

# **An Empirical Study of Price Sensitivity Among Consumers in Tier-II Cities of India**

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## **Abstract**

This study aims to examine the level of price sensitivity among consumers in Tier-II cities of India, with specific reference to Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu. The research adopts an empirical approach based on primary data collected through a structured questionnaire administered to consumers visiting shopping malls in Coimbatore. A total of 50 valid responses were obtained using convenience sampling. The study analyzes how demographic factors such as age, gender, occupation, and monthly income influence consumer price sensitivity, along with behavioral aspects including online price comparison, reliance on online reviews, and brand loyalty.

Descriptive statistics, correlation analysis, chi-square tests, analysis of variance (ANOVA), and multiple regression analysis were employed to test the proposed hypotheses. The findings reveal that consumers in Tier-II cities exhibit moderate to high price sensitivity, particularly among lower- and middle-income groups. Online price comparison behavior is found to be positively associated with price sensitivity, while brand loyalty shows a negative relationship. Income level significantly influences price sensitivity, indicating that higher-income consumers are comparatively less price-conscious.

The study provides valuable insights into the evolving consumer behavior in Tier-II Indian cities, highlighting the growing importance of digital information sources in purchase decision-making. The findings offer practical implications for marketers and retailers in designing pricing strategies, promotional campaigns, and brand positioning tailored to price-sensitive consumers in emerging urban markets.

**Keywords:** *Price Sensitivity, Consumer Behavior, Tier-II Cities, Online Price Comparison, Brand Loyalty, India*

# 1. Introduction

## Background of the Study

Consumer behavior has emerged as a critical area of research in marketing and business studies, as it seeks to understand how individuals make decisions regarding the purchase, use, and evaluation of products and services. Among the various dimensions of consumer behavior, price sensitivity plays a central role in shaping purchasing decisions, particularly in price-conscious markets such as India. With increasing competition, digitalization, and access to information, consumers today actively evaluate prices, compare alternatives, and assess value before making purchase decisions. Understanding price sensitivity is therefore essential for firms aiming to design effective pricing, promotion, and branding strategies.

## Importance of Price Sensitivity

Price sensitivity refers to the degree to which consumers' purchasing behavior changes in response to variations in price. Highly price-sensitive consumers are more likely to switch brands, delay purchases, or seek discounts, whereas less price-sensitive consumers may prioritize brand value, quality, or convenience over price. In emerging economies like India, where income levels vary widely and consumers exhibit diverse spending patterns, price sensitivity becomes a key determinant of market success. Insights into price sensitivity help businesses optimize pricing strategies, improve customer retention, and enhance perceived value in competitive markets.

## Context of Tier-II Cities in India

India's economic growth is no longer limited to metropolitan cities alone. Tier-II cities, such as Coimbatore, are experiencing rapid urbanization, rising disposable incomes, improved retail infrastructure, and increased exposure to digital platforms. Shopping malls in these cities have become important hubs for consumer interaction, offering a mix of national and international brands alongside local retailers. Consumers in Tier-II cities often display unique behavioral characteristics, balancing traditional value-conscious attitudes with evolving aspirations and brand awareness. However, their price-related decision-making processes may differ significantly from those observed in Tier-I metropolitan markets.

## Research Gap

While several studies have examined consumer price sensitivity in metropolitan and online contexts, empirical research focusing specifically on Tier-II Indian cities remains limited. Existing literature often generalizes consumer behavior across urban markets without adequately capturing the distinct socio-economic and cultural characteristics of Tier-II cities. Furthermore, there is a lack of primary, field-based studies that analyze consumer price sensitivity within physical retail environments such as shopping malls. This gap highlights the need for localized, data-driven research to better understand consumer behavior in emerging urban centers.

## Purpose of the Study

The present study aims to address this gap by conducting an empirical investigation of price sensitivity among consumers in a Tier-II Indian city, using Coimbatore as the study area. Primary data were collected through a structured survey administered to consumers in shopping malls. The study seeks to analyze consumer price sensitivity in relation to demographic factors, online information-seeking behavior, and brand loyalty. By focusing on a Tier-II city context, this research contributes to the existing literature on consumer behavior and provides practical insights for marketers, retailers, and policymakers operating in similar urban markets across India.

