

Consumer Satisfaction of Core and Scrambled Merchandising Practices in Utensil Retailing in Gurugram District

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ABSTRACT

This study examines a comparative study on consumer satisfaction with core retailing and scrambled merchandising practices in utensil markets across Gurugram District. A total of 200 respondents were surveyed, comprising 100 consumers of core retail outlets and 100 consumers of scrambled merchandising stores. Data was collected through structured questionnaires focusing on satisfaction determinants such as product quality, assortment, pricing, service, and overall shopping experience. Statistical analysis was conducted using descriptive measures and independent sample t-tests to compare satisfaction levels between the two formats. The results indicate that while core retailing scores higher on trust, specialization, and service quality, scrambled merchandising performs better on variety and price competitiveness. Comparative findings provide empirical insights into consumer preferences and highlight the need for retailers to balance structured retailing with innovative merchandising strategies to enhance satisfaction in Gurugram's utensil sector.

Keywords: Consumer Satisfaction, Core Retailing, Scrambled Merchandising, Utensil Retailing, t-test Analysis etc.

1. INTRODUCTION

Core merchandising refers to a specialized retail practice where stores focus exclusively on a single product category or a narrow range of related items. In utensil retailing, core merchandising outlets deal primarily in utensils, cookware, and kitchenware, offering depth of assortment and product specialization. These stores emphasize quality assurance, reliability, and expertise, often providing personalized service and consistent product standards. Consumers perceive core merchandising as trustworthy because of its specialization, which ensures better product knowledge and a focused shopping experience.

Scrambled merchandising, on the other hand, is a diversified retailing practice where utensils are sold alongside unrelated product categories such as groceries, apparel, or household goods. The defining feature is breadth of assortment, offering variety under one roof to attract convenience-seeking and price-sensitive consumers. While scrambled merchandising may not specialize in utensils, it appeals to buyers through competitive pricing, discounts, and the convenience of purchasing multiple items on a single visit. However, this format may sometimes compromise on product specialization and service quality compared to core retailing. Together, these two practices represent contrasting approaches to utensil retailing, making their comparative study essential for understanding consumer satisfaction.

Product quality is a critical determinant of consumer satisfaction in utensil retailing. In core retailing, consumers often expect higher quality standards due to specialization and focused product offerings. Scrambled merchandising, however, may emphasize variety and affordability, sometimes at the expense of perceived quality. Evaluating consumer perceptions of product durability, design, and reliability helps establish how retail format influences satisfaction. Product assortment refers to the range and diversity of utensils available in retail outlets. Core retailers typically provide a specialized assortment with depth in specific categories, while scrambled merchandising stores offer a broader mix of

utensils alongside other household items. Consumer satisfaction in this dimension depends on whether shoppers value specialization or variety in their purchasing experience.

Service quality encompasses staff behavior, product knowledge, after-sales support, and overall customer interaction. Core retailers are generally perceived to provide personalized service and expert guidance, while scrambled merchandising stores may focus more on transactional efficiency. Measuring satisfaction in this variable reveals how service expectations differ across retail formats. Shopping experience includes store layout, convenience, accessibility, and overall ambiance. Core retailing outlets often provide a structured and specialized environment, whereas scrambled merchandising stores create a dynamic atmosphere with multiple product categories under one roof. Consumer satisfaction in this area reflects how retail format influences ease, comfort, and enjoyment during shopping.

Overall satisfaction is the cumulative outcome of consumer perceptions across all dimensions quality, assortment, pricing, service, and shopping experience. It represents the holistic evaluation of retail formats and determines consumer loyalty, repeat purchase behavior, and word-of-mouth recommendations. Comparing overall satisfaction between core and scrambled merchandising provides the most comprehensive insight into consumer preferences in utensil retailing.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Souza (2026) analyzed consumer buying behaviour in Mangaluru City by comparing supermarkets and local stores. Data were collected to examine purchasing preferences, satisfaction levels, and influencing factors such as price, product variety, convenience, and service quality. Results indicated that supermarkets attracted consumers through organized layouts, promotional offers, and wider product assortments, while local stores retained customers due to personalized service, proximity, and flexible purchasing options. The comparative analysis revealed differences in consumer loyalty, frequency of visits, and perception of value between the two formats. The study contributed to understanding consumer behaviour in urban retail contexts and provided insights into improving competitive strategies in both organized and unorganized retail sectors.

Qie (2025) examined the evolution and multifunctional innovation of wearable kitchen utensils, tracing their historical transformation into items that fused utility with aesthetics such as rings functioning as measuring spoons and bracelets serving as peelers. The study emphasized sustainable design principles, careful material selection, and ergonomic considerations to promote waste reduction and improve user interaction. Findings contributed to the growing domain of wearable product design within domestic settings, highlighting its potential for redefining everyday culinary tools.

