A STUDY ON CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR AND PREFERENCES TOWARDS APPAREL PURCHASE IN KARUR, TAMILNADU

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*“Apparel is anything you wear to protect,
wrap, or beautify your body”.*

Abstract
Indian apparel industry is highly fragmented in nature. It also has a vast existence in the economic life of the country. The Indian apparel industry has seen remarkable changes in the past few years and it is also one of the India's largest foreign exchange earners. The new generation of apparel manufacturers in India is geared to meet the global demands with highest quality assured. The apparel industry in India has substantially diversified on the basis of fashion, climate, region, culture and fiscal factors. Indian textile is witnessing great growth and development in the industrial sector in India as well as abroad. Apparel sector in totality contributes to the country's GDP after agriculture. The important segments covered in apparel industry include home decor and furnishings along with clothing and fashion accessories for kids, women and men. Apparel, is the second largest retail category in India. Retail boom in India continues to stimulate consumer demand for apparels and is estimated to grow at the rate of 12-15 per cent annually in terms of growth in rupee value. It seems to indicate that consumer life style and preferences are changing fast which is a prominent driving factor. It needs a careful analysis of the consumer for the purpose of knowing the attitude of the consumers in purchase of the apparels to stimulate the demand in apparel sector. Details regarding demographic, economic, social and behavioural characteristics of the consumer, consumer’s awareness, attitude, buying behaviour and preferences for buying apparels were taken as part of the survey. The researcher selected 100 respondents as sample in Karur town. The respondents were selected on the basis of simple random sampling technique.

Keywords: Apparel, Ethical Fashion, Consumer Behaviour.

Introduction

The Textiles and Clothing emphasizes the connections among the physical characteristics of textiles products, human perceptions of and behavior toward these products, and global economic trends affects the textiles/ apparel market place. India is the world's second largest producer of textiles and garments after China. It is the world's third largest producer of cotton after China and the USA and the second largest cotton consumer after China. The growth pattern of the Indian textile industry in the last decade has been considerably more than the previous decades, primarily on account of liberalization of trade and economic policies initiated by the Government in the 1990s.Apparel is an ideal industry for examining the dynamics of buyer driven value chains. The relative ease of setting up clothing companies, coupled with the prevalence of developed country protectionism in this sector, has led to an unparalleled diversity of garment exporters in the third world. The apparel market has seen considerable churning with respect to dressing pattern, style, usage of branded items, and choice of fibres and awareness of latest trends. The Indian textile industry is a sector which has generated employment in large scale and it stands next only to agriculture by providing employment to about 15 million people across rural as well as urban areas. Globally, the Indian retail market is the fifth largest in the world. Further proof of its growth has been indicated by various indicators of development. The apparel fashion plays a paramount role in shaping apparel consumerism. As lifestyles change, fashion in India is becoming more diversified, as in the Western countries. Technology, ideas and lifestyles are moving concurrently and quickly. Companies and brands that offered monotonous and mundane products for years, have now multiplied their product ranges and new appealing styles, shapes and forms are being launched each season by them. The Indian garment export industry is best known for its value additions and capabilities of small runs in mass to high fashion for the global apparel trade. Recently, India is increasingly being looked upon as a major supplier of high quality fashion apparels and Indian apparels have come to be appreciated in major markets internationally. Although the apparel industry seems to be in the maturity stage and growth is slow, fashion trend cycles are accelerating - it is generally observed that nowadays the average successful clothing trend lasts only six to twelve weeks. The presence of more and more brands has created a competitive environment unheard of in the past. The apparel products are identified by myriad physical characteristics which are perceived differently by various consumers. When considering a product purchase, consumers tend to compare and contrast alternative products made up of different attributes. The preference for items of apparel may depend on the joint influence of price and product attributes such as quality, style and brand. Branded apparels have not started to appeal the rural India to a large extent. The Indian apparel industry is estimated to be worth Rs. 1,876 billion in FY11 and its growth has increased at a CAGR of 8.7 per cent in FY16. The growth would primarily be driven by the surge in demand for

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readymade apparels in rural areas, rising income levels and youth population and increasing preference for branded apparels.The domestic apparel industry constitutes of five segments – men’s wear, women’s wear, Kids wear, unisex and uniforms. Menswear is the largest segment whereas uniforms and women’s wear are the fastest growing segments. Apparel manufacturing is the least capital intensive section of the textile value chain and is therefore characterized by low entry barriers. At the same time, it is highly labour intensive and requires skilled, unskilled and semi-skilled labourers.