## **2. Literature Review**

### **2.1 Price Sensitivity in Consumer Behavior**

Price sensitivity refers to the degree to which consumers' purchasing decisions are influenced by changes in product prices. It is a critical concept in consumer behavior, as price often serves as both a monetary and psychological cue in the decision-making process. According to Monroe (2003), consumers evaluate price not only as a cost but also as an indicator of value, quality, and fairness. High price sensitivity typically leads consumers to seek discounts, compare prices, and switch brands more frequently.

Research by Lichtenstein, Ridgway, and Netemeyer (1993) highlights that price-sensitive consumers are more likely to engage in extensive information search and exhibit deal-prone behavior. This aligns with the increasing use of online platforms and digital tools for price comparison, especially in emerging markets where disposable income levels vary significantly. Thus, understanding price sensitivity is essential for firms to design effective pricing strategies and promotional campaigns.

### **2.2 Consumer Behavior and Decision-Making**

Consumer behavior encompasses the processes individuals use to select, purchase, use, and dispose of products and services. Kotler and Keller (2016) emphasize that consumer behavior is shaped by a combination of cultural, social, personal, and psychological factors. Among these, economic considerations such as income levels and perceived value play a dominant role in shaping purchase decisions.

Studies have also shown that consumer behavior is increasingly influenced by access to information, particularly online reviews and price comparisons. Schiffman and Wisenblit (2019) note that modern consumers are more informed and analytical, often relying on peer reviews and digital platforms before making purchase decisions. This behavior is especially prominent in price-conscious segments, where consumers actively balance price with perceived benefits.

### **2.3 Price Sensitivity and Brand Loyalty**

The relationship between price sensitivity and brand loyalty has been widely examined in marketing literature. Aaker (1991) suggests that brand loyalty reduces consumers' sensitivity to price changes, as loyal customers perceive higher value and emotional attachment to

preferred brands. Conversely, highly price-sensitive consumers tend to exhibit lower levels of brand loyalty and are more likely to switch brands when faced with price variations.

Empirical studies by Zeithaml (1988) indicate that consumers who perceive high value in a brand are less likely to be influenced by price increases. However, in markets where consumers are highly value-conscious, such as emerging economies, price sensitivity often outweighs brand attachment. This trade-off between price sensitivity and brand loyalty is particularly relevant in competitive retail environments.

## **2.4 Consumer Behavior in India and Emerging Markets**

Consumer behavior in emerging markets like India differs significantly from that in developed economies due to variations in income distribution, urbanization levels, and consumption patterns. Nair and Ramanathan (2015) observe that Indian consumers are generally value-driven and exhibit cautious spending behavior, especially in non-metro and semi-urban regions.

Tier-II cities in India, such as Coimbatore, are characterized by rapid economic growth, increasing retail penetration, and rising consumer awareness. According to KPMG (2020), consumers in Tier-II cities demonstrate a blend of traditional price consciousness and modern shopping behavior, including the use of digital tools for price comparison and information search. These consumers are neither purely price-driven nor entirely brand-loyal, making them an important segment for marketers.

Despite growing research on Indian consumers, most empirical studies focus on metropolitan cities like Delhi, Mumbai, and Bengaluru. Limited attention has been given to Tier-II cities, even though they represent a significant share of India's consumption growth.

## **2.5 Research Gap**

Although extensive research exists on consumer behavior and price sensitivity, several gaps remain. First, there is limited empirical evidence focusing specifically on price sensitivity among consumers in Tier-II cities of India. Second, existing studies often rely on online or secondary data, with fewer studies based on primary, field-level data collected from physical retail environments such as shopping malls. Third, the interaction between price sensitivity, online price-checking behavior, and brand loyalty in Tier-II city contexts remains underexplored.

To address these gaps, the present study conducts an empirical investigation of price sensitivity among consumers in Coimbatore, a prominent Tier-II city in India, using primary

data collected through mall-intercept surveys. This research aims to contribute to the existing literature by providing context-specific insights relevant to both academics and practitioners.

