

# Influence of Smartphone Use on In-Store and Online Shopping Behavior of Consumers

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*Smartphones have evolved into an important appendage for consumers and are now ubiquitous and increasingly used for several reasons. The simplicity and convenience of mobile devices has given a boost to e-commerce, forcing companies to focus on ways to enhance online shopping experience. Companies face new realities as the environment evolves, and a better understanding of how consumers use their mobile phones during the purchasing process is critical. This study analyzes the role mobile phones play in influencing major shopping decisions of consumers. The purpose is to understand the impact of smartphones on the way people purchase different products and services both in brick-and-mortar and online retail. The data was collected from a sample of 227 respondents across all regions of India. The study found that mobile device use does have an impact on the shopping behavior of consumers. The findings may be useful to businesses who use or plan to use mobile channel to communicate with their customers.*

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## Introduction

Smartphones have evolved into an important appendage without which users feel incomplete and lost. Given the device's importance in linking users to the rest of the world, it is only natural for the commercial microcosm to celebrate it as its new poster boy. Mobile gadgets are now ubiquitous and are used for several reasons. Mobile application solutions have grown at an exponential rate, from finding transportation to filing taxes. E-commerce is one of the fastest mobile application verticals. Due to the sheer simplicity and convenience that mobile devices bring to the online shopping experience, e-commerce is booming.

One of the major uses that smartphones have been put to over the years is for shopping online for a variety of products and services. The Covid-19 pandemic shifted most shopping to mobile, thereby increasing the role of smartphones in the purchase journey

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of a consumer. Almost all types of consumer goods are sold through online and mobile channels. An increasing number of consumers are adopting mobile phones for shopping and a variety of other activities. Furthermore, mobile phones are progressively utilized for shopping-related functions inside stores. Mobile phone usage has a variety of effects on consumer behavior.

Retailers face new realities as the retail environment continues to evolve. Today, success involves being able to communicate with customers, no matter where they are or what technology they are using. Because consumers are constantly connected via their phones, businesses can maintain constant contact with their customers. However, companies must first understand their customers to engage them. It involves understanding crucial information about customers, such as their demographics, location, web browsing habits and purchasing patterns. It is critical to have a full grasp of how consumers use mobile phones in stores for shopping-related objectives. Knowing where, how, and why customers use their phones can help businesses improve their marketing efforts and serve their customers' better. All these factors show that a better understanding of how consumers use their mobile phones during the purchasing process is critical.

## Literature Review

Research suggests that mobile phone owners use their devices to purchase a wide range of goods and services, including clothing, household goods, electronics, and groceries. They have a far wider range of possibilities for shopping because they can browse and find various items at any moment. Mobile users can now access websites while seated on the couch, in queue or even in bed, whereas previously they could only do so from their laptops. On their mobile devices, users may instantly get product reviews and price information, which can significantly influence their purchasing decision.

According to an annual survey conducted in India, close to 85% of consumers had placed food orders on their mobile phones, with over one million orders placed online through Zomato. In a category that relies on customer impulse, this confirms user preference for mobile (*Times of India*, 2015). The days of only using PCs and laptops for digital commerce are gone. Today's savvy shoppers shop online while on the go using their smartphones. Mobile devices now account for 15.4% of the global digital commerce spending and 0% of all online retail traffic in the US (Khalid, 2022).

Kunz (1997) observed that online shoppers are opinion leaders, innovators, and domain-specific to the Internet. Men are more likely to shop online, according to the report, and younger people are more likely to plan to shop online. People who live in suburban areas of small metropolitan cities are less likely to shop online than those who live in major metropolitan areas. According to a study by Williams (2019), more than 90% of consumers now use their mobile devices to make impulsive purchases in various categories, including fashion, travel, music, and movies. The same study reports that 36% of consumers still utilize their personal computers or laptops for decision-making when it comes to goods and services like insurance and investments.

An article in a leading newspaper stated that until 2015, global trends indicated that personal computers were responsible for a higher percentage of online purchasing traffic. In contrast, Google stated that around the same time, mobile search queries from India had surpassed those from desktop searches. Consumers' attitudes and purchase intents on the Internet are influenced by a range of situational considerations. These include physical distance, lack of mobility, lack of time, attractiveness of other available options, and demand for specialty items. Convenience and accessibility are important features of online buying for most customers (Wolfenbarger and Gilly, 2001).