Indian Apparel Industry: Facts
Largest producer of jute in the world, second largest producer of silk, third largest in cotton and second largest in cellulosic fibres, fifth largest in synthetic fibres/yarn. Apparel, is the second largest retail category in India. Retail boom in India continues to stimulate consumer demand for apparels and is estimated to grow at the rate of 12-15 per cent annually in terms of growth in rupee value. In fact, reflecting the huge opportunity in this segment, AT Kearney's 'Retail Apparel Index' ranks India as the third most attractive market for apparel retailers. Changing demographic profile works as a major stimulus to market development. India has a young consumer profile with over 65% of the population below 35 years of age. The composition of the Indian population is shifting more towards the age–group 20-49, viz, the working population with purchasing power.

Problem Focus
The fastest growth and development of apparel retailing environment, and understanding the psyche of customer is critical for today's business and environment. Aggregate or macro level information may mislead, so understanding at individual customer level is desirable. It is generally observed that customers have a wide range of choices for purchasing apparels and they have no clear vision to what they buy. Today's consumption in young Indian consumer has no limits they work hard and spend money for more non-essential products and it is been a driving factor and evolution in the Indian Apparel Retail sector.

Objectives of the Study
- To understand consumer behaviour of Indian consumer's towards apparels.
- To know whether and how some demographic variable of the respondents have influence in buying brand or non-branded apparel products.
- To know the role of family members, friends and peers in information search about the apparels.
- To study the attributes or sensory feelings of consumers towards Indian and western apparel.

Methodology
A study can be initiated with a proper design and methodology to bring out the suitable findings which are reliable and applicable to solve the problems and useful to carry out further research of interest. Primary data are collected by issuing questionnaires. Well structured questionnaire was framed and used for collection of data. Details regarding demographic, economic, social and behavioural characteristics of the consumer, consumer’s awareness, buying behaviour and preferences for buying apparels were taken as part of the survey. Besides, direct information has also been obtained in Karur Town. Secondary data and information were collected from the various books, journals and websites pertaining to the relevant matter of the subject under study.

Sampling
The sample population was the youngsters. The sampling was adopted to cover a sample size of 100 in each segment (50 male and 50 female) in Karur town. The respondents were selected on the basis of simple random sampling technique. The survey was done through the issue of questionnaire to consumers in Karur to have stability of response. The sample was heterogeneous to some extent as it includes male, female, and people from different distances, educational status, and occupation and income group of regular and occasional buyers.

Tools for Analysis
The data were analyzed by using appropriate statistical techniques such as Percentage analysis, Rank analysis, 5 point rating scale, and chi-square test. Further popular statistical techniques like tabulation, bar diagram and pie diagram have been adequately employed to highlight the customer preference and the factors influencing a customer to choose particular apparels.

Limitations of the Study
The present study was confined to study the behaviour and awareness towards ethical fashion among young Indian generation; hence extrapolation of the results may not be possible since there is a wide difference in customer preference. The study is restricted to Karur town. Owing to time and cost constraint the study is confined only to 100 samples. Some of the consumers were reluctant to give complete information about their apparel purchase. Details furnished in the questionnaire are treated as true.

Analysis and Interpretation

Age and Gender

Gender is also a very important and a distinguishing segmentation variable for marketers. This is more prominently visible in the clothing, hair dressing and magazines read by both the age groups – gender.