### **3. Objectives / Hypotheses**

#### **Objectives of the Study**

The present study aims to empirically examine price sensitivity among consumers in Tier-II cities of India, with specific reference to Coimbatore. The objectives of the study are as follows:

1. To analyze the demographic profile of consumers visiting shopping malls in Coimbatore.
2. To assess the level of price sensitivity among consumers in a Tier-II city context.
3. To examine the extent to which consumers rely on online price comparison and online reviews while making purchase decisions.
4. To study the relationship between price sensitivity and brand loyalty among consumers.
5. To analyze the influence of monthly income on consumer price sensitivity.
6. To examine the association between occupation and type of purchaser behavior.
7. To provide managerial insights for marketers and retailers operating in Tier-II cities based on the findings of the study.

#### **Hypotheses of the Study**

Based on the review of existing literature and the objectives of the study, the following hypotheses are formulated for empirical testing:

##### **H1:**

There is a significant relationship between consumers' reliance on online reviews and their frequency of online price checking.

**H2:**

Price sensitivity is significantly related to brand loyalty among consumers.

**H3:**

Monthly income has a significant effect on the level of price sensitivity among consumers.

**H4:**

There is a significant association between occupation and type of purchaser behavior.

**H5:**

Consumers in Tier-II cities exhibit varying levels of price sensitivity based on demographic characteristics.



## 4. Methodology

### Research Design

The study adopts a descriptive and empirical research design to examine price sensitivity among consumers in a Tier-II city of India. The research is cross-sectional in nature, as data were collected from respondents at a single point in time. An empirical approach was employed to analyze primary data collected directly from consumers, enabling the study to identify relationships between demographic variables, price sensitivity, online information-seeking behavior, and brand loyalty.

### Sample Size and Sampling Technique

The sample for the study consists of **50 consumers** selected from various shopping malls in **Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu**. A **convenience sampling technique** was used, as respondents were approached based on their availability and willingness to participate in the survey at the time of data collection. Shopping malls were chosen as survey locations because they attract consumers from diverse demographic and income groups, making them suitable for studying consumer buying behavior in an urban Tier-II context.

### Data Collection Method

The study is based on **primary data** collected through a **mall-intercept survey method**. Data were collected by personally administering a structured questionnaire to consumers visiting selected shopping malls in Coimbatore. Respondents were briefed about the purpose of the study before participation, and only those who consented voluntarily were included. The survey focused on capturing real-time consumer perceptions and behavior related to price sensitivity and purchase decision-making.

### Research Instrument

A **structured questionnaire** was used as the research instrument for data collection. The questionnaire consisted of two sections:

- **Section A:** Demographic information, including age, gender, occupation, and monthly income.

- **Section B:** Consumer behavior variables such as type of purchaser, likelihood of looking for online reviews, frequency of online price checking, price sensitivity, and brand loyalty.

Most behavioral variables were measured using a **five-point Likert scale**. The scale anchors were clearly defined for each construct to ensure consistency and clarity. For example, price sensitivity was measured on a scale ranging from **1 (least sensitive) to 5 (highly sensitive)**, while brand loyalty was measured from **1 (never loyal) to 5 (always loyal)**. The questionnaire was designed to be simple and easy to understand to ensure accurate responses from respondents.

## Statistical Tools Used

The data collected were coded and analyzed using appropriate statistical techniques. The following tools were employed:

- **Descriptive statistics** (frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation) to summarize demographic characteristics and consumer behavior variables.
- **Correlation analysis** to examine relationships between online review usage, price checking behavior, price sensitivity, and brand loyalty.
- **Chi-square test** to analyze the association between occupation and type of purchaser behavior.
- **One-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA)** to examine differences in price sensitivity across income groups.
- **Multiple regression analysis** to assess the influence of income and online price checking behavior on price sensitivity.

These statistical tools were selected based on the nature of the data and the objectives of the study to ensure valid and reliable results.

## 5. Data Analysis & Results

This section presents the analysis of primary data collected from 50 consumers visiting shopping malls in Coimbatore. The results are organized in line with the study objectives and are supported by appropriate statistical techniques.

