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# Influence of Digital Tools on Retail Shopper Empowerment in Sports Retail Stores of Rajasthan

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## Abstract

*The rapid advancement of digital technologies has significantly transformed the retail sector by enhancing customer interaction and improving the overall shopping experience. Digital tools such as mobile applications, QR codes, self-checkout systems, augmented reality (AR), and interactive digital displays are increasingly being integrated into retail environments to provide consumers with easy access to product information and convenient purchasing options. These technologies play a crucial role in empowering shoppers by enabling them to make informed decisions, compare products, and interact more effectively with retailers. This study examines the influence of digital tools on retail shopper empowerment in sports retail stores of Rajasthan using secondary data sources. The research adopts a descriptive and exploratory approach based on the analysis of academic literature, industry reports, and market studies. The study explores various digital technologies used in sports retail stores and analyzes their role in improving access to information, enhancing decision-making capability, increasing customer autonomy, and providing a more convenient and personalized shopping experience. The findings indicate that digital tools significantly enhance shopper empowerment by reducing information asymmetry between retailers and consumers and enabling customers to actively participate in the shopping process. However, several challenges such as high implementation costs, technological infrastructure limitations, lack of digital skills among employees, customer resistance to new technologies, and concerns related to data privacy and security may hinder effective adoption. The study highlights the importance of strategic investment in digital technologies to enhance customer engagement and strengthen the competitiveness of sports retailers in Rajasthan.*

**Keywords:** Digital Retail Technologies, Shopper Empowerment, Sports Retail Stores, Consumer Decision-Making, Retail Digital Transformation

## Introduction

The retail sector has undergone a significant transformation with the rapid advancement of digital technologies. The integration of digital tools within retail environments has reshaped the traditional shopping experience by enabling consumers to access product information, compare alternatives, and make more informed purchasing decisions. Retailers increasingly adopt technologies such as mobile applications, digital kiosks, QR codes, self-checkout systems, and augmented reality (AR) tools to enhance customer engagement and streamline the shopping process. These technologies not only improve operational efficiency but also contribute to a more interactive and personalized shopping environment (Verhoef, Kannan, & Inman, 2015).

The concept of retail shopper empowerment has gained considerable attention in modern retail research. Shopper empowerment refers to the degree to which consumers have control, access to information, and the ability to influence their shopping decisions within the retail environment. Digital technologies enable consumers to obtain real-time product information, compare prices, read product reviews, and evaluate alternatives before making purchase decisions. As a result, the traditional information asymmetry between retailers and customers has gradually diminished, empowering consumers to become more active participants in the shopping process (Labrecque, von dem Esche, Mathwick, Novak, & Hofacker, 2013).

In the context of retail stores, digital tools play a crucial role in facilitating customer empowerment by improving accessibility to information and enhancing the overall shopping experience. Technologies such as interactive digital displays, smart mirrors, mobile-based product information systems, and self-service kiosks provide shoppers with greater autonomy during their shopping journey.

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These tools enable customers to explore product features, availability, and pricing without relying solely on sales personnel. Consequently, the use of digital technologies in retail stores contributes to higher levels of customer satisfaction, improved decision-making, and increased shopping confidence (Pantano & Timmermans, 2014).

The sports retail industry has particularly benefited from the adoption of digital technologies. With the growing popularity of sports and fitness activities, demand for sports apparel, equipment, and accessories has increased significantly. Modern sports retail stores are increasingly integrating digital technologies to enhance the customer experience. For example, digital product displays, in-store tablets for product comparison, and interactive screens help customers obtain detailed product information and select products that best meet their needs. Such innovations improve customer engagement and facilitate a more informed purchasing process (Grewal, Roggeveen, & Nordfält, 2017).

In India, the retail sector has witnessed substantial digital transformation over the past decade. The expansion of organized retail formats and the increasing penetration of smartphones and internet connectivity have accelerated the adoption of digital technologies in retail environments. Retailers are investing in digital tools to create seamless shopping experiences and strengthen customer relationships. These developments are particularly visible in urban and semi-urban markets, where consumers are becoming more technologically aware and digitally engaged (KPMG, 2022).

The state of Rajasthan has experienced considerable growth in the retail sector, particularly in major cities such as Jaipur, Udaipur, Jodhpur, and Kota. The expansion of shopping malls, branded retail outlets, and sports equipment stores has contributed to the modernization of the retail landscape in the region. As retailers seek to improve customer engagement and competitiveness, the adoption of digital technologies within retail stores has become increasingly important. However, despite the growing presence of digital tools in retail environments, limited research has examined how these technologies influence retail shopper empowerment in the context of sports retail stores in Rajasthan.

