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From Online Research to Offline Purchases: Examining the Impact of ROPO Behaviour on Customer Satisfaction and Loyalty in the Textile Sector

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Abstract

The rapid development of digital technology has changed customer purchasing habits and has led to the phenomenon of Research Online, Purchase Offline (ROPO). In the textile industry, people typically look online before buying in physical stores because it is difficult to assess product quality, fabric, fit, and appearance through online platforms alone. The study investigates the impact of ROPO behavior on post-purchase satisfaction and customer loyalty of textile consumers. The study used a quantitative methodology and collected data from 105 respondents through a structured questionnaire. To analyse the data, the study used independent-samples t-tests, regression analysis, correlation analysis, and descriptive statistics. The results show that before visiting physical stores, customers usually rely on online resources, including social media, price comparison websites, e-commerce platforms, and customer reviews. The findings show a favourable correlation between consumer loyalty, post-purchase satisfaction, and ROPO behavior. While ROPO behaviour supports better-informed purchasing decisions and higher satisfaction, post-purchase satisfaction emerged as the strongest predictor of consumer loyalty. The study also found significant gender differences in ROPO behaviour, with male consumers showing a greater tendency to research online before purchasing textile products offline. The results emphasise the importance of a smooth link between online and physical retail channels. Accurate product information, transparent pricing, authentic customer reviews, and effective digital engagement can enhance consumers' confidence and satisfaction, ultimately fostering stronger customer loyalty. In addition to offering useful information for merchants looking to improve customer interactions in an increasingly digital economy, the study advances knowledge of omnichannel consumer behavior in the textile industry.

Keywords: ROPO behaviour, textile retailing, post-purchase satisfaction, customer loyalty, omnichannel marketing, consumer behaviour.

Introduction

The quick digitization of retail has completely changed how consumers make decisions. Contemporary consumers increasingly rely on online platforms to gather product information, compare alternatives, evaluate reviews, and assess prices before deciding to buy. However, despite e-commerce growth, many consumers still complete purchases in physical stores, particularly in product categories where tactile evaluation and direct inspection matter. This behaviour, commonly known as Research Online, Purchase Offline (ROPO), represents a significant feature of modern omnichannel retailing (Verhoef, Kannan, & Inman, 2015).

The textile and apparel sector is especially susceptible to ROPO behaviour because consumers often seek sensory experiences such as touching fabrics, evaluating colours, assessing fit, and examining product quality before finalizing purchases. While online channels provide extensive information, consumers frequently prefer physical stores for the final transaction to reduce perceived risk and increase purchase confidence (Flavian, Gurrea, & Orus, 2020).

Vol 1, Issue 9, December 2025, Page: 92-98 ISSN: 3107-5037

Consequently, retailers must create seamless integration between digital and physical channels to enhance customer experiences.

The emergence of ROPO behaviour has altered traditional customer journeys and intensified the importance of understanding post-purchase outcomes. Lemon and Verhoef (2016) state that since the customer experience spans several touchpoints before to, during, and following a transaction, channel integration is a crucial factor in determining consumer happiness. Mishra et al. (2021) states online information serves as a foundation for expectation formation, while offline experiences influence the confirmation or disconfirmation of those expectations. Expectation Confirmation Theory (Oliver, 1980), which contends that satisfaction arises when actual product performance meets or surpasses pre-purchase expectations, aligns closely with this process.

Customer loyalty has long been known to be significantly influenced by customer satisfaction. Satisfied customers are more likely to form long-term relationships with brands, share positive word-of-mouth, and make repeat purchases (Oliver, 1999). In the textile sector, where product differentiation is often limited and competition is intense, customer loyalty becomes a valuable strategic asset (Jo and Bang ,2024). The quality of information obtained during online research can significantly influence satisfaction levels by shaping expectations regarding product attributes, quality, and value.

Existing studies show that consumers increasingly rely on online reviews, social media recommendations, and e-commerce platforms during their information search process (Park & Kim, 2003; Fedorko et al., 2019). Research has also shown that ROPO behaviour is prevalent among younger, digitally connected consumers (Szymański & Stanisławski, 2018). However, while prior studies have explored determinants of ROPO behaviour and channel-switching patterns, they have paid limited attention to its consequences for post-purchase satisfaction and customer loyalty in the textile retail context.

The significance of this issue has increased in the post-pandemic era, where consumers have become more digitally empowered and expect consistency across online and offline channels. Retailers must understand whether online research enhances purchase confidence and satisfaction or creates expectations that are difficult to fulfil during offline interactions. Such understanding is essential for designing effective omnichannel strategies that foster stronger customer relationships.