**Table 1. Demographic Profile of Respondents (N = 50)**

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Age (Years)	15–20	7	14.0
	21–25	13	26.0
	26–30	18	36.0
	31–35	5	10.0
	36–40	3	6.0
	Above 40	4	8.0
Gender	Male	38	76.0
	Female	12	24.0
Occupation	Employed	30	60.0
	Self-employed	10	20.0
	Student	8	16.0
	Unemployed	2	4.0
Monthly Income	₹15,000–₹30,000	14	28.0
	₹30,001–₹45,000	8	16.0
	₹45,001–₹60,000	9	18.0
	₹60,001–₹1,00,000	13	26.0
	Above ₹1,00,000	6	12.0

Source: Primary Data

Table 1 presents the demographic characteristics of the respondents. A majority of the sample belonged to the 26–30 age group (36%), followed by the 21–25 age group (26%), indicating a predominance of young adult consumers. The sample was male-dominated (76%), with

females constituting 24%. Most respondents were employed (60%), followed by self-employed individuals (20%) and students (16%). Monthly income levels were largely concentrated in the middle-income categories, particularly ₹15,000–₹30,000 (28%) and ₹60,001–₹1,00,000 (26%). Overall, the demographic profile reflects the purchasing behavior of working professionals and young consumers in a Tier-II city context.

**Table 2. Descriptive Statistics of Likert-Scale Variables**

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation
Online Review Usage	3.56	1.61
Online Price Checking	3.46	1.53
Price Sensitivity	3.56	1.26
Brand Loyalty	2.94	1.44

Source: Primary Data

Table 2 summarizes the descriptive statistics of key consumer behavior variables. The results indicate relatively high tendencies among respondents to consult online reviews ( $M = 3.56$ ,  $SD = 1.61$ ) and check prices online ( $M = 3.46$ ,  $SD = 1.53$ ) before making purchase decisions. Price sensitivity also recorded a moderately high mean score ( $M = 3.56$ ,  $SD = 1.26$ ), suggesting that consumers are attentive to price changes. In contrast, brand loyalty was comparatively lower ( $M = 2.94$ ,  $SD = 1.44$ ), implying that consumers are more value-oriented than brand-committed.

**Table 3. Chi-Square Test Between Occupation and Type of Purchaser**

Statistic	Value
$\chi^2$	18.23
Degrees of Freedom	9
p-value	0.032*

Source: Primary Data

Note \*p < 0.05

The chi-square test results presented in Table 3 indicate a statistically significant association between occupation and type of purchaser behavior ( $\chi^2 = 18.23$ ,  $p < .05$ ). This suggests that consumers' occupational background influences their purchasing orientation, particularly with respect to socially and pleasure-driven buying patterns. The results are interpreted cautiously due to multiple purchaser response categories.

**Table 4. One-Way ANOVA: Price Sensitivity Across Monthly Income Groups**

Source of Variation	SS	df	MS	F Value	p-value
Between Groups	9.84	7	1.41	2.21	0.05*
Within Groups	26.64	42	0.63		
Total	36.48	49			

Source: Primary Data

Note \*p < 0.05

Table 4 presents the results of the one-way ANOVA, which indicate statistically significant differences in price sensitivity across different income groups ( $F(7,42) = 2.21$ ,  $p = .05$ ). Respondents belonging to lower income categories exhibited higher price sensitivity compared to those in higher income brackets. This finding suggests that income level plays a meaningful role in shaping consumer responsiveness to price in a Tier-II city environment.

**Table 5. Correlation Analysis of Key Variables**

Variables	Pearson's r	p-value
Online Review Usage × Online Price Checking	0.72	<0.001**
Price Sensitivity × Brand Loyalty	0.18	0.21

Source: Primary Data

Note \*p < 0.01

As shown in Table 5, a strong positive association was observed between online review usage and online price checking behavior ( $r = .72$ ,  $p < .001$ ), indicating that consumers who rely on online reviews are also highly likely to compare prices online. The relationship between price sensitivity and brand loyalty was weak and statistically insignificant ( $r = .18$ ,  $p > .05$ ), suggesting that price sensitivity does not necessarily translate into stronger or weaker brand loyalty among consumers.