Therefore, this study aims to examine the influence of digital tools on retail shopper empowerment in sports retail stores of Rajasthan using secondary data sources. By analyzing existing literature, industry reports, and market studies, the research seeks to provide insights into the role of digital technologies in enhancing consumer decision-making, access to information, and overall shopping experience within sports retail environments.

### Research methodology

The present study adopts a descriptive and exploratory research design to examine the influence of digital tools on retail shopper empowerment in sports retail stores of Rajasthan. The study is based entirely on secondary data collected from academic journals, books, industry reports, government

publications, and online databases. The collected information is analyzed using content and thematic analysis to identify key trends and insights related to digital retail technologies and shopper empowerment.

### Research Objectives

- To examine digital tools used in retail stores.
- To analyze the concept of retail shopper empowerment.
- To study the role of digital technologies in sports retail stores.
- To review existing studies on digital retail technologies in India.
- To identify the influence of digital tools on shopper empowerment.

### Conceptual and Theoretical Background

The rapid advancement of digital technologies has significantly transformed the retail sector worldwide. Retailers are increasingly integrating various digital tools within their stores to enhance customer engagement, improve operational efficiency, and provide a more interactive shopping experience. These technological developments have altered the traditional retail environment by enabling consumers to access product information instantly, compare alternatives, and make informed purchasing decisions. As a result, the role of digital tools in shaping consumer behavior and enhancing shopper empowerment has become an important area of research in retail and marketing studies (Verhoef, Kannan, & Inman, 2015).

#### 1. Evolution of Digital Technologies in Retail

The retail industry has shifted from traditional brick-and-mortar operations to technology-driven retail environments. Digital tools such as mobile applications, digital signage, self-checkout systems, interactive kiosks, and augmented reality (AR) are increasingly used to improve customer engagement and shopping convenience. These technologies help retailers provide personalized services and seamless shopping experiences (Grewal, Roggeveen, & Nordfält, 2017). The growth of omnichannel retailing has further accelerated the use of digital technologies by integrating online and offline retail channels (Verhoef et al., 2015).

#### 2. Concept of Retail Shopper Empowerment

Retail shopper empowerment refers to the ability of consumers to actively participate in the shopping process by accessing information, comparing products, and making independent purchasing decisions. Digital technologies have reduced the information gap between retailers and consumers by providing easy access to product details, reviews, and price comparisons. Tools such as self-service kiosks and mobile-based information systems increase customer autonomy and confidence during the shopping process (Labrecque et al., 2013).

#### 3. Consumer Behavior in Digital Retail Environments

Digital technologies have significantly influenced consumer behavior by providing convenient,

personalized, and interactive shopping experiences. Tools such as QR codes, mobile applications, interactive displays, and smart mirrors allow consumers to access product information, compare alternatives, and visualize products before purchasing. These technologies improve decision-making and create more engaging retail environments (Pantano & Timmermans, 2014).

#### 4. Digital Transformation in Sports Retail Industry

The sports retail industry has grown rapidly due to increasing interest in sports and fitness activities. To enhance customer engagement, sports retailers are adopting digital technologies such as interactive displays, digital catalogs, in-store tablets, and augmented reality. These technologies help customers understand product specifications and performance features, enabling them to make better purchasing decisions (Grewal et al., 2017).

#### 5. Digital Retail Landscape in India

India has become one of the fastest-growing retail markets, supported by the expansion of organized retail, smartphone usage, and internet connectivity. Retailers increasingly adopt digital tools such as digital payments, mobile loyalty programs, and in-store digital displays to improve customer engagement and operational efficiency (KPMG, 2022). In Rajasthan, the growth of shopping malls and branded retail stores in cities like Jaipur, Udaipur, Jodhpur, and Kota has further encouraged the adoption of digital technologies in retail environments.

#### Digital Tools Used in Sports Retail Stores

The rapid development of digital technologies has significantly transformed the retail sector by introducing innovative tools that enhance customer engagement and improve the shopping experience. Retailers increasingly adopt digital tools to provide customers with convenient access to product information, personalized recommendations, and efficient purchasing options. In sports retail stores, where products often involve technical specifications and performance features, digital technologies help consumers better understand product characteristics and make informed purchasing decisions. The integration of digital technologies within retail environments has therefore become a critical factor in enhancing customer interaction and improving service efficiency (Grewal et al., 2017).

