

Fashion Retail Consumer Behaviour: An Empirical Examination of Shopping Habits

S. Ramesh Babu¹

Assistant Professor (Sl. G), Mepco School of Management Studies
Mepco Schlenk Engineering College (Autonomous), Sivakasi, Tamil Nadu, India.

L. Ivan Kenny Raj²

Assistant Professor Mepco School of Management Studies
Mepco Schlenk Engineering College (Autonomous), Sivakasi, Tamil Nadu, India.

T. Manoj Kumar³

Assistant Professor Mepco School of Management Studies
Mepco Schlenk Engineering College (Autonomous), Sivakasi, Tamil Nadu, India.

T. Pranav Priyan⁴

Student, MBA Program (2022-2024), Mepco School of Management Studies
Mepco Schlenk Engineering College (Autonomous), Sivakasi, Tamil Nadu, India.

Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to S.Ramesh Babu, Assistant Professor (Sl.G), Mepco Scholl of Management Studies, Mepco Schlenk Engineering College (Autonomous), Sivakasi, Tamil Nadu, India

E-Mail: srbabu@mepcoeng.ac.in

Abstract

This study investigates the factors influencing consumer preferences in selecting fashion outlets in Chennai, India. Both primary and secondary data were used in this descriptive research. A structured questionnaire was administered to 423 customers visiting various fashion outlets, with 412 male and 11 female respondents. The study employed a multi-stage random sampling method, combining purposive and simple random sampling techniques. Demographic analysis revealed that the majority of respondents were male (97.4%), aged 25-34 (60.5%), unmarried (63.2%), degree holders (75.1%), and employed in private organizations (61.7%). Consumer behaviour patterns indicated a preference for offline shopping (62%) and purchasing frequency of every six months (32.3%). A Structural Equation Model was developed and analyse the factors affecting consumer preferences. The model demonstrated good fit (CMIN/DF = 1.161, RMSEA = 0.019, CFI = 0.997). Key factors influencing consumer attraction to fashion outlets included promotions, shop location, external influences, and services. The study provides valuable insights for fashion retailers to enhance their marketing strategies and improve consumer attraction and preference.

Key Words: *Fashion outlet, Consumer behaviour, Store location, Promotion*

1. Introduction and Review

Fashion, as a multifaceted phenomenon, extends far beyond the realm of clothing. It encompasses a wide array of lifestyle choices, including speech patterns, food preferences, cosmetic selections, and accessory choices. This ever-evolving field is characterized by rapidly shifting trends, making it a dynamic area of study within consumer behaviour research (V, 2024). The study of individual buyer behaviour in the fashion industry is a methodical and scientifically rigorous process, focusing on the intricate decision-making pathways that consumers navigate when selecting, acquiring, utilizing, and eventually disposing of fashion-related products and services (Kumar, 2021). The significance of understanding consumer behaviour in the fashion industry cannot be overstated. Extensive empirical studies have demonstrated that a profound comprehension of consumer preferences and decision-making processes directly influences the formulation and implementation of effective marketing strategies (Maciej Urbaniak, 2023). This understanding enables fashion enterprises to resonate with and effectively target potential consumers in an increasingly competitive market landscape.

A multitude of factors contribute to shaping contemporary fashion trends and influencing consumer behaviour. These can be broadly categorized into demographic, psychological, social, economic, and environmental factors. Research indicates that age, gender, marital status, educational achievement, professional occupation, and financial condition play pivotal roles in shaping fashion preferences and purchasing behaviours (V, 2024). For instance, a study by Kim (2015) found that age, income, and occupation significantly influenced fashion outlet selection among Korean consumers. Youngsters and higher income individuals were more likely to choose fast-fashion retailers, while elders and lower income individuals preferred traditional department stores. Gender differences in fashion consumption have also been observed. Zhang (2017) revealed that women were more likely to choose fashion outlets based on brand reputation, quality, and style, while men prioritized price and convenience. This aligns with V's (2024) findings that women generally place greater emphasis on emotional connections and social dynamics in their shopping experiences, whereas men tend to focus more on practicality and efficiency. Education levels have been found to correlate with preferences for sustainable and eco-friendly products in fashion retail (Khan, 2018), indicating a growing awareness of environmental issues among more educated consumers.

The psychological and social dimensions of fashion consumption are complex and multifaceted. Now a days, Social media, is a powerful tool in shaping consumer perceptions and attitudes towards fashion trends and brands (V, 2024). The desire for social approval, self-expression, and identity construction through fashion choices are significant psychological drivers of consumer behaviour in this sector. Economic considerations, such as disposable income and credit availability, significantly influence fashion outlet selection and purchasing behaviour (Prasad, 2012). Additionally, increasing awareness of environmental issues has led to a growing segment of consumers seeking sustainable and eco-friendly fashion options (Khan, 2018).