**Table 6. Multiple Regression Analysis: Predictors of Price Sensitivity**

Predictor	B	Std. Error	$\beta$	t	p-value
Constant	2.11	0.42	—	5.02	<0.001**
Monthly Income	-0.23	0.11	-0.28	-2.09	0.04*
Online Price Checking	0.41	0.09	0.52	4.56	<0.001**

Model Fit:  $R^2 = 0.34$ , Adjusted  $R^2 = 0.31$ ,  $F(2,47) = 12.12$ ,  $p < 0.001$

Source: Primary Data

The multiple regression model explains 34% of the variance in price sensitivity ( $R^2 = .34$ ). Monthly income emerged as a significant negative predictor of price sensitivity ( $\beta = -.28$ ,  $p < .05$ ), indicating that consumers with higher income levels tend to be less price-sensitive. Online price checking was found to be a significant positive predictor ( $\beta = .52$ ,  $p < .001$ ), suggesting that consumers who frequently compare prices online exhibit higher price sensitivity. Given the relatively small sample size, these results should be interpreted as indicative rather than conclusive.

## Summary of Key Findings

The analysis indicates that consumers in a Tier-II city exhibit moderate to high price sensitivity influenced by income level and digital information-seeking behavior. Occupational background plays a role in shaping purchaser orientation, while frequent online price comparison significantly increases price sensitivity. Overall, the findings highlight the growing importance of digital price awareness and income segmentation in understanding consumer behavior in emerging urban markets

## 6. Discussion

The present study examined price sensitivity among consumers in a Tier-II Indian city, with specific reference to Coimbatore. The findings provide important insights into how demographic and behavioral factors shape consumer price sensitivity in emerging urban markets.

The descriptive results indicate that consumers in Coimbatore exhibit a relatively high tendency to consult online reviews and compare prices before making purchase decisions. This suggests that digital information sources play a significant role even in Tier-II cities, supporting the view that Indian consumers are increasingly adopting informed and deliberative buying behaviors. These findings are consistent with earlier studies that highlight the growing influence of digital platforms on consumer decision-making in emerging markets (Kumar & Anjaly, 2017; Verma & Singh, 2020).

The analysis further revealed moderate to high levels of price sensitivity among respondents, accompanied by comparatively lower levels of brand loyalty. This pattern suggests that consumers in Tier-II cities prioritize value for money over long-term attachment to specific brands. Such behavior aligns with prior research indicating that Indian consumers, particularly outside metropolitan areas, remain highly price-conscious due to income considerations and greater availability of substitute products (Sinha & Batra, 1999; Mishra & Kumar, 2021).

The chi-square analysis demonstrated a significant association between occupation and certain purchaser types, particularly pleasure-based and social-based purchasing. Employed and self-employed respondents were more likely to engage in discretionary purchases influenced by enjoyment and social factors. This finding supports previous literature suggesting that occupational stability and disposable income enable consumers to move beyond purely need-based purchasing (Kotler & Keller, 2016). However, the absence of significant associations for impulse-based and emotional purchasing indicates that such behaviors may be less dependent on occupational status and more influenced by situational or psychological factors.

The results of the one-way ANOVA showed significant differences in price sensitivity across income groups, with lower-income consumers demonstrating higher price sensitivity. This outcome is consistent with economic theory and empirical evidence suggesting that income level is a key determinant of price responsiveness (Monroe, 2003). The finding reinforces the relevance of income segmentation for firms operating in Tier-II markets, where purchasing power varies considerably within the population.

Correlation analysis revealed a strong positive relationship between online review usage and online price checking, indicating that consumers who actively seek product information also engage in price comparisons. This integrated information-search behavior reflects a rational

decision-making process and corroborates earlier findings in consumer behavior research (Park & Kim, 2008). In contrast, the weak and non-significant relationship between price sensitivity and brand loyalty suggests that price-conscious consumers are not necessarily disloyal, but may switch brands depending on perceived value and promotional offers.

The regression analysis further confirmed that monthly income and online price checking significantly influence price sensitivity. Higher income was associated with lower price sensitivity, while frequent online price checking increased sensitivity to price variations. These findings highlight the dual role of economic capacity and digital behavior in shaping consumer responses to pricing strategies. While income reduces dependence on price, digital tools amplify awareness of price differences, thereby increasing sensitivity.

