

Consumer Buying Behavior in Fashion Retailing: an Empirical Study on Men's Fashion Apparels



ISBN: 978-1-943295-14-2

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The retail industry in India is poised to grow at faster rate to reach USD 31,880.8 billion by 2023 & India's apparel market will be worth \$59.3 billion in 2022, making it the sixth-largest in the world (McKinsey's Fashion Scope, 2019). The apparel business in India is still largely "unorganised," with formal retail accounting for just 35 percent of sales. Its share is likely to reach around 45 percent by 2025. This study on Consumer Buying Behavior in Fashion Retailing which is specifically focused on Men's Fashion Apparels is an attempt by the researchers to understand the type of fashion apparels men buy & the preference for branded or unbranded fashion apparel. Efforts have also been made to understand the product attributes, price attributes and promotion attributes involved in the decision making & whether there is any significant relationship between demographic variables & buying behavior.

1. Introduction

Fashion is one of the world's most important industries, driving a significant part of the global economy & it is defined as the prevailing style of consumer products or a way of behaving that is temporarily adopted by a discernible proportion of members of a social group. It is also imperative that the chosen style or behavior is perceived to be socially appropriate for the time and situation. For consumers, there has never been so much choice when it comes to working out what to buy and how, but this represents a real challenge for retailers (Burns, et al., 2016). The actual fashion market is notably competitive and there is a constant need to refresh products and retailers to provide consumers what they want (Bhardwaj & Fairhurst, 2010).

India is increasingly a focal point for the fashion industry, reflecting a rapidly growing middle class and an increasingly powerful manufacturing sector. These forces, together with strong economic fundamentals and growing tech savvy, make India too important for international brands to ignore. India's fashion retail market is itself set to grow to US\$115 billion by 2026. India's middle class is forecast to expand by 1.4 percent a year over the same period, outpacing China, Mexico, and Brazil. As a result, India is set to evolve from an increasingly important sourcing hub into one of the most attractive consumer markets outside the Western world. India's apparel market will be worth \$59.3 billion in 2022, making it the sixth largest in the world, comparable to the United Kingdom's (\$65 billion) and Germany's (\$63.1 billion) (McKinsey's Fashion Scope, 2019). The aggregate income of the addressable population (individuals with more than \$9,500 in annual income) is expected to triple between now and 2025.

The year 2019 finally seems to be the year when India will set its image as a global fashion hub. Programs such as Make in India, Skill India and Digital India have pushed forward revolutionary policy changes for the business community and industry as a whole (McKinsey, 2019). Fashion brands that have already been successful in India have understood the consumption patterns in the country, sizes are needed based on the Indian consumers make up, designs, touch points and personalization that work are those which keep in mind the tastes of the Indian consumers. However, Indian fashion and textile brands need to warm up to the emergence of a new connected consumer, well synced with the latest in global apparel and fashion trends, if they are to capture their due share of this growth.

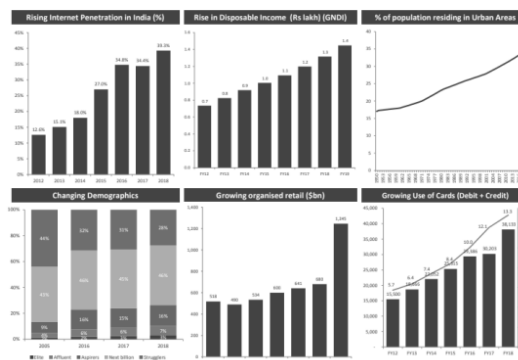


Figure 1 Trends in Demand Drivers
 Source: CMIE, United Nations Statistics, IBEF (April, 2019)

Note: Urban population as a percentage of the total population

The business of fashion has undergone a revolution in the digital age; consequently it has democratized, disrupted and even shifted the business model of the traditional fashion system (**Bendoni, 2017**). Figure 1 shows the Trends in Demand Drivers and the info graphic shows that the demand for textiles and apparel is being primarily driven by 1) rise in disposable income which increases ability to consume, 2) increased usage of plastic money leading to impulsive buying among the Indian consumers, 3) intensifying urbanization leading to demand of varied goods and services, 4) positive demographic dividend along with changing consumer preference (ready to stitch), 5) increased organized retail which increases availability and the rise of private labels coupled with increase in (Ready to wear) RTW rather than RTS (Ready to Stitch), and 6) growth of internet penetration and rise of e-commerce as a viable alternative sales channel.