The retail environment plays a crucial role in shaping the behaviour of the individual buyer and their preferences in the fashion industry. Several key aspects of the retail experience have been identified as significant influencers of consumer decision-making. The ambiance within retail establishments, including store layout, lighting, and overall design, has been found to significantly impact purchasing decisions and overall buying behaviour (Maciej Urbaniak, 2023). Chen (2017) revealed that consumers preferred fashion outlets with modern and trendy store designs. Zulu (2021) emphasized the importance of store layout, lighting, and employee-customer interactions in creating enjoyable shopping experiences, which in turn influence customer satisfaction and repeat purchase intentions.

The variety and quality of merchandise offered by fashion retailers are critical factors in consumer preferences. Raghani (2022) found that a wider assortment of products and higher quality merchandise influenced consumers' preferences for particular fashion outlets. Traditional department stores are often preferred over factory outlets due to their wider selection and perceived superior quality of merchandise (Ali, 2018). The geographical positioning of fashion retail outlets plays a significant role in consumer choice. Studies by Kumar and Chaudhuri (2000, 2013) indicated that store distance was a crucial factor, with consumers preferring stores closer to their homes or workplaces. Barreto (2023) corroborated this, noting that proximity to residential areas was a prime consideration for consumers. Additionally, Park (2019) found that consumers valued fashion outlets with convenient locations, easy parking, and extended shopping hours.

Price consciousness and promotional offers significantly influence consumer behaviour in fashion retail. Ali (2018) noted that price-conscious customers prefer to shop in factory outlets. Kumar (2016) found that consumers favour multi-brand outlets due to discounts and promotional offers. Kim (2015) identified sales promotions as a significant factor influencing fashion outlet selection among Korean consumers. The importance of creating captivating and immersive in-store experiences has been highlighted by several researchers. Nakashima (2023) noted that consumers actively seek a sense of assurance and unexpected delight through tangible encounters with physical products. Sinha (2019) emphasized the significance of in-store experiences for Indian fashion retailers in crafting immersive shopping journeys that enhance the satisfaction level of customers and foster loyalty, particularly in the context of increasing digital shopping trends. Research has highlighted the importance of understanding cultural and market-specific nuances in fashion consumer behaviour. Kumar (2021) noted that successful fashion enterprises in India have meticulously analysed the intricate consumer habits prevalent within the nation, taking into account the multifaceted composition of the Indian customer demographic and their distinct preferences.

This paper aims to provide the factors influencing fashion consumer behaviour, with a particular focus on retail preferences and purchasing decisions. By synthesizing findings from this study, we seek to offer valuable insights for fashion retailers, marketers, and researchers in navigating the complex terrain of consumer behaviour in the fashion industry.

2. Methodology

This study employed a descriptive research design, utilizing both primary and secondary data to investigate the factors influencing fashion outlet selection among customers in Chennai. The primary data was collected through a structured questionnaire administered to customers visiting various fashion outlets in Chennai. The questionnaire was designed to gather information on demographic characteristics, shopping habits, and preferences of customers. A total of 423 customers participated in the survey, providing a comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing their fashion outlet selection. The secondary data was obtained from various sources, including journals, literature, and websites of fashion outlets. This data provided a foundation for understanding the existing research on the topic and informed the development of the questionnaire. The research approach used in this study was survey research, which involved collecting data from a sample of customers visiting fashion outlets in Chennai.

The sampling unit for this study was customers visiting various fashion outlets in Chennai. However, the population size was unknown, making it challenging to determine the sample size. To address this, a multi-stage random sampling method was employed. This method involved dividing the population into smaller groups and randomly selecting one or more groups for sampling. In the first stage, a purposive random sampling method was used to select five leading fashion outlets in Chennai, namely Zudio, Max Fashion, Westside, Pantaloons, and Trends. These outlets were chosen based on their reputation and popularity among customers in Chennai. In the second stage, a simple random sampling method was used to select customers visiting these fashion outlets. This method ensured that each customer had an equal chance of being selected, reducing the risk of sampling bias and selection bias. The survey was administered to customers who visited these outlets during a specified period, and a total of 423 customers participated in the study. The sample size was deemed sufficient to provide a representative picture of the factors influencing fashion outlet selection among customers in Chennai.