In a survey by Jean (2020), mobile shopping consumers were asked what is most important to them when purchasing on their mobile devices. The study concluded that simple payment method was most significant; especially during festivals like Diwali, exclusive deals, easy navigation, and a respectable mobile experience were less important to customers. Consumers use their smartphones to shop for everything, everywhere—including using them while shopping in-store. 55% of in-store shoppers have used their mobile phones to search for information while being in-store. 71% suggested that their in-store experience was enriched by using a mobile phone (Wilkinson, 2021). This indicates that mobile phones are not only affecting remote shopping but also play a very significant role in offline shopping.

Singh (2014) mentioned that online shopping is getting more popular among Indians since it is more comfortable, time-saving, and convenient. Consumers are affected by a variety of factors when purchasing goods and services online, including price, trust, and convenience. Because Internet retailers do not have intermediaries, physical storage, or other costs, they can provide economically priced products to their customers.

Chang *et al.* (2005) looked at the various types of variables that influence Internet shopping behavior. The first are the features that people perceive about the Internet-based channel, including risk, advantages, service quality, and trust. The second area is the characteristics of the website and the product, which includes risk management techniques, site features, and product attributes. The third category is consumer features. Numerous factors, including demographics, customer buying preferences, innovativeness and psychological factors, computer and Internet usage, skill, and experience, affect consumer characteristics.

A survey by NPD Group (2021) found that one-fourth of digital shoppers used a smartphone for holiday shopping in 2021, up 19% from the previous two years. Thus, mobile strategies are important to boost holiday shopping.

Vijay and Balaji (2009) indicated that most people throughout the world are gradually shifting away from crowded stores and toward the convenience of online purchasing. A poll among 150 Internet users was conducted to determine why some people prefer to shop online while others do not. According to the findings, convenience and time-saving

inspire Indian customers to shop online, while security and privacy concerns deter them. According to research, 78% of consumers are more inclined to make a mobile buy if user-generated content on social media supports it. About 54% of millennials made a purchase on Instagram since the recent shopping update on the application. It was also highlighted that popular social media apps like Facebook, Instagram, and Pinterest are used by users to search for new products (Wilkinson, 2021).

The study seeks to analyze the role that mobile phones play in influencing major shopping decisions of consumers. The study considers the views of respondents across the country. The purpose of the study is to understand how smartphones are impacting the way people shop for different products and services both in shops and online.

The following hypotheses were formulated on the impact of smartphone on shopping behavior.

*H<sub>01</sub>: Smartphones have no impact on buyers' in-store shopping and are preferred by them during online shopping.*

*H<sub>1</sub>: Smartphones have an impact on buyers' in-store as well as online shopping.*

To examine the level of trust in bank transactions during online shopping, the following hypotheses are proposed.

*H<sub>02</sub>: People do not have a low level of trust in bank transactions on smartphones during online shopping.*

*H<sub>2</sub>: People have a low level of trust in bank transactions on smartphones during online shopping.*

## Data and Methodology

Single cross-sectional research design was considered a suitable methodology for the study, since samples from respondents were collected only once. The primary data was collected using a structured questionnaire (see Appendix) as the research instrument. Questions were based on information gathered during the extensive literature review to find out the impact of smartphones on shopping behavior (both online and in-store) of consumers. The questionnaire was divided into two sections for in-store shopping and online shopping. All the questions were closed-ended. The questions were in multiple choice, multiple grid, and checkbox format. The study was carried out from October to December 2022.

A non-probabilistic sampling method was used to collect the data. The sampling method employed was convenience sampling. As mentioned earlier, the survey did not have a specific target audience. The sample size was 227 respondents across all regions of India.

The following scales were used to collect the responses: (a) nominal scale to understand the demographics of the respondents, their preferred shopping method, and choice of device for online shopping; (b) ordinal scale to understand the use of smartphones

during in-store shopping, trust in bank transactions during online shopping, a post-pandemic online shopping frequency, and respondents' comfort level with smartphone shopping and its impact on their store shopping; and (c) ratio scale to know the amount of time the respondents spent on their smartphones, along with their online purchases via smartphones.