2. Materials & Methods

2.1 Literature Review

Consumer behavior includes investigation of how individuals buy, what they buy when they buy and why they buy and it merges the components from Psychology, Sociology, Socio-brain science, Anthropology and Economics. Consumer Behavior Theories originated from psychology study in the beginning of 20 century, and did not become systematic theories until 1968. From the marketing perspective, consumer behavior research is a necessary tool for the marketers to understand their target market and consumer group, in order to develop marketing strategies. Firms can satisfy those needs only to the extent that they understand their customers. For this reason, marketing strategies must incorporate knowledge of consumer behaviour into every facet of a strategic marketing plan (**Solomon, 2002**). According to **Solomon & Rabolt (2004)**, consumer behaviour is the study of the processes involved when individuals or groups, select, purchase, use or dispose of products, services, ideas or experiences to satisfy needs and desires. Consumer behaviour research is the scientific study of the processes consumers use to select, secure, use and dispose of products and services that satisfy their needs. Knowledge of consumer behaviour directly affects marketing strategy (**Anderson et al, 2005**). Consumers buy items with which they feel familiar and comfortable. An individual's preferences and level of comfort is derived through the inherent things that guide them to make decisions. Fashion starts and ends at the consumer (**Kankanamge & Dinesha, 2014**). Although various factors influencing people's shopping behavior have been observed by **Berry (1996)**, **Kumar, Kim, and Pelton (2009)** have suggested that more studies are needed to determine the significant factors in relation to clothing interest and purchase intention.

Buying fashion is a complex process for consumers. Consumers' clothing interest is of great interest to the producers and retailers in the fashion industry. These industry players are eager to know what would create interest among the consumers in buying certain type of clothing (**Zeb, Rashid, and Javeed 2011**). The relation between dressing and the idea of individual expression is complex. It may be perceived in people's daily life through recurrent use of the same clothing colours, brands, fashion tendencies etc. Many people use contrasts and colours that express feelings according to their state of mind. Thus, the products' properties, like design, comfort, individuality, have a decisive role on apparel's buying behavior, which may vary depending on a set of factors, mainly on sex (**Fischer and Arnold, 1994**). The emotional aspects of self-image, impulse purchases and constantly changing fashion combine with cost, personal circumstances, massive over consumption and lack of awareness of the fashion industry to create a difficult set of behaviors to try to change.

Clothing is considered as one of the most common products used by individuals in addressing their psychodynamic and psychographic needs such as appearance, social status, and self-esteem (**Stan forth 2009**). **Isita and Pradip (1996)** did a study on factors influencing purchase of apparels from organized retail outlets. They arrived at a conclusion that frequent change in lifestyles with changing fashion preference of consumers is fed by the newer retail offerings coming from the organized retailers, where apparel gets utmost importance. Although **Kumar et al.'s (2009)** study found that the need for uniqueness and self-concept have a significant positive relationship with clothing interest, studies on clothing interest that considers the impact from the marketing aspects such as brand image and word of mouth are still scarce and have little empirical evidence. Furthermore, **Tsiotsou (2006)** has argued that the quality of clothing plays an important role in influencing individual's clothing interest. Studies have found a positive relationship between consumers' interest of clothing and their intention to purchase (**Kumar et al. 2009; Vikkraman and Sumathi 2012**). Other studies found that the level of price consciousness among the consumers will influence their purchase decision (**Gauzente and Roy 2012; Jayasingh and Eze 2012**).

Researchers in the past have attempted to study the consumer buying behavior pattern with regard to fashion apparels on various dimensions for e.g. **Kwan et al (2004)** mentions that researchers have identified many product attributes and criteria that are critical for fashion consumers in clothing purchases and basically all these can be summarized under intrinsic and extrinsic categories. They also identified five factors in clothing choice criteria viz. named product and self image related criteria, style and quality related criteria, durability and easy care, fit and sex appropriateness, and price. **Sproles and Kendall (1986)** established a model to conceptualize consumer's decision making behavior with eight consumer mental orientation variables viz., perfectionism consciousness, brand consciousness, novelty and fashion consciousness, impulsive and careless consumer, confused by over choice consumer, habitual and brand loyal consumer, recreational and hedonic shopping consciousness, and price and value consciousness. **Jin and Kang (2010)** in their study of purchase intention toward foreign brand jeans using four antecedents viz. face saving, attitude, perceived behavior control, and subjective norms found that face saving, attitude, perceived behavior control have significant influence of purchase intention where as subjective norms has not significant influence toward purchase intention. **Fernandez, P. (2009)**, in his study hypothesized that youth are brand conscious. He suggested that to create an image and identity, brand consciousness is the right choice. Peer influence plays a major role in choosing a brand while, advertisement plays a variable role. Branded clothes are highly impacted by