Table 1.01: Age Vs Gender

Age Group / Gender	Below 15 Years	15-20 Years	20–25 Years	Above 25 Years	Total	Percentage
Male	5	15	20	10	50	50
Female	7	15	16	12	50	50
Total	**12**	**30**	**36**	**22**	**100**	**100**

Source : Computed from Primary Data

The above table shows that among the 100 sample respondents, 50 per cent are male and 50 per cent are female. Out of which, 36 per cent belongs to 20-25 years, 30 per cent come under the age group of 15-20 years and 22 per cent of belongs to above 25 years and the rest of the respondents come under the category of below 15 years.

CHI – Square Test

H0: There is no significant relationship between Income and frequency of purchase of apparels.

Table 1.02: Income and Frequency of Purchase

Purchase interval	Below Rs.10,000	Rs.10,000 – Rs.20,000	Rs.12,000 – Rs.30,000	Rs.30,000	Total
Monthly	3	4	4	**5**	**16**
3 Months Once	3	3	4	**4**	**14**
6 Month Once	4	4	5	**5**	**18**
Need Based	3	5	6	**6**	**20**
Special Occasion	2	4	4	**4**	**17**
Others	2	4	4	**5**	**15**
Total	**17**	**24**	**27**	**28**	**100**

Calculated value of chi-square = .04
Table value @ 5% significant level, for 15 degrees of freedom = 24.996

The calculated value is less than the table value at 5% level of significance. Hence the hypothesis is accepted. So, we conclude that there is no significant relationship between the income and frequency of purchase of apparels.

H0:There is no significant relationship between gender and towards brand of apparels.

Table 1.03: Gender and Perception towards Brand

Brand features	Male	Female	Total
Brand Image	7	12	**19**
Quality	10	8	**18**
Value for Money	12	11	**23**
Availability of range of apparels	15	9	**24**
Convenience of many items	6	10	**16**
Total	**50**	**50**	**100**

Calculated value of chi-square = .41
Table value @ 5% significant level, for 4 degrees of freedom =9.488

The calculated value is less than the table value at 5% level of significance. Hence the hypothesis is accepted. So, we conclude that there is no significant relationship between the gender and perception towards brand of apparels.

Table 1.04: Gender Vs Fashion / Style

	Male	Female	Total	Percentage
Casual	25	34	59	59
Party	7	14	21	21
Executive	14	1	15	15
Street Fashion	4	1	5	5
Total	**50**	**50**	**100**	**100**

Source : Computed from Primary Data

It is inferred from the above table on average 59 per cent of the respondents would like to buy casual apparels followed by party wear (21%). Women tend to shop more casual and party wear but men prefer to buy executive wear. Majority of the respondents prefer casual wear.

Priority of Sensory Feeling

The following four main opinions about the importance to sensory feeling of apparels while purchasing by the respondents have been identified and analyzed. Touch, Smell, Visual, Taste. The respondents were asked to give their opinion about the sensory feeling of apparels on a 5 point scale, the weighted average score was calculated for each opinion.

Table 1.05: Priority of Sensory Feeling

Opinion	Weighted Average Score
Touch	3.45
Smell	3.20
Visual	2.94
Taste	3.26
Total	**100**

Source: Computed from Primary Data

The above table shows that among the five opinions 'touch' has the highest weighted average score followed by 'taste'. Next to taste 'smell' have the weight age and 'visual' scores the least weighted average score.

Table 1.06: Rank The Product Features

Product Features	I		II		III		IV		V		Total no. of respondents	Total Score	Mean Score	Rank
	No. of respondents	Scores	No. of respondents	Scores	No. of respondents	Scores	No. of respondents	Scores	No. of respondents	Scores				
Product Quality	20	100	15	60	20	60	30	60	15	15	100	295	2.95	IV
Price	10	50	20	80	15	45	30	60	25	25	100	260	2.6	V
Brand Name	28	140	24	96	17	51	15	45	16	16	100	348	3.48	II
Style and Fit	25	125	20	80	10	30	25	100	20	20	100	355	3.55	I
Product Variety	30	150	10	40	25	75	15	30	20	20	100	315	3.15	III

Scores: Rank I = 5, Rank II = 4, Rank III = 3, Rank IV = 2, Rank V = 1

Source : Computed from Primary Data

It is inferred from the above table that the sample consumers while shopping gives their first preference to the style and fit, next to it the respondents look into the product quality followed by price which scores III rank. Brand name score, IV rank

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and product variety is ranked number five by the respondents. Thus, it can be concluded that respondents give first preference to style and fit while purchasing apparels.