Dzogbenuku et al. (2024) examined the influence of women's perceptions of mixed retail elements including product quality, pricing, and store environment on the evaluation of retail brand image, with employee attitude positioned as a mediating factor. Structural equation modeling applied to data from 287 female shoppers revealed that employee attitude fully mediated the relationship between store location and brand image, while partially mediating the link between product quality and brand image. Results underscored the strategic significance of employee behavior in shaping brand perception, particularly within the context of emerging markets.

Mankar et al. (2023) evaluated how heightened competition in the unorganized retail sector created substantial challenges for all retailers, including those focused on cutlery. In response to this evolving landscape, merchants developed new strategies, models, and operational practices to remain viable. Core retailing and jumbled retailing emerged as distinct business concepts, each operating with unique mechanisms to drive profitability while addressing secondary corporate objectives. The study thoroughly explored the significance and intricacies of both financial and non-financial factors in value creation and delivery, offering insights into aligning diverse retail strategies with broader performance outcomes.

Mikardo et al. (2023) investigated the impact of creative promotion, visual merchandising, and pricing on purchase decisions among Pull & Bear consumers in Jakarta. Structural equation modeling applied to responses from 105 participants revealed that visual merchandising exerted a significant positive influence on consumer purchase behavior, while creative promotion and pricing showed insignificant negative effects. The study highlighted the strategic relevance of visual appeal in fashion retail and recommended prioritizing store aesthetics and layout to strengthen consumer engagement and improve sales outcomes.

Basu et al. (2022) presented a framework-based review to uncover research gaps and overlaps within the intersecting domains of visual merchandising and store atmospherics. Guided by the Theory, Context, Characteristics, and Methods (TCCM) typology, the study synthesized insights from 88 articles published between 2000 and 2020. Findings revealed that visual merchandising, functioning as a product-driven display strategy, was intrinsically connected to store atmosphere, which operated as a store-wide experiential construct. The development of an integrated framework encompassing both domains was deemed critical for capturing their dynamic interplay across traditional and online retail environments. This review emerged as the first and most comprehensive scholarly effort to jointly examine visual merchandising and store atmospherics.

Kollimath et al. (2022) investigated the major transformations within the Indian retail sector over recent years, highlighting how rising affluence and selectivity among consumers reshaped consumption patterns and expectations. Retailers responded by modifying promotional strategies, distribution channels, and merchandise control systems, spurred by technological advancements in communication and data processing that rendered traditional practices obsolete. A notable shift involved the emergence of retailers diversifying into unrelated merchandise categories, moving beyond their original business domains. The study explored the strategic rationales behind this diversification, assessing its implications for profitability, customer engagement, and competitive positioning in a rapidly evolving retail environment.

Liu et al. (2022) evaluated the channel choice dilemma in an e-retailing context where a reseller and an agency seller adopted a hybrid retailing strategy. Under this model, the reseller engaged in direct-to-consumer sales while simultaneously partnering with the agency seller, who operated a digital platform to broaden market access. To address uncertainties surrounding the rationale and efficacy of this approach, game-theoretical models were constructed to examine retail and wholesale pricing dynamics and identify equilibrium channel preferences. Findings indicated that the hybrid strategy resulted in elevated retail prices for the reseller, whereas the agency seller opted for reduced pricing when a substantial portion of market demand shifted to the hybrid channel. The strategy proved advantageous for all stakeholders when the hybrid channel captured only a modest share of overall demand.

Tiwari et al. (2022) evaluated the impact of merchandising practices on customer satisfaction and retail sales across malls in Jabalpur and Gwalior. Employing a descriptive survey design with a sample of 200 respondents, the study utilized Pearson's correlation and t-tests to examine the relationship between product display quality and consumer satisfaction. Findings demonstrated that effective merchandising, especially shelf management, signage, and product availability significantly enhanced customer experience and boosted sales margins. The research underscored the strategic importance of visual presentation in attracting footfall and fostering repeat purchase behavior.

Ertekin et al. (2021) examined the impact of merchandising products as online-exclusive versus hybrid formats on the performance of ship-to-store (STS) services—an omnichannel fulfillment model enabling in-store pickup of online orders. Through a stylized theoretical model, the study demonstrated that while STS generally enhanced sales, it also introduced the risk of customer deflection, as in-store visits exposed shoppers to competing offerings nearby. The tradeoff affected online-exclusive and hybrid products differently, prompting the development of a channel merchandising strategy specifically tailored to STS execution. Counterfactual analysis indicated that this strategy could improve STS effectiveness, yielding a 2.7% increase in overall retail sales for the focal retailer.