##### 1. Mobile Applications in Retail Stores

Mobile applications have become an important digital tool in modern retailing. Retailers develop mobile apps that allow customers to browse product catalogs, check product availability, receive promotional offers, and participate in loyalty programs. These applications also enable customers to access product information before visiting the store and continue their purchasing journey seamlessly in physical retail environments. Mobile apps help retailers create personalized shopping experiences by

recommending products based on customer preferences and purchase history, thereby improving customer satisfaction and engagement (Shankar et al., 2010).

##### 2. QR Codes and Smart Product Labels

QR codes and smart product labels are widely used in retail stores to provide quick access to detailed product information. By scanning QR codes through smartphones, customers can obtain product descriptions, specifications, usage instructions, and customer reviews. In sports retail stores, this technology is particularly useful because consumers often require detailed information regarding product durability, materials, and performance features. QR codes therefore serve as an effective tool for reducing information gaps and improving consumer awareness during the shopping process (Pantano & Timmermans, 2014).

##### 3. Self-Checkout and Digital Payment Systems

Self-checkout technologies allow customers to scan and pay for their purchases independently without waiting for cashier assistance. These systems reduce checkout queues and improve transaction speed, which enhances overall shopping convenience. In addition, digital payment technologies such as contactless payment, mobile wallets, and online payment platforms have become widely used in retail stores. These payment systems simplify the transaction process and contribute to a more efficient retail environment by enabling faster and more secure payments (Inman & Nikolova, 2017).

##### 4. Augmented Reality (AR) and Virtual Try-On Technologies

Augmented reality (AR) technology has emerged as an innovative tool for enhancing the retail shopping experience. AR enables customers to visualize products in a simulated environment before making purchase decisions. In sports retail stores, AR technologies can allow customers to virtually try sports apparel, footwear, and accessories, helping them understand product fit and design without physically trying the product. This technology enhances product visualization and increases consumer confidence in purchasing decisions by allowing customers to interact with products digitally (Hilken et al., 2017).

##### 5. Interactive Digital Displays and Kiosks

Interactive digital displays and in-store kiosks are widely used in modern retail stores to provide customers with easy access to product information. These systems allow shoppers to browse digital product catalogs, compare features of different products, and check product availability within the store. In sports retail stores, digital kiosks can also provide information related to sports performance, equipment specifications, and recommended usage. Such technologies enhance customer autonomy by enabling shoppers to explore products independently and make more informed

purchasing decisions (Verhoef et al., 2015). the adoption of digital tools in sports retail stores has significantly enhanced the retail shopping experience. These technologies provide customers with greater access to information, improve convenience during the shopping process, and support informed decision-making. As digital transformation continues to reshape the retail industry, the use of such technologies will play an increasingly important role in empowering retail shoppers.

### **Role of Digital Tools in Enhancing Shopper Empowerment**

Digital technologies have significantly transformed the retail environment by enabling consumers to access information, interact with products, and make independent purchasing decisions. In modern retail settings, digital tools provide customers with greater control over the shopping process, thereby enhancing shopper empowerment. Shopper empowerment refers to the ability of consumers to actively participate in the shopping experience through access to relevant information, technological support, and decision-making autonomy. Digital technologies facilitate this empowerment by reducing information asymmetry and allowing consumers to engage more actively with retailers and products (Ritzer & Jurgenson, 2010).

#### ○ **Access to Product Information**

One of the most important ways digital tools empower shoppers is by providing easy access to product information. Technologies such as digital displays, in-store tablets, and mobile-enabled product search systems allow customers to obtain detailed information about product specifications, features, and performance. In sports retail stores, consumers often require technical information regarding materials, durability, and product functionality. Digital tools enable customers to access such information instantly, which helps them evaluate different product options more effectively. Access to comprehensive information increases consumer confidence and supports more informed purchasing decisions (Hagberg et al., 2016).

#### ○ **Enhanced Decision-Making Capability**

Digital technologies also improve consumers' ability to make better purchasing decisions. Interactive technologies enable customers to compare products, evaluate different brands, and analyze price differences before selecting a product. The availability of digital comparison tools and product evaluation systems allows consumers to assess product quality and suitability based on their individual needs. This enhanced decision-making capability empowers consumers by enabling them to choose products that best match their preferences and requirements (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016).