The data collection tool used in this study was a structured questionnaire, which was designed to gather information on demographic characteristics, shopping habits, and preferences of customers. The questionnaire was pilot-tested to ensure its validity and reliability. The data collected through the survey was analysed using descriptive statistics and inferential statistics to identify the factors influencing fashion outlet selection among customers in Chennai. The use of a multi-stage random sampling method and a structured questionnaire ensured that the data collected was reliable and representative of the population. The sample size of 423 customers provided a comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing fashion outlet selection, and the results of this study can be generalized to the population of customers visiting fashion outlets in Chennai. The study's findings have implications for fashion retailers in Chennai, highlighting the importance of understanding customer preferences and shopping habits to inform marketing strategies and improve customer satisfaction.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. Respondents Profile and Purchasing Pattern

The below table 1, shows that the researcher gathered data from a group of 412 men and 11 women. The information collected demonstrates that 60.5% of respondents were aged between 25 and 34 years, while 63.2% were unmarried, 75.1% had a degree, and 61.7% were working for private organisations. Additionally, 57.2% of the people who answered the survey stated their household income was between ₹35,000 and ₹50,000, with 56% showing a likelier inclination to shop for clothes in physical retail locations rather than in malls. Additionally, 62% of the consumers indicated a preference for the convenience of purchasing apparel through offline or direct visits rather than online methods. Moreover, 32.3% of the consumers stated that they purchase apparel with a frequency of every six months, while 37.5% of the consumers were prompted to visit apparel shops primarily for offers and discounts. A notable 35.6% of buyers revealed their readiness to allocate between ₹2,001 and ₹3,000 for apparel purchases.

Table 1: Respondent's Profile

Distribution of respondents	Respondent's characteristics	Frequency	%
Gender	Male	412	97.4%
	Female	11	2.6%
Age group	18-24	112	26.5%
	25-34	256	60.5%
	35-44	55	13%
Education Qualification	HSC(+2)	6	1.4%
	PG	99	23.4%
	UG	318	75.2%
Marital Status	Married	156	36.8%
	Unmarried	267	63.2%
Occupation	Student	103	24.3%
	Public Employment	23	5.4%
	Private Employment	261	61.8%
	Home maker	3	0.7%
	Business	33	7.8%
Consumer convenience to buy apparels	Offline/direct visit	262	62%
	Online	161	38%
Preference of consumer to buy apparels	In Stores	237	56%
	In Shopping malls	186	44%
Consumer prompt to visit apparels shop	Offers and discounts	159	37.5%
	New arrivals	106	25.05%
	Special occasions	89	21.04%
	Seasonal needs	47	11.1%
	Gift shopping	22	5.2%
Consumers frequency of purchase in apparels	Every 6 months	137	32.3%
	Every 3 months	121	28.6%
	Every 2-3 months	99	23.4%
	Occasionally	34	8.03%
	Once a month	29	6.8%
	Rarely	2	0.5%
	Annually	1	0.2%
Consumer willingness to spend on apparels	₹2001-3000	151	35.6%
	₹3001-4000	132	31.2%
	₹4001-5000	98	23.2%
	Below ₹2000	31	7.3%
	Above ₹5000	11	2.6%

3.2. Reliability test

Table 2 Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
0.782	14

Cornbach’s alpha is used for calculating reliability of the survey instruments that use Likert-type response sets. The thumb rule is that a Cornbach’s alpha of 0.70 and above is good, 0.80 and above is better and 0.90 and above is best.

The table 2 shows that the Cornbach’s alpha value is greater than 0.70 it shows that the survey data is reliable.

3.3. Consumer Preference (SEM MODEL)

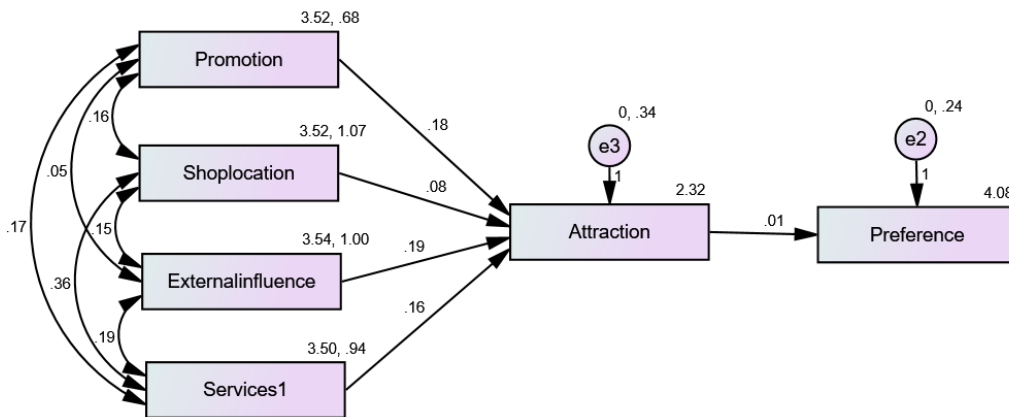


Figure 1 Consumer Preference Model in selecting fashion outlets

Table 3: Fitness of Consumer Preference Model in selecting fashion outlets

Probability level	CMIN/DF	RMSEA	NFI	RFI	IFI	TLI	CFI
0.326	1.161	0.019	0.981	0.900	0.997	0.985	0.997

The table presented above expounds on the degree of adequacy of the model constructed for gauging the preference of customers in selecting fashion retail outlets. The probability level of obtaining chi-square statistic for the aforementioned model is 0.326, which is higher than the standard alpha level of 0.05. This, in turn, guarantees the statistical accuracy of the assumptions made regarding the relationship between the variables utilized in the specified model.

