digital payment systems. Primary data were collected through a structured questionnaire administered to a sample of 120 consumers, selected using a convenience sampling technique. The respondents comprised individuals aged 18 years and above who regularly use online payment methods such as mobile wallets, UPI-based systems, debit or credit cards, and internet banking, ensuring the relevance of responses to the research objectives.

The survey instrument was designed to capture key behavioural dimensions related to digital payment adoption, including frequency of use, perceived convenience, trust and security concerns, changes in spending behaviour, impulse buying tendencies, and overall satisfaction with online payment systems. The questionnaire included closed-ended and Likert-scale statements to assess respondents' level of agreement with statements reflecting behavioural shifts and attitudes towards digital payments. Prior to data collection, the questionnaire was reviewed for clarity and content validity to ensure consistency with established concepts in consumer behaviour and digital finance literature.

Data collection was conducted through online platforms, enabling efficient distribution, respondent anonymity, and broader geographic reach. The collected data were analysed using descriptive statistical techniques such as frequencies, percentages, and mean values to identify dominant behavioural trends. Graphical representations, including pie charts and bar charts, were used to visually present key findings related to adoption patterns and behavioural impacts. This primary research methodology provides an empirically grounded basis for understanding how the adoption of online payment systems influences contemporary consumer behaviour.

Results and Discussion

Table 1: Demographic Profile of Respondents (n = 120)

Demographic Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	66	55.0
	Female	54	45.0
Age Group	18–25 years	38	31.7
	26–35 years	46	38.3
	36–45 years	24	20.0
	Above 45 years	12	10.0
Education	Undergraduate	42	35.0
	Postgraduate	58	48.3
	Others	20	16.7
Monthly Income	Below ₹25,000	34	28.3
	₹25,000–₹50,000	47	39.2
	Above ₹50,000	39	32.5

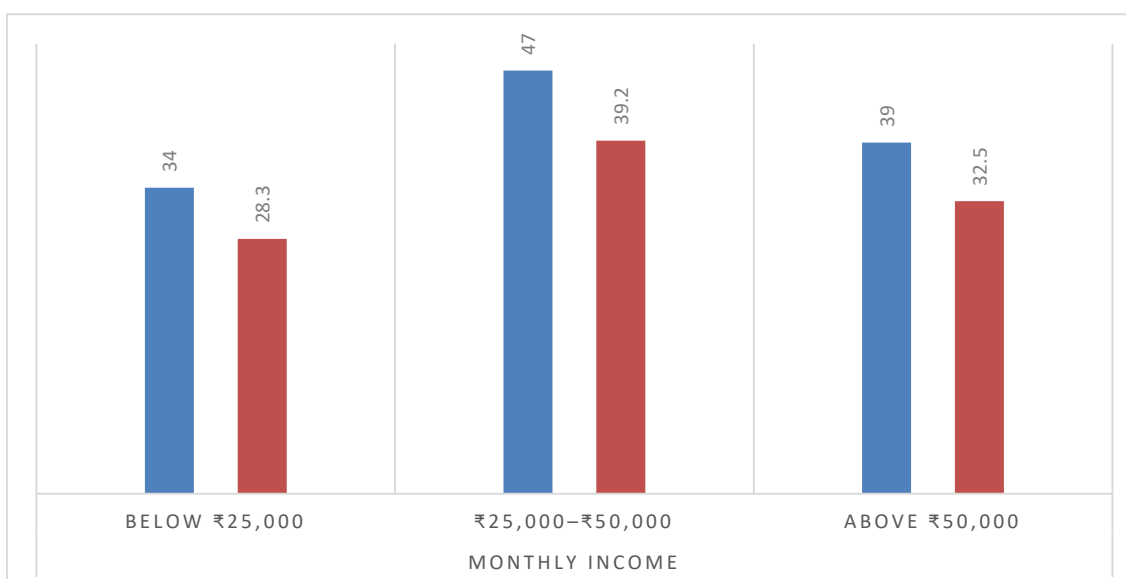
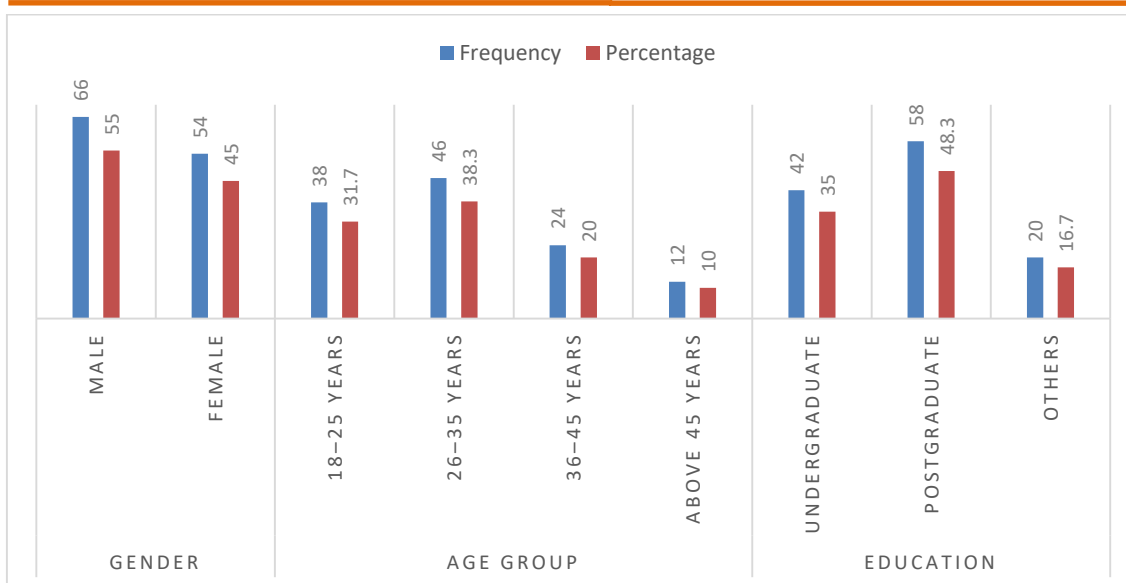