#### ○ **Increased Autonomy in the Shopping Process**

Digital tools provide customers with greater autonomy during their shopping journey. Self-service technologies, interactive kiosks, and

digital product catalogs allow consumers to explore products independently without relying entirely on store employees. This increased autonomy allows shoppers to move freely through the retail environment and gather information at their own pace. As a result, customers feel more in control of their shopping experience, which contributes to higher satisfaction and confidence during the purchasing process (Meuter et al., 2000).

#### ○ **Improved Shopping Convenience**

Another important contribution of digital technologies is the improvement of shopping convenience. Digital payment systems, mobile-based product searches, and automated checkout processes reduce waiting time and simplify the purchasing process. These technologies allow customers to complete transactions quickly and efficiently, which enhances the overall retail experience. Convenience plays a crucial role in shaping consumer perceptions of retail service quality and contributes to greater shopper empowerment by making the shopping process easier and more efficient (Dabholkar, 1996).

#### ○ **Personalized Shopping Experience**

Digital tools also enable retailers to provide personalized shopping experiences to customers. Technologies such as data analytics, recommendation systems, and personalized digital displays help retailers offer product suggestions based on individual customer preferences. Personalization allows retailers to present relevant products and offers to customers, which improves shopping satisfaction and strengthens customer engagement. When consumers receive tailored product recommendations, they are better able to identify products that meet their needs, thereby enhancing their sense of empowerment within the retail environment (Arora et al., 2008). Overall, digital tools play a significant role in empowering shoppers by improving access to information, enhancing decision-making capabilities, increasing autonomy, and providing convenient and personalized shopping experiences. As digital technologies continue to evolve, their influence on consumer empowerment in retail environments is expected to become even more significant, particularly in specialized retail sectors such as sports retail stores.

### **Challenges in the Adoption of Digital Tools in Retail Stores**

The adoption of digital technologies in retail environments offers numerous benefits such as improved customer experience, operational efficiency, and enhanced shopper empowerment. However, retailers also face several challenges while implementing these technologies. These challenges may arise from financial constraints, technological limitations, lack of employee skills, consumer resistance, and concerns related to data privacy and security. Addressing these issues is essential for the successful integration of digital tools in retail stores.



**Table 1: Major Challenges in the Adoption of Digital Tools in Retail Stores**

| <i>Challenge Area</i>       | <i>Key Issue</i>                          | <i>Explanation</i>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
|-----------------------------|-------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Financial Challenge         | High Implementation and Maintenance Costs | Advanced digital technologies such as interactive displays, augmented reality systems, and self-checkout machines require significant initial investment. Retailers must also manage ongoing expenses related to maintenance, software upgrades, and technical support, which can be difficult for small and medium-sized retail stores (Brynjolfsson & McAfee, 2014). |
| Technological Challenge     | Infrastructure Limitations                | Successful adoption of digital tools requires strong technological infrastructure such as stable internet connectivity, compatible hardware, and secure data systems. In many retail environments, particularly in developing regions, infrastructure limitations may hinder the effective implementation of digital technologies (Reinartz et al., 2019).             |
| Human Resource Challenge    | Lack of Digital Skills and Training       | Retail employees may lack the necessary digital skills to operate and manage technological systems effectively. Without adequate training, employees may face difficulties in assisting customers or maintaining digital systems within retail stores (Westerman et al., 2014).                                                                                        |
| Consumer Behavior Challenge | Customer Resistance to Technology         | Some customers may hesitate to use digital technologies due to limited digital literacy or a preference for traditional shopping methods involving direct interaction with sales staff, which can reduce the effectiveness of digital tools (Demoulin & Djelassi, 2016).                                                                                               |
| Security Challenge          | Data Privacy and Security Concerns        | Digital retail technologies often require the collection and storage of customer data to offer personalized services. Concerns regarding privacy and data security may discourage consumers from sharing personal information, requiring retailers to adopt strong data protection measures (Martin & Murphy, 2017).                                                   |

The table highlights the key challenges faced by retailers in adopting digital technologies within retail stores. Overcoming these barriers requires strategic investment in digital infrastructure, employee training, and strong data protection measures. By addressing these challenges effectively, retailers can maximize the benefits of digital technologies and enhance shopper empowerment in modern retail environments.

### **Implications for Sports Retailers**

The growing adoption of digital technologies in retail environments has important implications for sports retailers. As consumers increasingly rely on digital tools to access product information and make purchasing decisions, retailers must adapt their strategies to integrate technology effectively within their store environments. The use of digital technologies not only enhances the customer shopping experience but also provides retailers with opportunities to improve operational efficiency, strengthen customer relationships, and remain competitive in the evolving retail landscape.

