
A Study on Consumer Culture and Purchase Intentions towards Fashion Apparel In Jamnagar City

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ABSTRACT:

This study examines the effectiveness of different fashion marketing strategies and analyzes of the consumer behavior in a cross-section of demographic settings in reference to fashion apparel retailing. This paper also discusses the marketing competencies of fashion apparel brands and retailers in reference to brand image, promotions, and external market knowledge. The study examines the determinants of consumer behavior and their impact on purchase intentions towards fashion apparel. The results reveal that socio cultural and personality related factors induce the purchase intentions among consumers. One of the contributions that this research extends is the debate about the converging economic, cognitive and brand related factors to induce purchase intentions. Fashion loving consumers typically patronage multi-channel retail outlets, designer brands, and invest time and cost towards an advantageous product search. The results of the study show a positive effect of store and brand preferences on developing purchase intentions for fashion apparel among consumers.

Keywords: Consumer behavior, purchase intention, socio-cultural values, designer brands, store brands, fashion apparel.

1. INTRODUCTION:

Globalization has catalyzed the growth of fashion industry and the marketplace attractions have driven the cultural attributes of consumers significantly across various consumer segments. Shifts in the cultural values, consumer preferences, and purchase intentions towards designer products is arguably the most critical issue faced by the marketing managers today. Many researchers argue that increasing globalization is reducing the homogeneity of consumer behaviors within countries, while increasing communalities across

countries (Cleveland and Laroche, 2007). Most firms manufacturing designer apparel are trying to bridge intercultural differences and building cultural consonance across consumer segments on a variety of contexts that stimulates interest in fashion apparel. Customer centric market strategy developed on self-esteem attributes of consumer is used by the firms to enhance purchase intentions towards fashion apparel (Horowitz, 2009). Powerful market stimulants such as fashion shows on television, fashion advertisements, in-store displays, and fashion events in the urban shopping malls have influenced the transnational cosmopolitanism among consumers. Such interactive marketing strategies of fashion apparel have shown convergence of traditional and modern values and lifestyle to develop a homogeneous global consumer culture. The conventional method of using societal icons as the cultural drivers have now been replaced by global fashion players with flagship brands as a basis for product position and market segmentation. It is found that multi-channel systems of brand building and differentiation influence the consumers towards fashion apparel and need is created at local levels supportive of, and constituted by, cultural industries. Globalization and increasing competition, and short product life cycles in fashion retailing cultivate asymmetric consumer behavior and pose a number of marketing challenges for retail firms in Jamnagar. In order to survive in this industry, it is vital for manufacturers and retailers to develop and leverage core marketing capabilities. This study examines the effectiveness of different fashion marketing strategies and analysis of the consumer behavior in a cross-section of demographic settings in reference to fashion apparel retailing. This paper also discusses the marketing competencies of fashion apparel brands and retailers in reference to brand image, promotions, and external-market knowledge. The study examines the determinants of consumer behavior and their impact on purchase intentions towards fashion apparel. Consumer market for fashion apparel has become more diverse by designer brands, store brands, personalization, advertising, and ethnicity in the global marketplace. If manufacturers and retailers of fashion apparel can identify the target consumers' preferences, they may be better able to attract and maintain their target consumer group. However, little research has been conducted to investigate the factors influencing the apparel shopping behaviors among Gujarati consumers. Thus, the purpose of the present study is to investigate the attributes of shopping designer apparel among consumers in Jamnagar, India.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE & HYPOTHESIS FRAMEWORK

2.1 Shifts in Consumer Fashion Culture

Traditional clothing practice is often assimilated to the generic preferences of ethnic dressing. Thus, modern fashion apparel market has emerged with the announcement that ethnic dressing comes from the core of the traditional culture whose gorgeous fabrics have been face lifted as convenience apparel within societal value and lifestyle (VALS) system. The fashion apparel has built the image in the market by characterizing as sexually ardent designs for passionate male and female shoppers (Narumi, 2000). It is argued that shifts in consumer culture provide a stimulus to dynamic innovation in the arena of personal taste and consumption. Such dynamism in consumer preferences is considered as part of an international cultural system and is driven by continuous change in VALS. The consumer values like functionality, fitness for purpose and efficiency significantly contribute in driving cultural change and recognizing suitable fashion to strategically fit with the lifestyles (Hartley and Montgomery, 2009). The growing technology led apparel selling is one of the major stimulants for inducing change in fashion and consumer culture.

Hence, the following hypothesis can be laid:

H1: Consumer culture on fashion apparel is influenced by life style and value simulations.

