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Fun Friday: How the Weekend Became an Economic Engine

From dining out and shopping to cinema, entertainment and food delivery, India's urban consumers are increasingly concentrating their discretionary spending around the weekend.

Friday evening has traditionally marked the end of the working week. Offices begin to empty, traffic patterns change, restaurant reservations fill up and entertainment plans move from the calendar to reality.

But the Friday-to-Sunday period is no longer only a social or cultural phenomenon. New data suggests that the weekend has become an important consumption window for urban India.

A 2026 report by the People Research on India's Consumer Economy (PRICE) and Tata Sons, The Many Urban Indias, finds that urban consumers spend an average of ₹6,724 during weekdays compared with ₹10,732 over Saturday and Sunday.

That means 61.5 per cent of weekly spending is concentrated in just two weekend days.

The findings are based on PRICE's ICE 360° Survey 2025, which gathered responses from 6,655 individuals across five age groups in 25 major Indian cities. The wider report analyses India's top 100 cities and draws on PRICE's household surveys alongside official data sources.

The numbers point to a clear shift: for a large section of urban India, the weekend is not simply a break from work. It is a period when consumption accelerates.

Friday: The beginning of the weekend economy

The PRICE-Tata Sons study measures spending on weekdays and on Saturday and Sunday. It does not separately establish Friday as a high-spending day.

Yet Friday has an important role in the pattern because it marks the transition into the two-day period when spending rises sharply.

For many consumers, Friday evening is when plans that were postponed during the working week begin to take shape.

A meal outside becomes a dinner reservation. A film becomes a cinema visit. A shopping list becomes a trip to the mall. A quiet evening at home can mean ordering food, streaming a film or series, gaming or shopping online.

The common factor is time.

With fewer work commitments, consumers have more opportunity to undertake activities that can be deferred during the week.

And the data shows that discretionary categories respond strongly to this change in available time.

What happens to spending over the weekend?

The difference between weekday and weekend consumption becomes particularly visible when individual categories are examined.

According to the PRICE-Tata Sons report, average spending on fashion and apparel rises from ₹529 during weekdays to ₹1,075 over the weekend.

Entertainment spending increases from ₹328 to ₹662.

Electronics rise from ₹350 to ₹695.

Dining and food delivery increase from ₹525 to ₹959.

In each of these categories, weekend spending is close to twice the weekday level.

Essential categories show a smaller increase. Grocery spending has a weekend multiplier of 1.64, while healthcare has a multiplier of 1.54.

The contrast is significant.

The categories that rise most sharply are largely those involving choice, leisure and discretionary consumption.

From malls to mobile phones

The weekend economy does not have a single physical location.

For some consumers, it is a shopping mall.

For others, it is a restaurant, cinema, concert venue or sports facility. Increasingly, part of that spending also takes place through a smartphone.

India's broader media and entertainment data shows how quickly the ecosystem around leisure is expanding.

The FICCI-EY Media & Entertainment report released in March 2026 estimates that India's media and entertainment sector grew 9 per cent in 2025 to ₹2.78 trillion.

Digital media became the industry's largest segment, crossing ₹1 trillion in revenue for the first time. Digital advertising grew 26 per cent to ₹947 billion, while the organised live-events segment grew 44 per cent.

The film business also recorded a strong year.

Film-segment revenues reached a record ₹205 billion in 2025, according to FICCI-EY, with theatrical revenues rising 16 per cent. More than 1,900 films were released during the year and 37 films crossed ₹1 billion at the box office.

The figures illustrate an important point: digital entertainment and physical entertainment are not necessarily replacing each other.

They are becoming part of the same leisure economy.

The restaurant table is part of the weekend story

Food is another major component of the weekend spending pattern.

The PRICE-Tata Sons data shows that dining and food delivery spending rises by about 83 per cent between weekdays and weekends, from ₹525 to ₹959.

That comes against the backdrop of a large and expanding Indian food-services industry.

The National Restaurant Association of India estimates that the country's food-services sector was worth ₹5.69 lakh crore in 2024 and projects it to reach ₹7.76 lakh crore by 2028. The sector accounted for about 1.9 per cent of India's GDP in 2024 and employed an estimated 8.55 million people.

The sector is also becoming more organised and increasingly connected to digital ordering.

A 2026 report cited by the National Restaurant Association of India estimates that India's food-services market could grow from around US\$90 billion in 2025 to US\$150 billion by 2030, with online food delivery expected to increase its share of the market.