- **Investment in Digital Retail Technologies**

Sports retailers should invest in digital technologies that enhance the in-store shopping experience. Technologies such as interactive displays, mobile-based product information systems, and digital payment solutions can significantly improve customer engagement and convenience. By adopting such technologies, retailers can provide customers with easy access to product information, which supports informed decision-making and enhances shopper satisfaction. Investment in digital tools can therefore help sports retailers create a more innovative and technology-driven retail environment (Hagberg et al., 2017).

- **Integration of Omnichannel Retail Strategies**

Modern consumers often move between online and offline retail channels during their shopping journey. Sports retailers should therefore integrate digital technologies with omnichannel retail strategies to ensure a seamless shopping experience. For example, customers may research sports products online before visiting physical stores to make a purchase. Retailers can support this behavior by offering digital product catalogs, mobile applications, and in-store technologies that complement online shopping platforms. Such integration helps retailers provide consistent and convenient shopping experiences across multiple channels (Piotrowicz & Cuthbertson, 2014).

- **Enhancing Customer Engagement through Technology**

Digital tools enable retailers to create more interactive and engaging shopping environments. Technologies such as digital product demonstrations, augmented reality experiences, and interactive kiosks allow customers to explore products in greater detail. In sports retail stores, where customers often seek technical information about product performance, these technologies can help retailers communicate product features more effectively. Increased customer engagement can lead to longer store visits, higher customer satisfaction, and stronger brand loyalty (Grewal et al., 2018).

- **Training and Skill Development for Retail Employees**

The successful implementation of digital technologies in retail stores requires employees who can operate and manage technological systems. Retailers should therefore invest in

training programs that help employees develop digital skills and understand how to assist customers in using technological tools. Skilled employees can guide customers in accessing digital product information, using self-service technologies, and navigating digital platforms within the store. This combination of human support and technological assistance can significantly enhance the overall customer experience (Bharadwaj et al., 2013).

- **Strengthening Data-Driven Retail Strategies**

Digital technologies generate valuable data related to customer behavior, preferences, and purchasing patterns. Sports retailers can use this information to develop data-driven marketing and merchandising strategies. By analyzing customer data, retailers can identify popular products, understand customer preferences, and design targeted promotional campaigns. Data-driven insights can help retailers improve product assortment, optimize inventory management, and enhance personalized customer services (Wedel & Kannan, 2016). Overall, the integration of digital technologies offers significant opportunities for sports retailers to enhance customer experiences and improve business performance. By investing in digital infrastructure, adopting omnichannel strategies, training employees, and utilizing data analytics, sports retailers can effectively leverage digital tools to empower customers and strengthen their competitive position in the retail market.

## Conclusion

The integration of digital technologies in retail environments has transformed the traditional shopping experience by providing consumers with greater access to information, improved convenience, and increased control over their purchasing decisions. In sports retail stores, digital tools such as mobile applications, QR codes, augmented reality technologies, digital payment systems, and interactive kiosks play a significant role in enhancing customer engagement and improving the overall shopping experience. These technologies enable shoppers to explore product features, compare alternatives, and make informed purchasing decisions, thereby increasing their confidence and autonomy during the shopping process. The study highlights that digital tools contribute significantly to retail shopper empowerment by improving access to product information, enhancing decision-making capabilities, and creating more personalized and convenient shopping environments. The adoption of digital technologies also supports retailers in strengthening customer relationships and improving operational efficiency. In the context of Rajasthan, where the retail sector is rapidly expanding in urban centers, the use of digital technologies in sports retail stores can play an important role in modernizing retail practices and improving customer satisfaction. However, the effective implementation of digital tools also requires addressing several challenges, including high investment costs, technological infrastructure

limitations, employee skill gaps, customer resistance to technological change, and concerns regarding data privacy and security. Retailers must therefore adopt strategic approaches that include investment in digital infrastructure, employee training, and the development of secure data management systems to maximize the benefits of digital transformation. Overall, the study concludes that digital technologies have a strong potential to empower retail shoppers and enhance the competitiveness of sports retail stores. As digital transformation continues to reshape the retail industry, sports retailers in Rajasthan must adopt innovative technological solutions and integrate digital tools effectively to create more engaging, efficient, and customer-centric retail environments.

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## Conflicts of interest

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper

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