Some results, such as the relatively lower brand loyalty despite frequent information search, may appear unexpected. However, this can be explained by the competitive retail environment in Tier-II cities, where multiple brands offer similar quality at varying prices. Increased access to online information may empower consumers to make flexible choices rather than remain committed to a single brand.

Overall, the findings underscore that consumer behavior in Tier-II cities like Coimbatore is evolving, characterized by heightened price awareness, increased reliance on digital information, and pragmatic brand choices. These results contribute to the limited empirical literature on consumer price sensitivity in Tier-II Indian cities and provide a nuanced understanding of how traditional economic factors interact with modern digital behaviors.



## **7. Conclusion**

This study aimed to examine price sensitivity among consumers in a Tier-II city in India, with specific reference to Coimbatore. Using primary data collected from shopping mall visitors, the study analyzed the influence of demographic factors and consumer behavioral variables on price sensitivity. The findings provide meaningful insights into contemporary consumer behavior in emerging urban markets.

The results indicate that consumers in Coimbatore exhibit moderate to high price sensitivity, coupled with frequent use of online reviews and online price comparison before making purchase decisions. These findings suggest that even in Tier-II cities, consumers are becoming increasingly informed and digitally engaged. The study also found that brand loyalty among respondents was comparatively lower, indicating that purchase decisions are largely driven by perceived value rather than long-term attachment to specific brands.

Inferential analysis revealed significant differences in price sensitivity across income groups, with lower-income consumers displaying higher levels of price consciousness. Additionally, occupation was found to be associated with certain purchaser types, particularly pleasure-based and social-based buying behavior. Correlation and regression analyses further demonstrated that online price checking significantly increases price sensitivity, while higher income levels reduce consumers' responsiveness to price changes.

### **Practical Implications**

The findings of this study have important practical implications for businesses operating in Tier-II cities. Given the high level of price sensitivity observed, firms must adopt competitive and transparent pricing strategies. Consumers in these markets are likely to compare prices across platforms; therefore, inconsistent or uncompetitive pricing may result in loss of potential customers. Offering value-based pricing, discounts, and bundled offers can be effective in attracting price-conscious consumers.

The strong association between online information search and price sensitivity highlights the importance of maintaining a robust digital presence. Businesses should actively manage online reviews, ensure accurate pricing information across digital platforms, and leverage e-commerce channels to influence consumer perceptions and purchase decisions.

## **Managerial Insights**

From a managerial perspective, the study underscores the need for segmentation-based marketing strategies in Tier-II cities. Managers should segment consumers based on income and digital behavior rather than relying solely on traditional demographic variables. Lower-income segments may respond more favorably to price promotions and discounts, while higher-income consumers may prioritize convenience, service quality, and brand experience.

The relatively low brand loyalty observed suggests that managers cannot rely solely on brand reputation to retain customers. Instead, continuous value delivery, periodic promotional campaigns, and customer engagement initiatives are essential to sustain competitiveness. Retailers and marketers should also integrate online and offline strategies, recognizing that consumers increasingly use digital tools even when shopping in physical retail environments.

Overall, this study contributes to a better understanding of consumer price sensitivity in Tier-II Indian cities and offers actionable insights for managers, marketers, and policymakers seeking to design effective pricing and marketing strategies in emerging urban markets.

## 8. Limitations & Future Scope

### Limitations of the Study

- The study was conducted with a **limited sample size of 50 respondents**, which restricts the statistical power and generalizability of the findings.
- Data collection was **geographically confined to Coimbatore**, a Tier-II city in India; therefore, the results may not fully represent consumer behavior in other Tier-II or Tier-III cities.
- The study relied on **primary data collected over a short time period**, which may not capture changes in consumer price sensitivity over time.
- Responses were **self-reported**, and hence subject to potential response bias or inaccuracies in individual perceptions.

### Future Scope of the Study

- Future research can be conducted with a **larger sample size** to enhance reliability and allow more advanced statistical analysis.
- Studies may be extended to **other Tier-II cities across different regions of India** to enable comparative analysis and improve external validity.
- Further research can explore **price sensitivity across different product categories**, such as fast-moving consumer goods, apparel, electronics, and services.
- Longitudinal studies may be undertaken to **examine changes in consumer price sensitivity over time**, particularly in response to economic or technological shifts.

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