H2: Personalization of fashion apparel stimulates self-esteem among consumers that enhances social values.

H3: Family and external lifestyle and values impel consumer culture on designer brands and fashion apparel.

2.2 Store Brands Response

Departmental stores and Lifestyle Centers develop their apparel store brands to generate store loyalty among consumers. The store brands are displayed in these stores alongside the designer apparel brands. The changing dynamics of the fashion industry have forced retailers to aim at low cost marketing strategies and flexibility in design, and improving speed of penetration in market to gain competitive advantage. The concept of 'throwaway' or fast fashion had emerged since 1990 in the global marketplace, which describes that fast fashion

drifts from a manufacturers to retailers and consumers. The store brands have emerged rapidly in the fashion market considering the fast growth of fashion (Bharadwaj and Fairhurst, 2010). Store fashion brands are designed and developed considering consumer perceptions on the store image. The shopping satisfaction of fashion apparel includes consumers' perceptions of store attributes as well as subjective evaluations of products purchased from the store by the consumers themselves or by their fellow shoppers. Store brand impact is largely derived also through the word-of-mouth interaction. However, response to the store brands appears to be more complex in nature than a simple affective summary of the relative frequencies of positive and negative emotion during consumption experiences (Torres et al, 2001). Another factor that affects the consumer decision on store brands is the recognition of the role of store sales personnel in a retail environment. It has been observed that effective sales people not only influence the shopping process but may also influence the consumers to switch their store patronage. Consumers may abandon one store brand to follow specific sales and service personnel to a new store brand (Terblanche and Boshoff, 2005). The retail stores play major role in influencing consumers for both store and manufacturer's brands. Attitude toward promoted brands is characterized by positive store image, smart shopper self-perception, need for affiliation, and money attitude regarding power-prestige and anxiety. However, attitude of consumers towards store brands is determined by more positive store image, price advantage, range of products to exercise buying options, and loyalty and trust related factors (Liu and Wang, 2008). In view of the above discussion, the hypothesis may be framed as:

H4: Consumers develop loyalty for store brand fashion apparel considering the store image and informal communication among fellow shoppers.

H5: Relatively low prices, range of designs, and image of store motivate consumers to choose store brands for buying fashion apparel

2.3 Purchase Intentions

The fashion apparel has short product life-span and is influenced largely by the celebrity promotions, visual merchandizing, and store ambience. The multi-channel systems of brand

building and differentiation at regional and local levels supported by cultural forums in the local markets drive the purchase intentions of consumers. Besides retail stores, fashion and design-based industrial actors also contribute to creating images and myths that support consumers' orientation towards buying fashion apparel (Jansson and Power, 2010). Purchase intentions of consumers on fashion apparel are influenced by psychodynamics and social factors. Consumer perceptions on buying fashion apparel are based on five factors that include perceptual leadership and perceived role models in the society, matching attire status to employment and workplace ambience, socialization with peers and people they like, self-esteem and fun, and respectful treatment in the society (Stanforth, 2009). In recent past conscience among men and women on a body of critical scholarship emerged globally that stimulated the feel of newness and feminisms. Fashion magazines have become emblematic of feminism, a form of 'third-wave' feminist engagement that revalues activities and interests traditionally associated with femininity, such as knitting, fashion clothing, and make-up (Groeneveld, 2009). Fashion magazines are the perfect medium to influence the fashion adaptation within the larger thesis of global-local effects. These magazines along with television fashion shows influence consumers on the process of fashion adaptation, which begins with product conceptualization and self-esteem in the society (Tay, 2009). As women's purchase behavior is very different from men's, it is essential for businesses that target female consumers to make a shift in marketing strategies and include factors other than socio-cultural characteristics. Fashion-involved female consumers are considered as the drivers and legitimists of the fashion adoption process (Belleau, et al, 2008). Considering the previous studies discussed above, the hypothesis may be developed as:

H6: Purchase intention on fashion apparel is largely influenced by the socio-cultural movements and media shows that drive involvement with the products and message.

H7: Celebrity promotions of fashion apparel intensely drive purchase intentions as consumers involve in personating celebrities.