Thus, the current study investigates how ROPO behavior affects consumer loyalty and happiness in the textile industry. It specifically looks on how consumers' post-purchase assessments and ensuing loyalty to textile brands and merchants are influenced by their online research activities. In addition to offering useful insights for textile merchants seeking to improve customer experience and retention, the findings are expected to contribute to the literature on omnichannel retail.

Literature Review

The concept of ROPO emerged as consumers increasingly integrated digital technologies into their purchase journeys. Zbonkowski (2020) found that consumers frequently gather information online before purchasing products in physical stores, particularly for products involving higher perceived risk and financial commitment. The study emphasized that detailed online information significantly influences offline purchase decisions and highlighted the growing importance of multichannel retail strategies.

In the apparel and textile sector, Mroz-Gorgon and Szymanski (2018) reported that about one-third of consumers use online sources to learn about clothing products before visiting physical stores. Their findings revealed that internet-based information substantially influences purchase decisions, indicating the growing integration of digital and traditional retail channels. Similarly, Czajkowski and Szymanski (2017) identified strong evidence of ROPO behaviour among male

Vol 1, Issue 9, December 2025, Page: 92-98 ISSN: 3107-5037

consumers in the Polish clothing industry, demonstrating that online information significantly shapes offline purchasing decisions.

Research by Fedorko et al. (2019) examined online and offline purchasing channels among Slovak consumers and reported significant associations between consumer characteristics and channel preferences. The study emphasized that modern consumers do not perceive online and offline channels as separate entities but rather as complementary components of a unified shopping experience. Likewise, Dudek, Jaremen, and Michalska-Dudek (2018) found that ROPO behaviour has become an important driver of omnichannel distribution systems, particularly among consumers seeking to minimize uncertainty before purchase.

The relationship between online information and satisfaction has been extensively discussed by Zhang et al. (2024) in consumer behaviour literature. Park and Kim (2003) demonstrated that information quality, website usability, and security perceptions positively affect consumer satisfaction and commitment. Their findings suggest that accurate and reliable online information can create positive purchase experiences and strengthen customer relationships. Similarly, Hong (2015) argued that trust generated through online information significantly influences customer evaluations and subsequent behavioural intentions.

Expectation Confirmation Theory offers a helpful framework for comprehending the relationship between post-purchase satisfaction and ROPO behavior. Oliver (1980) asserts that buyers evaluate the performance of a product against their pre-purchase expectations. When expectations are met or surpassed, contentment arises; when performance is subpar, discontent arises. Online information shapes these expectations in a ROPO setting, so accurate information is crucial for favorable consumer outcomes.

One of the most significant effects of client pleasure is customer loyalty. According to Oliver (1999), loyalty is defined as a strong desire to continuously buy a favored good or service in the future. Empirical evidence shows that happy consumers are more likely to make repeat purchases, recommend brands to others, and resist rival products (Dick & Basu, 1994). The uniformity and integration of experiences across channels have a growing impact on loyalty in omnichannel environments (Verhoef et al., 2015).

Recent studies have further highlighted the role of trust and perceived risk in shaping omnichannel purchase behaviour. Tran (2020) found that perceived risk significantly influences online shopping behaviour, while Daud et al. (2011) demonstrated that online trust positively affects purchase intentions. These findings suggest that consumers often engage in ROPO behaviour to balance the informational benefits of online channels with the risk-reduction advantages of offline purchasing.

Research Gap

Previous studies, such as Khalid (2024), have extensively examined ROPO behaviour, online information search, and omnichannel purchasing patterns across various retail sectors. Previous studies have mostly concentrated on the factors that influence ROPO behavior and customer channel-switching choices. However, there is no empirical data on how ROPO behavior affects post-purchase results, especially consumer loyalty and satisfaction in the textile industry. Furthermore, studies investigating the interrelationship among ROPO behaviour, post-purchase satisfaction, and customer loyalty within a single framework remain scarce. Given the importance of tactile evaluation and product inspection in textile purchases, understanding how online research influences offline purchase experiences and subsequent loyalty becomes particularly relevant. In order to close this gap, the current study looks at how ROPO behavior affects textile consumers' loyalty and customer satisfaction.

Vol 1, Issue 9, December 2025, Page: 92-98 ISSN: 3107-5037

Objectives of the study

The current study intends to investigate how consumer happiness and loyalty in the textile industry are affected by Research Online Purchase Offline (ROPO) behavior. In particular, the research aims to:

1. To examine the influence of ROPO behaviour on post-purchase satisfaction among textile consumers.
2. To look at the connection between consumer loyalty and ROPO behavior in the textile industry.
3. To evaluate how client loyalty is affected by post-purchase satisfaction.
4. To determine the combined effect of ROPO behaviour and post-purchase satisfaction on customer loyalty.