## Data Analysis

The study used SPSS 22.0 and MS Excel to analyze the data. First, the credibility of the responses collected through the survey questionnaire was checked using Cronbach's alpha. Thereafter, a *t*-test was used for testing the hypotheses (mentioned below) to see whether the mean of the variable is significantly different than the chosen value.

## Results and Discussion

The demographic profile of the sample is shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Demographic Profile of the Sample		
Variables	<i>n</i>	%
<b>Age</b>		
18-24	95	41.85
25-34	119	52.42
35-44	8	3.52
45-60	5	2.20
<b>Gender</b>		
Female	100	44.05
Male	127	55.94
<b>Employment Status</b>		
Student	127	55.94
Homemaker	1	0.44
Working Professional	99	43.61
<b>Marital Status</b>		
Married	30	13.21
Separated	1	0.44
Single	196	86.34
<b>Family Income (₹)</b>		
Less than 5 lakh	5	2.20
5-10 lakh	94	41.41
10-20 lakh	111	48.90
More than 20 lakh	17	7.49

## Reliability Test

Cronbach's alpha is a metric used to evaluate the internal consistency or reliability of a group of scale or test items. The total evaluation of a measure's dependability is given by the resulting alpha coefficient of reliability, which runs from 0 to 1. A commonly accepted rule for interpreting alpha for dichotomous or Likert scale questions is that an alpha in the range of 0.7-0.8 indicates acceptable reliability, 0.8-0.9 indicates good reliability, and  $\geq 0.9$  indicates excellent reliability.

The value of Cronbach's alpha is 0.83 (Table 2), which indicates good reliability or internal consistency of the questionnaire. Hence, the results from the survey can be used to derive meaningful conclusions.

## Hypothesis Testing

To test the hypotheses, *t*-Test for two-sample assuming unequal variances was conducted. The results of the same are shown in Table 3.

Data analysis shows *p*-value (0.0001) is lower than the level of significance 0.05, hence we reject the null hypothesis  $H_{01}$ .

One sample *t*-test assuming unequal variances was carried out. The results are shared in Table 4.

Data analysis shows *p*-value (0.14) is higher than the level of significance 0.05, hence we accept the null hypothesis ( $H_{02}$ ).

## Descriptive Statistics

Table 5 shows the descriptive statistics of the other important study variables.

The survey reveals that the biggest factor restricting the use of smartphones for online shopping among the respondents is fear of fraud. It indicates that people are still not comfortable with the idea of online shopping, fearing loss of money. The survey reveals that a majority of the respondents (41%) have low trust even when they opt for online payment. Security of personal data was the next big hindrance cited by people for not using smartphones for online shopping. About 83% of the survey respondents reported this as a major concern.

When the survey respondents were asked what they would most likely search on their smartphones while shopping in-store, a majority (90%) said they would search for information about products they intended to purchase. About 63% said they would compare the prices of the product across different sites and apps to decide where to finally buy the product. Coupons or deals online (60%) and products' warranty and return policy (47%) were the next most searched information about a product amongst the respondents. Most of the customers would thus prefer to search on their own for product information before speaking to a store associate.

Table 2: Cronbach's Alpha Test Results																				
1	Subjects	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5	Q6	Q7	Q8	Q9	Q10	Q11	Q12	Q13	Q14	Q15	Total Scores			
204	203	1	3	2	1	2	3	1	1	1	1	2	4	4	3	4	33			
205	204	1	2	1	1	2	1	1	1	1	2	2	4	4	3	4	30			
206	205	2	2	2	1	2	1	1	1	1	1	2	5	5	2	4	32			
207	206	1	2	1	1	2	3	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	4	17			
208	207	2	2	1	1	1	3	1	1	1	1	2	2	3	2	3	26			
209	208	2	2	2	1	2	3	1	1	1	1	2	4	4	2	4	32			
210	209	2	2	2	1	2	1	1	1	1	1	2	4	4	4	4	32			
211	210	1	2	1	1	2	1	3	1	1	1	2	4	4	3	4	31			
212	211	1	2	2	1	2	3	1	1	1	2	2	3	4	4	4	33			
213	212	1	2	2	1	2	3	1	1	1	2	1	5	5	2	3	32			
214	213	2	3	2	1	2	1	3	1	1	1	2	2	4	2	4	31			
215	214	2	2	2	1	2	1	3	1	1	1	2	5	4	2	4	33			
216	215	2	2	1	1	2	1	2	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	4	17			
																		$k$		
																		Sum of Variances		15
																		Variances of Total Scores		6.42201
																		Alpha		0.83635

k		15
Sum of		6.42201
Variances		
Variances of		29.2704
Total Scores		
Alpha		0.83635

Table 2 (Cont.)