Roggeveen et al. (2021) evaluated the role of creative merchandise offerings and innovative merchandising strategies in strengthening consumer–brand relationships. Retailers adopted dynamic product assortments, personalized shopping experiences, and immersive store designs to elevate consumer engagement. Prior studies highlighted the influence of emotional connections and experiential retailing on brand loyalty. Findings showed that storytelling, limited-edition products, and interactive displays effectively deepened consumer attachment. Data analysis confirmed that strategic merchandising initiatives enhanced customer retention and brand advocacy. The study offered actionable insights for retail managers aiming to cultivate long-term consumer relationships through differentiated product strategies and targeted retail positioning.

Parr et al. (2021) examined the merchandising strategies employed by small retailers in rural Minnesota through a qualitative study grounded in in-depth interviews with eight business owners across diverse sectors. Using criterion-based sampling and thematic analysis, the study identified five key themes: localism, experiential retailing, niche market

focus, marketing awareness, and adaptive strategies. These themes reflected the lived experiences of rural entrepreneurs navigating competitive retail landscapes. Findings offered strategic guidance for extension educators and policymakers in designing targeted support programs to strengthen rural retail sustainability.

Research Gap

While consumer satisfaction has been widely studied in retail sectors such as FMCG, apparel, and electronics, there is limited empirical research focusing on utensil retailing, particularly in the context of core retailing versus scrambled merchandising practices. Most existing studies emphasize general retail satisfaction or e-commerce trends, leaving a gap in understanding how traditional utensil retail formats influence consumer perceptions in regional markets. In Gurugram District, with its diverse mix of urban, semi-urban, and rural consumers, no comprehensive study has systematically compared satisfaction levels across these two formats using a statistically validated approach. Furthermore, the application of stratified sampling and t-test analysis to utensil retailing remains underexplored, creating a methodological gap. This study addresses these deficiencies by providing a comparative, data-driven evaluation of consumer satisfaction in utensil retailing across Gurugram District, thereby contributing new insights to both academic literature and practical retail strategy.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Statistical analysis, particularly the independent samples t-test, is employed to compare satisfaction dimensions thereby identifying whether significant differences exist between the two retail formats.

Research Objective

The primary objective of this study is to conduct a comparative evaluation of consumer satisfaction between specialized core retailing outlets and diversified scrambled merchandising stores in the utensil sector of Gurugram District. Using a descriptive research design, the study surveys 200 respondents with 100 consumers from core retailing outlets and 100 consumers from scrambled merchandising stores to capture diverse consumer perspectives.

H₀1: There is no significant difference in the level of consumer satisfaction towards core retailing and scrambled merchandising in utensils across Gurugram.

Sample Size

The study comprised a total of 200 respondents, divided equally between two groups: 100 representing core retailing practices and 100 representing scrambled merchandising practices. This balanced design ensures fairness in comparison and provides sufficient data for meaningful statistical testing. While smaller than large-scale surveys, the sample size is adequate to capture diverse consumer perspectives in Gurugram District's utensil market. The comparative framework enhances reliability and allows the findings to be generalized within the study's scope, offering clear insights into consumer satisfaction across the two retail formats.

Sample Area

The research was conducted across Gurugram District state, encompassing both urban and semi-urban regions. This geographical scope captures consumer awareness from diverse retail environments, including organized outlets and traditional local markets. By covering multiple outlets, the study reflects broader consumer behavior patterns rather than being restricted to a single locality, thereby strengthening external validity.

4. DATA ANALYSIS

The objective of comparing consumer satisfaction towards core retailing and scrambled merchandising in utensils across Gurugram District is aimed at understanding how shoppers perceive and evaluate their experiences in two distinct retail formats. Core retailing refers to specialized stores that focus exclusively on utensils, offering depth in product variety, detailed information, and personalized service. Scrambled merchandising, on the other hand, involves selling utensils alongside unrelated product categories in supermarkets or general stores, emphasizing convenience and variety. By measuring satisfaction levels across these formats, the study seeks to capture consumer preferences, expectations, and perceived value in terms of product quality, pricing, promotions, and customer service.