Conceptual Framework and Hypotheses Development

Expectation Confirmation Theory (ECT) (Oliver, 1980), which holds that consumers form expectations before making a purchase and then compare actual product performance with those expectations, underpins this study. In a Research Online Purchase Offline (ROPO) environment, online research activities such as reviewing product specifications, comparing prices, reading customer reviews, and checking product availability contribute significantly to expectation formation. Customers are more likely to feel satisfied and become brand loyal when their offline purchasing experiences meet these expectations.

ROPO behavior has become a significant aspect of omnichannel consumer behavior, especially in the textile industry where consumers prefer to make final purchases in physical stores yet frequently look for information online. Online information reduces uncertainty and perceived risk while enabling consumers to make informed purchasing decisions. Consequently, consumers engaging in ROPO behaviour are expected to experience greater satisfaction with their purchases because they better understand product attributes before visiting the store.

Previous studies have shown that access to accurate, relevant online information positively influences consumer evaluations and purchase experiences (Park & Kim, 2003; Verhoef et al., 2015). Consumers who conduct online research are often more confident in their purchase decisions and may exhibit stronger commitment towards brands. Accordingly, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H1: ROPO behaviour significantly influences post-purchase satisfaction among textile consumers.

ROPO behaviour may also contribute directly to customer loyalty. Consumers who consistently obtain valuable information from online sources and successfully complete purchases offline are likely to develop favourable attitudes towards the retailer or brand. Positive omnichannel experiences can strengthen customer relationships and encourage repeat purchasing behaviour.

H2: ROPO behaviour is significantly associated with customer loyalty in the textile sector.

Customer loyalty is known to be significantly influenced by customer satisfaction. Oliver (1999) asserts that happy consumers are more likely to make more purchases, spread good word of mouth, and remain loyal to a company over time. Customers are more likely to perceive value and stick with a company when information from online research accurately reflects the goods purchased offline.

H3: Post-purchase satisfaction significantly influences customer loyalty.

Furthermore, ROPO behaviour and post-purchase satisfaction may jointly contribute to customer loyalty. Zhang et al. (2024) supports the strong effect of customer experience/satisfaction on loyalty. While online research helps consumers make informed decisions, satisfaction derived from the actual purchase experience strengthens the likelihood of future patronage. Therefore, understanding the combined influence of these variables provides a comprehensive explanation of loyalty formation in the textile sector.

H4: ROPO behaviour and post-purchase satisfaction jointly influence customer loyalty.

Vol 1, Issue 9, December 2025, Page: 92-98 ISSN: 3107-5037

According to the study's conceptual framework, ROPO behavior is a significant predictor of consumer loyalty and post-purchase pleasure. Customer loyalty is further influenced by post-purchase pleasure. Customer loyalty is therefore seen as a result of both consumers' pleasure with their offline shopping experience and their online research behavior.

Research Methodology

In order to investigate how ROPO behavior affects consumer satisfaction and loyalty in the textile industry, this study used a quantitative research approach. The study employed a descriptive and explanatory approach to investigate the relationships among the proposed variables.

A structured questionnaire was used to gather primary data from textile consumers who look up information online before making purchases in real stores.The questionnaire comprised four sections covering demographic characteristics, ROPO behaviour, post-purchase satisfaction, and customer loyalty. ROPO behaviour was measured using five items relating to online product research, review consultation, price comparison, product availability checks, and preference for offline purchases after online information search. Post-purchase satisfaction was measured through five items assessing product quality, expectation fulfilment, purchase confidence, information accuracy, and overall satisfaction. Customer loyalty was measured using five indicators including repurchase intention, recommendation behaviour, brand attachment, switching resistance, and brand engagement.

SPSS was used to analyze the 105 valid replies that were collected. To profile respondents and understand their internet research habits, descriptive statistics were used. The links between ROPO behavior, post-purchase satisfaction, and consumer loyalty were investigated using Pearson correlation analysis. The combined impact of ROPO behavior and post-purchase satisfaction on customer loyalty was evaluated using multiple regression analysis.

The study is theoretically anchored in Expectation Confirmation Theory (Oliver, 1980), which suggests that consumer satisfaction emerges when actual product performance confirms or exceeds pre-purchase expectations. In a ROPO context, online information search serves as an important mechanism for expectation formation, while offline purchasing experiences determine the extent of expectation confirmation.

Results and Discussion

The findings indicate that textile consumers actively search online before making purchases in physical stores. When deciding what to buy, respondents commonly looked to social media, e-commerce sites, customer reviews, and price comparison data. These findings support earlier studies that identify online information search as an integral component of modern consumer decision-making (Park & Kim, 2003; Mroz-Gorgon & Szymanski, 2018).