Table 1 presents the demographic profile of the 120 respondents, indicating a reasonably balanced and diverse sample. In terms of gender, males constitute 55 per cent of the respondents, while females account for 45 per cent, suggesting adequate gender representation. The age distribution shows that the largest group falls within 26–35 years (38.3 per cent), followed by 18–25 years (31.7 per cent), indicating that a substantial proportion of respondents belong to the young and economically active population. Respondents aged 36–45 years and above 45 years represent 20 per cent and 10 per cent respectively, providing perspectives from more experienced age groups. With regard to education, nearly half of the respondents are postgraduates (48.3 per cent), while 35 per cent are undergraduates, reflecting a relatively well-educated sample. Income levels are also fairly distributed, with 39.2 per cent earning between ₹25,000 and ₹50,000, allowing meaningful analysis of stakeholder perceptions across different economic segments.

Table 2: Correlation Analysis between Online Payment Adoption and Consumer Behaviour Variables

Variables	Payment Frequency	Perceived Convenience	Spending Behaviour	Trust
Payment Frequency	1.000	0.642**	0.518**	0.467**
Perceived Convenience	0.642**	1.000	0.553**	0.601**
Spending Behaviour	0.518**	0.553**	1.000	0.412**
Trust	0.467**	0.601**	0.412**	1.000

Note: Correlation significant at 0.01 level (2-tailed)