celebrity endorsement as it promotes image, status and quality. In this study, it was recommended that to maintain brand loyalty, brand managers should built emotional attachment and advertisement should be used to create brand preference and brand image. **Rajput et al. (2012)**, in their study characterized that the modern period gives high-quality materials and variety in Indian piece of clothing business sector to fulfil the want of consumers. The result of the study showed that Indian individuals have become brand conscious and brand image is not the only factor. Quality, solace, desires and statistic attributes are some factors which additionally impact and overwhelm the buying choice of consumers. **Mittal and Aggarwal (2012)**, in their study based on consumer perception towards branded garments and develops a relationship between demographic and psychographic profiles. According to this study, success of marketing can be understood by the behaviour of the consumer which includes mental, physical and emotional processes at every purchase of good and service.

2.2 Broad Objective of the Study

The main objective of this study is to understand the consumer buying behavior of fashion apparels and to gauge the customer response on different marketing mix elements and whether they have an impact on buying behavior.

2.3 Methodology, Research Area & Sampling Design

The textile, apparel (clothing) and footwear industries are what many consider to be elements of the fashion industry. However, the term fashion can be used more broadly and cover a much greater range of goods, like home furnishings, fabrics, curtains, various upholstery, and wall and floor coverings (**Hines & Bruce, 2017**). To succeed, companies must understand the different sources of customer intelligence and take advantage of tools that will help them get closer to them. This study is an effort in that direction. The quantitative research conducted as part of this study was of an explorative character focusing only on clothing & apparel and was conducted by means of a survey addressed directly to young male consumers. The research tool was a structured questionnaire consisting of questions, of which some were demographic.

A focus group discussion was carried out after the literature review to arrive at the questionnaire. 14 attributes were arrived at after the focus group discussion and they were classified as Intrinsic & Extrinsic attributes.

While no “official” categorization of attributes exists, most attributes can be identified as either intrinsic or extrinsic (Eckman, Damhorst, & Kadolph, 1990; Hatch & Roberts, 1985; May-Plumlee & Little, 2006; Szybillo & Jacoby, 1974). Intrinsic attributes are inherent physical attributes that if altered would change the product itself (Szybillo & Jacoby, 1974). Extrinsic attributes are external to the product design and may be applied by retailers, manufacturers or consumers (Eckman et al., 1990). For purposes of this study, intrinsic attributes can be considered either aesthetic or functional and extrinsic attributes can be identified as brand/situational or expressive/symbolic.

The experts who were part of the focus group discussion included:

1. 2 fashion brand experts
2. 2 retail store owners
3. 2 retail store managers
4. 4 customers (only men)
5. 2 marketing faculty from 2 B-Schools

Figure 2 highlights the organizational chart of the focus group planning

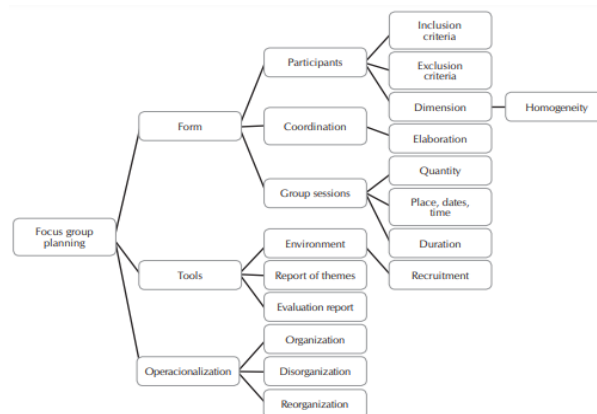


Figure 2 Organizational Chart of the Focus Group Planning

The questionnaire was administered to 545 respondents out of which 513 fully filled questionnaires were received. 13 questionnaires were discarded because of discrepancy in filled in data and finally 500 samples were used for analysis. Purposive sampling method was used in the study and study was conducted in Trivandrum, the capital city of Kerala.

3. Result & Discussion

This section deals with various results and findings obtained out of the estimation process. The results are divided among the different marketing mix elements.

3.1 Demographic Profit

Table 1 Age

Age	%
18-25	48.90
26-35	35.33
36-45	9.78
Above 45	5.99
Grand Total	100

Table 2 Marital Status

Marital Status	%
Single	67.47
Married	32.53
Grand Total	100

Table 3 Qualification

Qualification	%
Graduate	54.82
PG	23.69
Diploma	8.84
Others	12.65
Grand Total	100

Table 4 Income Level

Row Labels	%
No Income	23.2
Rs.5000-10000	10.8
Rs.10001-25000	29.2
Rs.25001-35000	18.6
Rs.35001-50000	10
Rs.50001& above	8.2
Grand Total	100

Table 1-4 highlights the demographic profile of the respondents who participated in the study. Majority of the respondents who participated in the study were in the age group of 18-25, who were mostly graduates and in the monthly income group of Rs.10, 001-Rs.25, 000. More than 60% of the respondents were single.