Findings

- India has emerged the third most attractive market destination for apparel retailers. The apparel industry seems to be in the maturity stage and growth is slow, fashion trend cycles are accelerating. It is generally observed that nowadays the average successful clothing trend lasts only six to twelve weeks.
- The domestic demand is projected to go up at a CAGR of 10.5% by value over the next 3 years. In volume terms the growth rate is expected to be 5% per year in the next three years.
- Majority of the respondents (36%) belonged to the age group of 20–25 years and visited the shops 3 months once for purchasing apparels.
- 46 per cent of the respondents do not purchase apparels frequently due to non – availability of range of apparels and prefer domestic brand.
- 20 per cent of respondents purchase apparels from Chennai silks.
- It is understood that 30 per cent of the respondents got information from radio and TV advertisement.
- It could be inferred that most of the sample consumers think about the quality of apparels while purchasing. Most (54%) of the respondents want their garment to be fashion / stylish.
- It is found that 52 per cent of the respondents are influenced by trend and opine that they dislike fashion as it changes quickly.
- It is inferred that on average 59 per cent of the respondents would like to buy casual apparels. From the research it can be concluded that the respondents give first preference to style and fit while purchasing apparels.
- Majority of the respondents give first preference to design as it scores the highest weighted average score.
- It is clearly seen that most of the respondents purchase apparels based on sensory feelings. It can be found that most of the respondents purchase Indian brands as they feel that these types of apparels have good sensory feelings.
- 60 per cent of the respondents came to know about ethical products through friends or media.
- Majority of the sample consumers are not aware of ethical products, and so they are not purchasing ethical products and could not make a final decision on considering ethical fashion product as an option during their purchase.
- It is inferred that 28 per cent of the respondents came to know about the ethical fashion through productions using green energy and the consumer felt the price of ethical fashion products are costly.

Suggestion

- Consumers should look for sustainable products as that will lead to a better living. The Indian consumers are not thinking about sustainable products and that leads to lot of usage of natural resources. At some point those resources are going to be extinct and so traditional methods of manufacturing apparels should be resorted to usage.
- Indigenous technologies should be developed to ensure sustainability.
- The consumers should be advised about ethical fashion products as they are the prime buyers of those products in the future. It is very important to get this group understand the benefit of ethical fashion products.
- Face book and blogs are used by young Indians to just pass time ; these media can be used to promote awareness on ethical, sustainable fashion.

Conclusion

The apparel fashion plays a paramount role in shaping apparel consumerism. As lifestyles change, fashion in India is becoming more diversified, as in the western countries. Technology, ideas and lifestyles are moving concurrently and quickly. The apparel products are identified by myriad physical characteristics which are perceived differently by various consumers. The preference for items of apparel may depend on the joint influence of price and product attributes such as quality, style and brand. Today's consumption in young Indian consumer has no limits. They work hard and spend money for more non-essential products and it is been a driving factor and is an evolution in the Indian apparel retail sector. Consumers of the age group 15 – 20 who are the pioneers of next generation are interested in western outfits and that has led to decline in traditional wear in India. Consumers are not aware of ethical fashion product which has to be insisted more in the minds of consumers. Consumers like to wear more fashionable, stylish and comfortable clothing associated with sensory feelings like touch, smell and visual. To conclude the youngsters is more inclined towards casual wear and that is due to the impact of westernization. In India there was only traditional wear (dhotis, sarees, salwar and trousers) and there were no casual and formal wears. However the latest advancements in information technology have shown the Indian consumers, what is casual wear and formal wear. The research seems to indicate that the consumer's life style and preferences are changing fast related to apparels.

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