1	Subjects	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5	Q6	Q7	Q8	Q9	Q10	Q11	Q12	Q13	Q14	Q15	Total Scores
217	216	2	2	2	1	2	1	1	1	1	2	2	4	4	2	4	31
218	217	2	2	1	1	2	2	3	1	1	1	2	2	4	3	3	30
219	218	1	2	1	1	1	1	2	1	1	2	2	3	3	2	3	26
220	219	1	2	2	1	2	1	3	1	1	1	2	4	4	2	4	31
221	220	1	2	1	1	2	1	3	1	1	1	2	4	4	1	3	28
222	221	1	3	2	2	2	2	3	1	1	1	1	4	4	3	4	34
223	222	2	2	2	1	2	1	1	1	1	1	2	4	4	2	4	30
224	223	2	2	2	1	2	1	3	1	1	1	2	4	4	2	3	31
225	224	1	2	1	1	2	1	1	1	1	1	2	4	4	2	4	28
226	225	2	2	1	1	2	3	3	1	1	1	2	4	4	2	3	32
227	226	1	2	1	1	2	1	3	1	1	1	2	3	4	3	3	29
228	227	1	2	1	1	1	3	1	1	1	1	2	4	5	2	3	29
229	Variances	0.246	0.43	0.2558	0.1299	0.151	0.925	0.792	0.05	0	0.103	0.23	0.927	0.47	1.139	0.58	



Table 3: Calculation Using Two Sample $t$ -Test Statistics for $H_{01}$		
	Have you ever used smartphone while shopping in-store?	Which of the following device do you use frequently for online shopping?
Mean	1.04845815	1.189427313
Variance	0.046313984	0.260418697
Observations	227	227
df	304	
$t$ -Stat.	-3.834926321	
$p$ ( $T \leq t$ ) one-tail	7.63552E-05	
$t$ Critical one-tail	1.649881428	
$p$ ( $T \leq t$ ) two-tail	0.00015271	
$t$ Critical two-tail	1.967798141	

Table 4: Calculation Using One Sample $t$ -Test Statistics for $H_{02}$	
	What is your level of trust in bank transactions on mobile phones while buying a product?
Mean	3.080213904
Variance	1.084928986
Observations	187
Hypothesized Mean	3
df	186
$t$ -Stat.	1.053100453
$p$ ( $T \leq t$ ) one-tail	0.146830545
$t$ Critical one-tail	1.653087138
$p$ ( $T \leq t$ ) two-tail	0.29366109
$t$ Critical two-tail	1.972800114

Table 5: Descriptive Statistics of the Primary Study Variables									
S. No.	Variable	Mean	Median	Mode	SD	Range	Sample Variance	Kurtosis	Skewness
1.	Trust in bank transaction on mobile phone while shopping	2.92	3	2	1.03	4	1.07	-0.96	-0.03
2.	Smartphone impact on in-store purchase	3.62	4	4	0.76	4	0.58	1.84	-1.34
3.	Comfort level in mobile shopping	4.19	4	4	0.55	2	0.30	-0.09	0.08
4.	Mobile shopping post pandemic	3.87	4	4	0.89	4	0.79	0.34	-0.81
5.	Trust on mobile shopping over shopping on laptops	1.61	2	2	0.60	2	0.35	-0.68	0.39

When respondents were asked about their most preferred mode of shopping, about 81%, that is, 185 out of the total 227 respondents, suggested that they preferred online shopping, while only 19% preferred in-store shopping. The results highlight the fact that today there is a very high level of acceptance amongst the respondents for buying products online. About 60% of the respondents use their smartphones to check about a product's specification and function even before shopping it from a brick-and-mortar store. This reveals that it is important for retailers to make information available about their products online as well, even if they only sell it through stores. 61% of the respondents believe that the information available online about a product is more useful than the information they find in the store.