3.2 Preference for Fashion Apparels

Table 5 Preference for Fashion Apparels

Preference for fashion apparels	%	Preference for fashion apparel	%
Ready Made Garments	95.42	Branded	91.04
Customised Tailoring	4.58	Unbranded	8.96
Grand Total	100	Grand Total	100.00

From Table 5, it can be clearly inferred that customers prefer to buy ready-made garments (95.42%) and branded garments (91.04%) as against customized tailoring and unbranded garments.

3.3 Attributes for buying Fashion Apparels

Table 6 Attributes for Fashion Apparels

Category	Attributes	%
Intrinsic : Aesthetic	Colour /Pattern	92.2
	Appearance	76.41
Intrinsic : Functional	Styling (Sizing/Fit)	96.49
	Stitching	22.41
	Durability	41.91
	Ease of care	24.17
	Fabric	41.91
Extrinsic : Brand/Situational	Brand Name	84.21
	Versatility with existing Wardrobe	24.17
	Price	85.19
Extrinsic : Expressive/Symbolic	Suitability for the individual	58.87
	Promotes high self esteem	78.75
	Purpose of use	86.35
	Pleasing to others	25.73

A total of 14 attributes were considered in the study with 7 each being intrinsic and extrinsic attributes. Table 6 shows that respondents considered majority of attributes (8 out of 14 attributes) as an important criteria for purchase of men’s fashion apparels.

Only two extrinsic attributes seem not so important while four intrinsic attributes seem to be not so important. When studied as a whole, extrinsic attributes seem to be more important in the purchase of men’s fashion apparel, than intrinsic. Respondents clearly consider that Sizing/Fit & Colour/Pattern as more important than other attributes while Stitching, Ease of care, Versatility with existing wardrobe and “pleasing to others” are not important attributes.

3.4 Price Preference for buying Fashion Apparels

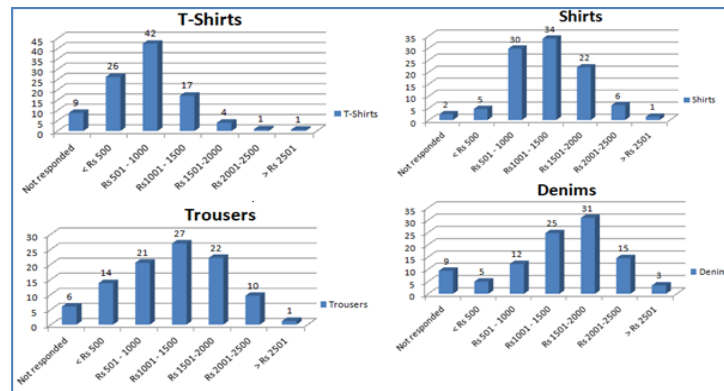


Figure-3 Price Preference for buying Fashion Apparels

Figure 3 clearly depicts that respondents prefer to buy T-Shirts in the price range of Rs.501-1000, shirts in the price range of Rs.1001-1500, Trousers in the range of Rs.1001-1500 & Denims in the range of Rs.1501-2000.

3.5 Place of Purchase of Fashion Apparel

Table 7 Place of Purchase of Fashion Apparel

Place of Purchase	%
Online	37.81
Single brand outlet	46.78
Multi Brand Outlet	78.16

Table 7 highlights the fact that respondents mostly prefer to buy from Multi Brand Outlet (78.16%) rather than Single Brand Outlet or through online platforms.