3. STUDY DESIGN

3.1 Sampling

In order to measure the purchase intentions of consumers for fashion apparel driven by the arousal and merriment situation, respondents including both men and women between the age group of 18-45 years were selected. The study was conducted among the shoppers of five stores in Jamnagar specialized in retailing fashion and designer apparel. Of selected stores for the study, Liverpool, Jade Blue, and Levis were catering to consumers of the A/B and C+ demographic segments, while Cotton County and Black Berry's served the consumers of C and D+ demographic segments. All the selected stores also had their store brands in fashion apparel. The September- December has been identified as leisure period as the early sales for the Diwali begin from September in Gujarat. The data was collected on 35 variables that were closely related towards influencing the customer values. These variables include various perspectives of brand equity, social value, store image, customer satisfaction and promotional strategies applied in positioning the fashion and designer apparel for gaining optimal market share and aggregate value on shopping. In all 11 fashion apparel designer brands spread over men (Levis, Lacoste, Wrangler and Jade Blue) and women (Nautica, Penney Black, Raulf Lauren, Folly's, Ivonne, Liz Clabourne, and GAP). Besides the designer apparel brands 5 store brands of above mentioned retail stores were covered under this study. Data was collected from 236 respondents purposively selected, who were involved in shopping at chosen retail self-service stores in Jamnagar, administering a semi structured questionnaire. Of the total sample respondents, men constituted 23.72 percent and women shoppers represented 76.28 percent. The data of 19 respondents were omitted from the data analysis due to paucity of information. The respondents were involved in buying the trend apparel of contemporary designs including designer fashion brands. In all, the data of 217 observations were analyzed in the study. It has been found that the overall response rate in the survey was 91.94 percent. The data collected from respondents were tested for its reliability applying the Cronbach Alfa test. Variables derived from test instruments are declared to be reliable only when they provide stable and reliable responses over a repeated administration of the test. The test results showed high reliability () $81.0 = \alpha$ on an average for all observations included for analysis in reference to all variables pooled under different segments.

3.2 Data Collection Tools

Initially focus group discussion was carried out of a representative sample from selected industries in order to assess the responsibility of direct supervision of sales people in industrial selling situations and the sale administration process in general. Based on the process flow in sales administration, major variable segments were identified keeping in view the objectives of the study. Accordingly pre-coded questionnaires were developed for the study and administered to the respondents. Besides questions with pre-coded options, some open ended questions were also administered separately for qualitative assessment of the responses. The content analysis was done to summarize the open ended questions using software QSR NVivo2. This software has powerful tools for combining subtle coding with qualitative linking, shaping and modeling qualitative information. The analysis of qualitative responses has largely benefited in deriving appropriate managerial implications of the study.

3.3 Attributes of Instrument

Data was collected on the variables closely related towards influencing the buying behavior of fashion apparel encompassing overall customer satisfaction, in-store shopping arousal, and retailing strategies. The results on the analysis of the selected variables refer to the short term customer values associated with the arousal and happiness on the fashion apparel. Seven sources of influence included co-workers, peers in school, family members, spouse, friends, public celebrities (e.g. movie stars) and salespeople at the store. Eight impersonal sources of influence included fashion magazines, non-fashion magazines, catalogues, internet, television programs, fashion models, observed street-wear, and store displays. Respondents were asked to indicate on a four-point Likert scale (1 – Totally agree; 4 –Totally disagree) when they make a purchase decision on fashion apparel. Much research in academia uses a five-point scale because researchers believe that it may produce more reliable or valid results. However, the response format of this study used a four-point scale because the researchers believed that deleting the neutral point might result in more accurate responses. The general information on respondents included age, gender, education, annual household income, and country-of-origin.

3.4 Analyzing Non-responsiveness

Questionnaires were administered to 236 respondents. However, the information of only 217 respondents qualified for the data analysis. The non-response bias has been measured applying two statistical techniques. Firstly, telephonic conversations were made with those respondents who either did not respond to the questions of survey or gave incomplete information of their preference to marketplace, store brands, lifestyle perceptions and logistics related issues (Gounaris et al, 2007). It was found that the main reason for the lack of response showing 42.10 percent respondents of the non-response cases was low confidence level of participation while 31.57 percent subjects failed to respond all Questions of the survey due to paucity of time and 26.33 percent subjects depended on their accompanying persons to offer responses who could not do so. The customer response is considered as unit of analysis of this study. Secondly, *T-tests* were used to ascertain emerging differences between respondents and non-respondents concerning the issues pertaining to market orientation and customer services strategies

4. RESULTS

Confirmatory Factor Analysis and Scale Reliability

Clothing theorists have devoted considerable attention to understanding the motivations and behaviors of fashion innovators. The results of the study are analyzed in reference to a wide range of variables such as personal values, attitudes and socio-economic considerations that affect the purchase intentions of consumers towards fashion apparel. It has been observed that the longer the consumers are attracted by the advertisement, innovation, technology, perception drives through '*do it yourself*' (DIY) tools, celebrity promotions, and store attractions, the more spendthrift they become as purchase intentions get stronger.

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