Consumers use their smartphones for a variety of in-store activities, according to the responses. The most common use of smartphones inside a brick-and-mortar store is to order and pay for the product purchased. Scanning codes, searching for discounts, accessing coupons on mobile apps were some of the other reasons for shoppers to use their smartphones in-store. The least common smartphone use was to find nearby stores when in a store, which was chosen by only 26% of the respondents. These findings highlight that to match buyer expectations, shops and brands must be on top of their game, providing adequate and accurate information both offline and online. This could be in the form of informative POS signage or kiosks, take-home brochures, and interactive displays inside stores. It is also important for retailers and brands to have a mobile app with relevant and engaging content.

Respondents were asked on a scale of 1 to 5 how much impact their mobile phones had on their in-store shopping, and it was found that women and younger male shoppers reported greater influence of their mobile phones on their in-store shopping. And, women in the age group of 35-44 were the most impacted by smartphone use in-store.

## Conclusion

The study reveals that most of the respondents prefer online shopping to in-store shopping. Buyers today spend a significant amount of time on their smartphones to search for information about products before buying them. When it comes to the preferred device for online purchases, smartphone emerged as the number one choice of the respondents.

The study found that customers looking for more information in-store often avoid approaching retail associates and instead use their smartphones to look for product information. Hence, brick-and-mortar stores must ensure that their personnel are well-informed, well-trained, and equipped with their own mobile devices to help the buyers in their stores. Store staff can provide customers with product availability information, handle online orders for out-of-stock items, and accept mobile payments with the help of mobile technology.

The major barriers to purchasing on a smartphone are online security concerns. Security concerns around financial transactions and the threat of personal information breach are the main issues preventing consumers from making purchases on smartphones.

The findings also suggest that shoppers majorly use smartphones in retail stores to pay for their products. Similarly, digital wallets emerged as the most preferred payment option of users while shopping online. This could be because in-store mobile payments are now widely accepted by retailers in India. Also, it suggests that consumers in India have now gradually started to shift to digital payments.

The three main in-store mobile activities that are gaining popularity among smartphone users are finding nearby stores, researching products, and recording and uploading images of products. Thus mobile phones help consumers to make final purchase decisions.

According to the study findings, people strongly prefer using mobile apps over browsers when it comes to purchasing. Hence, retailers should ensure that they develop user-friendly apps for shoppers. Since the use of browsers is less compared to apps, businesses should focus on making their websites more mobile compatible and optimized. To appeal to customers who rely extensively on their smartphones to make online purchases or for assistance in shops, retailers and brands must have mobile marketing strategies in place.

The findings of the study are especially useful to businesses who use or plan to use a mobile channel to communicate with their customers. Understanding how, what, and where customers use their phones will aid businesses in improving their digital marketing strategies. The study will also assist businesses in keeping up with the shifting retail landscape. It will provide businesses critical information on the impact of mobile technologies on consumer behavior.

**Limitations and Future Scope:** The sample size of the study can be considered limited given the broad scope of the topic. Most respondents also belonged to urban areas in India, hence the views of those in rural India and the role of smartphones in their

purchase decision may have been ignored. These can be taken up for future research. The study also does not cover in detail the influence of social media on purchase decisions. The current study was exploratory in nature; further research may be conducted to include other aspects of consumer behavior and the impact of smartphones on them.

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## Appendix

### Questionnaire

#### General Qtz:

1. What gender do you identify as?

☐ Male ☐ Female ☐ Others ☐ Prefer not to say

2. What is your age?

☐ Under 18 ☐ 18-24 ☐ 25-34 ☐ 35-44 ☐ 45-60/above 60

3. What is your employment status?

☐ Student ☐ Working Professional ☐ Homemaker ☐ Retired  
☐ Others (Please specify)

4. What is your Marital status?

☐ Single ☐ Married ☐ Separated ☐ Divorced/Widowed

5. What is your annual family income?

☐ 5L ☐ 5-10L ☐ 10-20L ☐ >20L

#### Smartphone Related Basic Qtz:

1. How frequently do you use your smartphone in a day?

☐ Less than 2 h ☐ 2-4 h ☐ 4-6 h ☐ 6-8 h ☐ above 8 h

2. Which one of the following do you prefer?

☐ Shopping in store ☐ Online or remote purchase

3. What type of product information are you more likely to look on your smartphone instead of speaking to a store associate?