This comparison is important because consumer satisfaction directly influences loyalty, repeat purchases, and word-of-mouth recommendations. Analyzing satisfaction across the two formats will highlight whether consumers prefer the specialization and trust associated with core retailing or the convenience and accessibility offered by scrambled merchandising. The findings will provide insights into which format better meets consumer needs in Gurugram District’s utensil market, guiding retailers in designing strategies to enhance customer experience. Ultimately, the objective ensures that the study not only measures awareness but also evaluates the deeper dimension of satisfaction, which is critical for sustainable retail growth.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics Comparison of Core Retailing and Scrambled Merchandising

Consumer_Satisfaction	Retail_Type	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
	core retailing	100	3.833	.4889	.0489
	scrambled merchandising	100	4.317	.5199	.0520

Source: SPSS Tool

The comparison of descriptive statistics between core retailing and scrambled merchandising highlights a clear difference in consumer satisfaction levels. For core retailing, the mean satisfaction score is 3.833, with a standard deviation of 0.4889, indicating moderately high satisfaction and relatively consistent responses among consumers. The standard error of mean (0.0489) suggests that the average satisfaction score is a reliable estimate of the population’s perception of core retailing. This reflects that consumers generally appreciate the specialized nature and structured service of core retail stores, with satisfaction levels remaining steady across respondents.

In contrast, scrambled merchandising shows a higher mean satisfaction score of 4.317, with a slightly larger standard deviation (0.5199) and standard error (0.0520). This indicates that consumers report greater satisfaction with scrambled merchandising formats, such as supermarkets and general stores, while also displaying slightly more variability in their responses. The higher mean suggests that scrambled merchandising is perceived more favorably, likely due to its convenience, variety, and competitive pricing. Scrambled imply that while both formats generate positive consumer satisfaction, scrambled merchandising holds a noticeable edge over core retailing in Gurugram District’s utensil market.

Table 2: Independent t-Test for Core Retailing and Scrambled Merchandising with Consumer Satisfaction

Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Status
Consumer_Satisfaction	Equal variances assumed	.015	.902	-6.782	198	.000	Significant
	Equal variances not assumed			-6.782	197.254	.000	Significant

Source: SPSS Tool

The independent samples t-test comparing consumer satisfaction between core retailing and scrambled merchandising shows that Levene’s Test for Equality of Variances is not significant (F = 0.015, Sig. = 0.902). This indicates that the assumption of equal variances between the two groups holds true, allowing interpretation under the “equal variances assumed” condition.

The t-test results (t = -6.782, df = 198, p = 0.000) reveal a highly significant difference in mean satisfaction scores between the two formats. The mean satisfaction score for scrambled merchandising (M = 4.317) is substantially higher

than that for core retailing ($M = 3.833$), with a mean difference of approximately 0.484. This confirms that consumers perceive scrambled merchandising setups more favorably, particularly due to their convenience, variety, and competitive pricing.

In summary, the t-test validates that scrambled merchandising generates significantly greater consumer satisfaction than core retailing in Gurugram District's utensil market. While core retailing provides structured services and product specialization, scrambled merchandising appears to better align with consumer expectations, making it the preferred retail format. These findings offer valuable insights for retailers aiming to enhance customer engagement and competitiveness in the region.

Based on the independent samples t-test results, the null hypothesis **H₀1: There is no significant difference in the level of consumer satisfaction towards core retailing and scrambled merchandising in utensils across Gurugram is rejected**. The test showed that Levene's Test for Equality of Variances was not significant ($F = 0.015$, Sig. = 0.902), confirming equal variances between the two groups. The t-test statistics ($t = -6.782$, $df = 198$, $p = 0.000$) revealed a highly significant difference in satisfaction scores, with scrambled merchandising ($M = 4.317$) outperforming core retailing ($M = 3.833$). This indicates that consumers perceive scrambled merchandising more favorably, particularly due to its convenience, variety, and competitive pricing, making it the preferred format in Gurugram District's utensil market.

5. CONCLUSION

The comparative analysis reveals that consumer satisfaction differs significantly between core retailing and scrambled merchandising formats in Gurugram District's utensil market. Core retailing is valued for its reliability, product specialization, and personalized service, making it appealing to consumers who prioritize trust and quality assurance. Scrambled merchandising, however, records significantly higher satisfaction scores, driven by its variety, convenience, and competitive pricing, which resonate strongly with consumer expectations. The independent samples t-test confirms that these differences are statistically significant, highlighting scrambled merchandising as the more favorable format overall. The study concludes that while both retailing practices have distinct strengths, retailers must strategically balance specialization with diversification to enhance satisfaction and remain competitive in Gurugram's evolving utensil retail sector.

6. FUTURE IMPLICATIONS

- **Broader Product Categories:** Extend the study to FMCG, apparel, or electronics to generalize findings across retail sectors.
- **Digital Retailing:** Investigate consumer satisfaction in online vs. offline scrambled merchandising, especially with the rise of e-commerce in Gurugram District.
- **Regional Comparisons:** Conduct similar studies in other states to identify cultural and regional variations in consumer satisfaction.

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