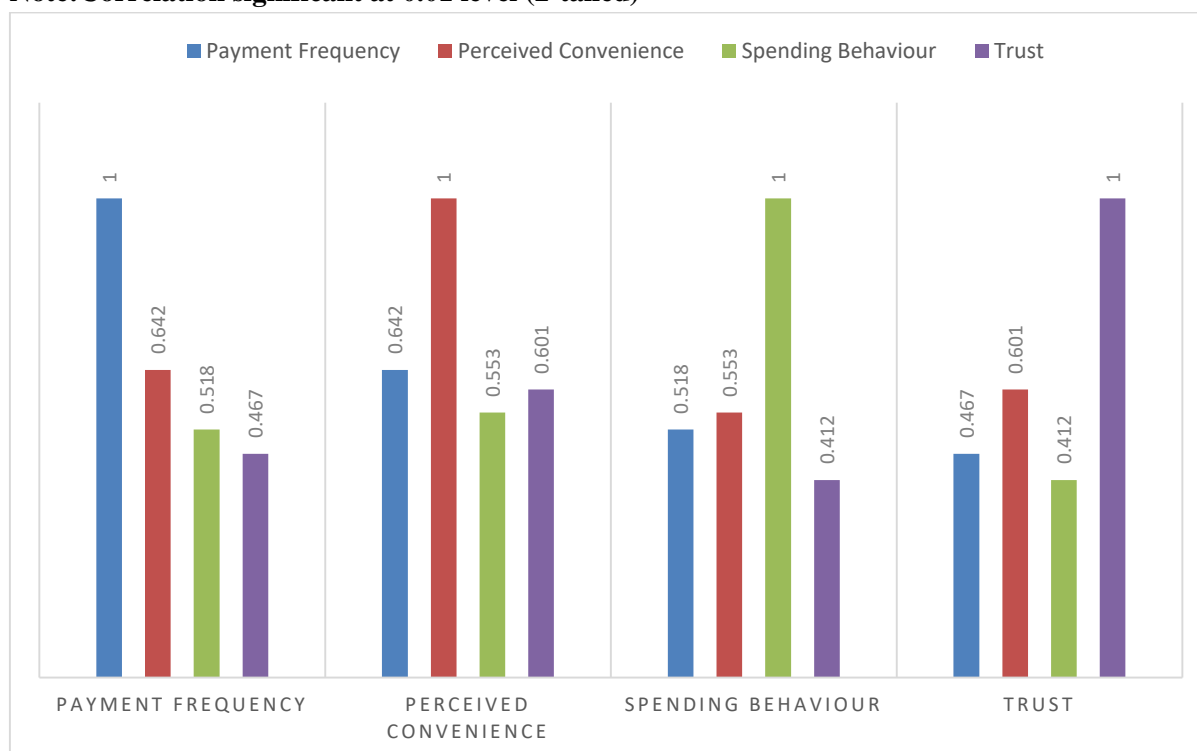


Table 2 presents the correlation analysis between online payment adoption, measured through payment frequency, and key consumer behaviour variables. The results indicate strong and statistically significant positive relationships among all variables at the 0.01 level. Payment frequency shows a high correlation with perceived convenience ($r = 0.642$), suggesting that users who find online payments easy and convenient tend to use them more frequently. It is also moderately correlated with spending behaviour ($r = 0.518$) and trust ($r = 0.467$), implying that greater trust and higher spending tendencies encourage repeated usage. Perceived convenience is strongly related to trust ($r = 0.601$), indicating that secure and user-friendly systems enhance consumer confidence. Additionally, spending behaviour is positively associated with trust ($r = 0.412$), showing that trust plays a role in influencing how much consumers are willing to spend through digital platforms.

Table 3: One-Way ANOVA – Impact of Online Payment Frequency on Spending Behaviour

Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F-value	Sig.
Between Groups	42.68	3	14.23	6.87	0.001
Within Groups	240.12	116	2.07		
Total	282.80	119			

Table 3 presents the results of a one-way ANOVA examining whether spending behaviour differs significantly across different levels of online payment frequency. The between-groups sum of squares (42.68) reflects the variation in spending behaviour attributable to differences in payment frequency categories, while the within-groups sum of squares (240.12) represents variability within each group. The calculated F-value of 6.87 indicates a substantial ratio of between-group variance to within-group variance. The significance value ($p = 0.001$) is well below the conventional threshold of 0.05, demonstrating that the differences in spending behaviour across the payment frequency groups are statistically significant. This implies that consumers who use online payment systems more frequently exhibit significantly different spending patterns compared to those who use them less often. The findings suggest that increased engagement with digital payment platforms is associated with changes in consumer spending behaviour, thereby reinforcing the role of digital payment adoption in shaping purchasing decisions.

The discussion indicates that the behavioural impact of online payments is shaped not only by payment mode but also by interface design and user engagement. The results further suggest that online payment adoption contributes to long-term behavioural changes through habit formation. Forced or initial adoption, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic, has led to sustained usage even after external constraints were removed. Consumers who adopted digital payments during this period show increased reliance on specific platforms, higher platform loyalty, and preference for digital channels in future purchases. This reinforces the idea that online payments influence consumer behaviour beyond immediate transactional contexts, reshaping consumption routines and preferences.