Research product features/Check or compare prices/Find coupons & deals/Get store location/Check product availability /Check return policy or product warranty /Others (Please specify)

#### In-store Purchase:

1. Have you researched about a product on your smartphone before buying it from the store?

☐ Yes ☐ No

2. Do you believe the information you gather via smartphones about a product is more beneficial than in-store information?

☐ Yes ☐ No

## Appendix (Cont.)

3. Do you use smartphones for online research during shopping in-store?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Next questions Applicable only if answer of 2 is Yes

1. What is your frequency of using smartphones during in-store shopping?

☐ Sometimes ☐ Never ☐ Every time I shop ☐ Most of the times

2. Why did you use your smartphone during in-store shopping?

☐ Research product and/or product information ☐ Price check and comparisons/  
Access or download digital coupons ☐ Access specific retailer mobile app  
☐ Scan a QR code ☐ Check for discounts/promotional offers ☐ Order & pay for  
a product ☐ Others (Please specify)

3. On a scale of 1-5 how much has using smartphones during purchase affected ur  
buying decision in the store? (1-Low impact, 5-High Impact)

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Online/Remote Purchase:

1. Have you ever opted for online/remote purchase?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Next question applicable only if answer of 1 is Yes

2. Which of the following device do you use for online shopping?

☐ Laptop or desktop ☐ Tablets ☐ Smartphones/others

3. In the last 6 months how many times have you purchased a product online using  
a smartphone?

☐ 1-6 ☐ 7-12 ☐ 13-18 ☐ 19-25 ☐ More than 25 times

4. Why do you prefer using a smartphone for online shopping? (Only if they answer  
smartphones)

Convenient/Faster Payments/Better online deals/Unavailability of product at the  
store/Easy navigation/Others (Please specify).

5. While using a smartphone for purchase which option would you prefer?

In-app purchase/Using mobile browser

6. Have you ever purchased something using smartphones directly from an ad/  
notification?

## Appendix (Cont.)

☐ Yes ☐ No

7. Do you believe mobile shopping is as secure as desktop/laptop shopping?

☐ Less secure ☐ Just as secure ☐ More secure

8. Your frequency of online shopping using smartphones post pandemic (Covid-19) has increased in comparison to pre pandemic scenario?

☐ Strongly Agree ☐ Agree ☐ Neither Agree nor Disagree ☐ Disagree/Strongly Disagree

9. Specify the type of products/services u purchase online using a smartphone

☐ Food orders ☐ Groceries ☐ Gifts ☐ Dress and Accessories ☐ Kid items

☐ Books ☐ Movie tickets ☐ Train or flight tickets ☐ Electronics

☐ Health and Beauty Products ☐ Household Items

☐ Insurance ☐ Investments ☐ Others (Please specify)

10. On a scale of 1-5 how comfortable are you with using smartphones for online shopping? (1-least comfortable, 5-most comfortable)

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

11. Which is your preferred payment option during online shopping using smartphones?

☐ CoD/Credit cards/Debit or ATM cards ☐ Net banking ☐ Digital wallets  
☐ Others

12. What is your level of trust in bank transactions through mobile while buying a product?

☐ Extremely high ☐ High/moderate ☐ Low/extremely low

13. Do you agree with the following statement? - "I am willing to allow my mobile phone to provide my location to companies so that they can offer me discounts, promotions, or services based on where I am."

☐ Agree ☐ Disagree ☐ Neither Agree nor Disagree

☐ Strongly Disagree/Strongly Agree

14. Which of the following factors restricts you from using smartphones for online shopping?

☐ Fraud in online banking ☐ Breach of personal information ☐ Previous bad experiences ☐ Poor internet connection ☐ Difficulty during payment/  
Small mobile screens ☐ Others (Please specify)

Reference # 03J-2023-08-05-01

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