For the weekend consumer, the distinction between eating out and ordering in is therefore becoming less important.

Both are part of the same leisure spending cycle.

The weekend is not only a metro story

One of the notable findings of the PRICE-Tata Sons study is that the weekend effect varies considerably from city to city.

The highest weekend multiplier among the cities covered was recorded in Jaipur at 2.76 times, followed by Surat at 2.44 times, Pune at 2.19 times and Kochi at 2.04 times.

Mumbai and Ahmedabad recorded weekend multipliers of 1.73 times, while Indore recorded 1.96 times.

This challenges the idea that India's weekend consumption story belongs only to the country's largest metros.

The report's broader analysis covers the top 100 Indian cities, which together account for 19 per cent of India's population but generate 35 per cent of household income and 31 per cent of household consumption, according to PRICE.

The weekend economy therefore reflects a wider urban consumption story.

Income changes the size of the weekend

The intensity of weekend spending also varies with household income.

According to the PRICE-Tata Sons findings, higher-income households record a substantially larger weekend spending multiplier.

The multiplier rises from 1.37 among consumers earning below ₹25,000 a month to 2.53 among those earning more than ₹1 lakh a month.

For the highest-income group, average weekend spending reaches ₹21,779, compared with ₹8,622 during weekdays.

This suggests that the weekend economy is closely connected to discretionary income.

When households have more money available after meeting essential expenses, there is greater scope for spending on experiences, shopping and entertainment during periods of free time.

Why businesses are watching the weekend

The concentration of spending creates a different operating pattern for businesses.

Restaurants need greater capacity during peak periods. Shopping centres schedule promotions around high-footfall days. Entertainment venues compete for the same pool of consumers. Cinemas programme major releases around periods when audiences have more free time.

Digital businesses operate on a similar principle, although the physical location disappears.

The consumer may move from a restaurant reservation to an online food order, from a cinema to a streaming platform, or from a physical store to an e-commerce app.

The common denominator is the same: leisure time creates an opportunity to spend.

The PRICE report captures this distinction particularly well. Essential categories show relatively moderate weekend increases, while fashion, entertainment, electronics and dining register much sharper increases.

A 48-hour consumption window

The numbers also put a figure on something that is otherwise easy to observe in urban life.

The average urban consumer in the study spends ₹6,724 across the five weekdays and ₹10,732 across Saturday and Sunday.

On a daily basis, that works out to roughly ₹1,345 across weekdays and ₹5,366 across the two weekend days combined. The comparison is not a measure of individual daily spending patterns, but it demonstrates the concentration of expenditure in the two-day period.

The weekend has effectively become a compressed consumption window.

For businesses, this means two days can carry a disproportionate share of weekly demand.

For consumers, it means several forms of discretionary activity compete for the same limited period.

What “Fun Friday” really tells us

The popular idea of Fun Friday may sound like a workplace or social-media phrase, but the economic data gives it a broader context.

Friday itself is not responsible for the spending numbers. The PRICE-Tata Sons study specifically measures the difference between weekdays and the Saturday-Sunday weekend.

What Friday does is mark the beginning of the transition.

The working week gives way to a period when consumers have more time to shop, eat out, watch films, attend events, meet friends, travel or simply order something they have been postponing.

The result is visible across several sectors.

Restaurants prepare for weekend demand. Shopping centres anticipate higher footfall. Cinemas rely heavily on weekend audiences. Entertainment companies compete for leisure time. Food-delivery platforms cater to consumers who may choose convenience over cooking.

And the data shows that this behaviour is not confined to one category.

It cuts across the urban consumption basket.

The weekend as an economic habit

India's urban economy is changing alongside its consumption habits.

PRICE estimates that nearly 630 million people could live in India's cities by 2030. The organisation's The Many Urban Indias report argues that India's urban growth is increasingly being shaped by a diverse network of cities rather than by a small number of metropolitan centres alone.

As urban households become more connected to formal employment, digital services, organised retail and entertainment, the distinction between work time and leisure time becomes increasingly important for businesses.

The weekend is where that distinction becomes visible.

Saturday and Sunday account for just two days of the week, but the latest consumer data shows that they account for 61.5 per cent of weekly urban spending.

That makes Friday more than just the last working day.

It is the opening bell for a two-day cycle of consumption.

The office may close.

The malls, restaurants, cinemas, delivery platforms and entertainment venues are only getting started.

-Ranu Jain