The results and discussion indicate that online payment systems significantly shape consumer behaviour by reducing transaction effort, altering cost perception, and influencing impulse control. While these systems enhance convenience and purchasing efficiency, they also raise concerns regarding overspending and financial self-regulation. The secondary evidence underscores the importance of balancing convenience-driven design with transparency and consumer protection mechanisms. These findings contribute to a nuanced understanding of consumer behaviour in the era of digital payments and provide important implications for businesses, platform designers, and policymakers.

Findings

The findings of this study reveal that online payment adoption is strongly influenced by demographic and behavioural characteristics of consumers. The demographic analysis showed that a majority of respondents belonged to the economically active age group of 18–35 years and possessed relatively high educational qualifications, particularly at the postgraduate level. This suggests that younger and more educated individuals are more inclined to engage with digital payment platforms, likely due to their greater exposure to technology and higher digital literacy. The income distribution further indicated that a substantial proportion of respondents fell within the middle-income group, implying that online payment systems are widely accepted among consumers who have regular financial transactions and purchasing power. The balanced gender representation also strengthens the generalisability of the findings, indicating that digital payment adoption is not confined to a single gender group but is broadly embraced across different social segments.

The correlation analysis provided clear evidence of strong positive relationships between online payment frequency, perceived convenience, spending behaviour, and trust. Perceived convenience emerged as a particularly influential factor, showing high correlation with both payment frequency and trust. This highlights that consumers are more likely to adopt and repeatedly use online payment systems when they find them easy, quick, and accessible. Trust was also significantly associated with both spending behaviour and payment frequency, indicating that security and reliability play a central role in

encouraging consumers to conduct more transactions digitally. The results confirm that behavioural factors are interdependent, where convenience builds trust, and trust, in turn, promotes increased usage and spending through online platforms.

The ANOVA results further strengthened these conclusions by demonstrating that spending behaviour differs significantly across levels of online payment frequency. Consumers who use online payment systems more frequently exhibit higher and distinct spending patterns compared to those who use them less often. This finding suggests that digital payment adoption does not merely change how consumers pay, but also influences how much and how often they spend. The study establishes that online payment systems, supported by convenience and trust, have a measurable impact on consumer purchasing behaviour, reinforcing their importance in modern digital commerce.

Conclusion

The findings of this empirical study demonstrate that online payment systems exert a significant influence on consumer behaviour in contemporary digital markets. Analysis of primary survey data indicates widespread adoption of digital payment methods, driven largely by perceived convenience, speed, and ease of use. The results suggest that reduced transaction friction alters consumers' spending behaviour by facilitating more frequent transactions and shaping everyday purchasing practices within digital marketplaces.

The study further reveals that the adoption of online payment systems is associated with noticeable changes in spending behaviour, including increased or moderately increased expenditure for a substantial proportion of respondents. While digital payments enhance transactional efficiency and user experience, the findings also indicate varying levels of consumer awareness and spending control. Trust in payment platforms emerges as a critical moderating factor, influencing both usage frequency and consumer confidence. Although overall trust levels are relatively high, the presence of moderate scepticism highlights ongoing concerns related to security and data protection.

This study contributes to consumer behaviour and digital finance literature by providing empirical, consumer-centred insights into the behavioural implications of online payment adoption. The findings emphasise the need for digital payment systems that balance convenience with transparency, security, and effective expenditure-monitoring mechanisms. As digital payments become increasingly embedded in everyday consumption, understanding their behavioural impact is essential for businesses, platform developers, and policymakers aiming to promote responsible and sustainable digital payment ecosystems.

Future Work

- Further studies can expand the sample size and include respondents from different regions and socio-economic backgrounds to improve the generalisability of findings on online payment adoption.
- Longitudinal research may be conducted to examine how consumer trust, spending behaviour, and usage patterns evolve over time with continued exposure to digital payment platforms.
- Future research can incorporate additional variables such as perceived risk, data privacy concerns, and technological literacy to gain deeper insight into behavioural drivers of digital payment usage.
- Comparative studies between different online payment systems and traditional payment methods can be undertaken to evaluate their relative efficiency, user satisfaction, and economic impact.

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