Promotions that Influence buying Fashion Apparels

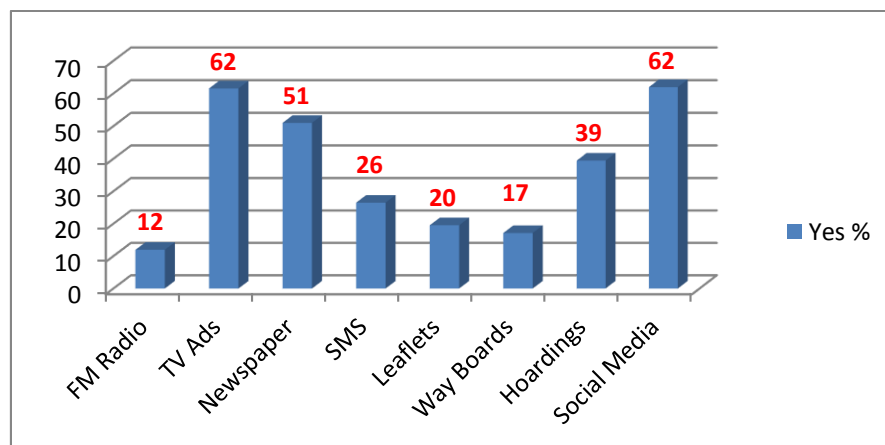


Figure 4 Promotions that Influence buying Fashion Apparels

Social Media Promotions (62%) and TV Ads (62%) both play an equal and major role in influencing the buying of fashion apparels as seen in Figure 4. The other mediums of promotion which have a significant influence on buying fashion apparels are Newspaper Advertisements followed by Hoardings.

3.6 Hypothesis Formed for the Study

Four hypotheses were formed to understand whether there is any significant relation between demographic variables & frequency of buying apparels. The hypothesis so formed where:

- H0:** There is significant relationship between age & frequency of buying apparels
- H2:** There is no significant relationship between age & frequency of buying apparels
- H0:** There is significant relationship between marital status & frequency of buying apparels
- H1:** There is no significant relationship between marital status & frequency of buying apparels
- H0:** There is significant relationship between qualification & frequency of buying apparels
- H3:** There is no significant relationship between qualification & frequency of buying apparels
- H0:** There is significant relationship between income level & frequency of buying apparels
- H4:** There is no significant relationship between income level & frequency of buying apparels

Table 8

CHI SQUARE TEST-AGE & FREQUENCY OF BUYING APPARELS			
	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	20.452 ^a	8	0.006
Likelihood Ratio	8.86	8	0.342
Linear-by-Linear Association	0.1	1	0.743
N of Valid Cases	500		

Table 8 shows whether there is significant relationship between age & frequency of purchase of apparels. As the obtained probable value of the test statistic is .006 and as it is below the critical value of 0 .05 at 5% level of significance, there is a significant relation between age & frequency of purchase of apparels. There by H0 is rejected.

Table 9

CHI SQUARE TEST-INCOME LEVEL & FREQUENCY OF BUYING APPARELS			
	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	30.767 ^a	16	0.013
Likelihood Ratio	17.754	16	0.326
Linear-by-Linear Association	3.129	1	0.069
N of Valid Cases	500		

It can be observed from Table 9 that as the obtained probable value of the test statistic is .013 and as it is below the critical value of 0 .05 at 5% level of significance, there is a significant relation between income level and frequency of buying apparels. There by H0 is rejected.

Table 10 Chi Square Test- Marital Status & Frequency of buying Apparels

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	19.926 ^a	12	.057
Likelihood Ratio	17.699	12	.119
Linear-by-Linear Association	1.965	1	.160
N of Valid Cases	500		

Table 10 exhibits the result of relationship between marital status & frequency of buying apparels. It can be inferred from the table that as the obtained probable value of the test statistic is 0.057 and as it is above the critical value of 0 .05 at 5% level of significance, there is no significant relation between marital status & frequency of buying apparels. So H0 is accepted.

Table 11 Chi Square Test-Qualification & Frequency of Buying Apparels

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	15.741 ^a	12	0.201
Likelihood Ratio	11.899	12	0.452
Linear-by-Linear Association	.287	1	0.539
N of Valid Cases	500		

It can be inferred from Table 12 that as the obtained probable value of the test statistic is 0.201 and as it is above the critical value of 0.05 at 5% level of significance, there is no significant relation between qualification and frequency of buying apparels. So H₀ is accepted.

4. Conclusions

From the study, it can be concluded that though there is significant relationship between age, income level & frequency of buying apparels, there is no significant relationship between marital status, qualification & frequency of buying apparels. This clearly shows that the buying behavior of customers differs according to age & income level. The buying behavior of customers is also different based on the intrinsic & extrinsic attributes and this complex nature of fashion consumption means that there is not one easy solution to motivate the customer to buy or demand sustainable fashion and textiles. The customers have varied thoughts with regard to price, place & promotion factors as well so a combined approach between the consumer and manufacturers needs to be developed in order to generate momentum and lasting change. In store experience is important, because if consumers get bored in store they go on their phones and can become disconnected to the brand / retailer. If they go on their phones, they might research lower prices or make a decision not to buy. That is why it is important to keep them immersed and interested in the experience of being in the store.

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