ROPO behavior and post-purchase pleasure were found to be strongly positively correlated ($r = 0.803$, $p < .001$). This finding implies that consumers are more likely to be satisfied with their purchases if they thoroughly investigate textile products online before making a buy. The results corroborate the Expectation Confirmation Theory (Oliver, 1980), which contends that knowledgeable customers create reasonable expectations that lead to positive post-purchase assessments.

Additionally, a strong positive correlation between ROPO behavior and customer loyalty was found ($r = 0.644$, $p < .001$). According to this research, customers who actively look up information online before making a purchase typically show greater commitment to textile shops and brands.The result aligns with the omnichannel retailing perspective proposed by Verhoef, Kannan, and Inman (2015), which emphasizes that integrated online and offline experiences positively influence customer relationships.

We also observed a strong positive association between post-purchase satisfaction and customer loyalty ($r = 0.755$, $p < .001$). This result supports the well-established theory that happy

Vol 1, Issue 9, December 2025, Page: 92-98 ISSN: 3107-5037

consumers are more likely to make repeat purchases, spread good word of mouth, and stick with brands over time (Oliver, 1999).

A multiple regression analysis was conducted to examine the factors influencing loyalty in more detail. The statistically significant model explained 57.4% of the variation in customer loyalty ($R^2 = 0.574$, $p < .001$). The direct influence of ROPO behavior became statistically negligible ($\beta = 0.099$, $p = .320$) when satisfaction was included in the model, even though post-purchase contentment was found to be a strong predictor of customer loyalty ($\beta = 0.680$, $p < .001$). This result implies that the main way that ROPO behavior promotes customer loyalty is through customer satisfaction.

The findings indicate that ROPO behaviour contributes to customer loyalty primarily through post-purchase satisfaction (Wibowo et al.,2021). Although ROPO behaviour was positively associated with customer loyalty, its direct effect became insignificant when satisfaction was included in the regression model. This suggests that customer satisfaction is the key mechanism linking online research behaviour to loyalty outcomes, consistent with Expectation Confirmation Theory (Oliver, 1980). The results further imply that online research alone cannot generate customer loyalty. Instead, the degree to which the offline shopping experience fulfills or surpasses the expectations developed during the online information search process shapes loyalty. These results emphasize how crucial it is to match online content with real product performance in order to cultivate enduring client connections (Verhoef et al., 2015).

Conclusion

The current study looked at how ROPO behavior affected customer loyalty and satisfaction in the textile industry. The results show that online information search significantly shapes consumer buying experiences and post-purchase evaluations. Before visiting physical stores, customers who do their homework online are more likely to make well-informed purchases and feel more satisfied. The study also shows that a key factor in determining client loyalty is customer happiness. ROPO behavior is strongly correlated with loyalty, but when satisfaction is taken into account, its impact becomes indirect. This implies that improving customers' shopping experiences and satisfaction is the main way online research promotes loyalty.

The findings extend the understanding of omnichannel consumer behaviour by highlighting the importance of integrating online and offline touchpoints within the customer journey. In the textile sector, where product evaluation often requires physical inspection and sensory experience, aligning online information with offline product performance is essential to achieve favourable customer outcomes.

Implications of the Study

Theoretical Implications

By empirically investigating the connections between ROPO behavior, post-purchase satisfaction, and consumer loyalty, this study adds to the expanding body of research on omnichannel commerce and ROPO behavior. The findings extend Expectation Confirmation Theory (Oliver, 1980) by showing how online information search influences customer satisfaction, which in turn shapes loyalty outcomes. Additionally, the study provides empirical evidence from the textile industry, a field that has received little attention in ROPO studies.

Managerial Implications

The findings offer several practical implications for textile retailers. First, retailers should provide detailed, accurate, and transparent product information across digital platforms. High-quality product descriptions, customer reviews, sizing information, and visual content can help consumers make informed decisions during the online research phase.

Second, retailers should ensure consistency between online representations and actual product performance. Any mismatch between consumer expectations and product reality may reduce satisfaction and loyalty.

Vol 1, Issue 9, December 2025, Page: 92-98 ISSN: 3107-5037

Third, textile retailers should adopt integrated omnichannel strategies that create a seamless transition between online research and offline purchasing experiences. Sales personnel should be equipped to reinforce online information and support consumers during in-store decision-making.

Finally, retailers should focus on enhancing post-purchase satisfaction through effective customer service, loyalty programmes, personalised communication, and post-purchase engagement initiatives. Investments to enhance customer experience are expected to yield long-term benefits in retention and brand advocacy, as satisfaction was the strongest predictor of loyalty.

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