The value of Minimum Discrepancy Function divided by Degrees of Freedom (CMIN/DF) for the model is 1.161, which falls below the threshold of 5 and hence represents an optimal fit for the data utilized in the construction of the model. Additionally, the value of Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) is 0.019, which is below the recommended threshold of 0.08 and is indicative of good model fitness. Moreover, a fit index value greater than 0.9 is considered a positive indicator of model fit, and for the aforementioned consumer preference model, the values of Normed Fit Index (NFI), Relative Fit Index (RFI), Incremental Fit Index (IFI), Tucker Lewis Index (TLI), and Comparative Fit Index (CFI) are 0.981, 0.900, 0.997, 0.985, and 0.997, respectively. It is noteworthy that all these fit index values exceed the benchmark of 0.9, thereby indicating the high statistical fitness level of the construct.

Consumer Preference Model Path and Hypothesis Testing

The relationships between the theoretical constructs are represented by regression coefficients between the constructs. The below table shows the casual relationship between exogenous variables and endogenous variables present in the model.

Table 4: Casual Relationships in Consumer Preference Model in selecting fashion outlets

Path	Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P
Attraction <--- Promotion	.176	.036	4.907	***
Attraction <--- Shop location	.079	.030	2.634	.008
Attraction <--- External influence	.188	.029	6.445	***
Attraction <--- Services	.164	.032	5.069	***
Preference <--- Attraction	.011	.035	2.326	.044

The unidirectional arrow indicates the correlation between casual factors and the consumers' preference in selecting the fashion outlets. The aforementioned table depicts that the factors associated with shop location greatly increases the attractions towards the outlet and that leads to the preference. The increase of 0.79 units in store location increases the attraction by one unit. All the other factors are also having impact on attractions towards the outlet (services- 0.164 unit, promotion- 0.176 unit and external influences- 0.188 unit). For all these factors the significance value is less than 0.05. Hence, these factors have impact in increasing attraction towards the store. Subsequently the attraction leads to preference. 0.011 unit increase in attraction will increase the preference by one unit.

4. Implications and Recommendations

The present study aimed to investigate the factors influencing consumers in selecting fashion outlets and their purchasing patterns when buying fashion items. The findings of the study highlight the importance of store location in attracting customers and increasing foot traffic in the outlet. Retailers can capitalize on this by providing better services to visitors and offering attractive promotions to maintain a steady crowd. Interestingly, the majority of consumers in the study preferred shopping in physical stores over online platforms, indicating a desire for a tangible and immersive shopping experience. To cater to this preference, retailers should focus on creating an inviting ambiance, delivering exceptional services, and offering enticing promotions.

By prioritizing these aspects, retailers can increase the likelihood of attracting and retaining customers. The study's findings suggest that consumers are willing to visit and purchase from physical stores that offer a pleasant shopping environment, attentive service, and appealing promotions. Retailers who invest in creating a welcoming atmosphere, training staff to provide excellent customer service, and offering competitive promotions can differentiate themselves from competitors and establish a loyal customer base. Furthermore, by understanding the purchasing patterns and preferences of their target audience, retailers can tailor their marketing strategies to effectively target and engage with potential customers. Ultimately, the study's findings emphasize the need for retailers to focus on creating a holistic shopping experience that meets the evolving needs and expectations of consumers, thereby driving business growth and success in the competitive fashion retail industry.

5. Conclusion

This comprehensive study on consumer preferences in selecting fashion outlets in Chennai, India, has yielded several significant findings that have important implications for the fashion retail industry. The research provides a nuanced understanding of the demographic profile of fashion consumers and their purchasing patterns, which can inform targeted marketing strategies. The findings underscore the importance of a multi-faceted approach to attracting and retaining fashion consumers. Retailers should focus on strategic promotions, optimal store locations, leveraging external influences (such as social media and word-of-mouth), and enhancing in-store services to increase consumer attraction. The study's limitations, including the geographical focus on Chennai and the predominance of male respondents, suggest opportunities for future research. Expanding the study to other regions and ensuring a more balanced gender representation could provide more comprehensive insights into fashion consumer behaviour in India. In conclusion, this research provides a robust framework for understanding consumer preferences in fashion retail, offering actionable insights for retailers to enhance their marketing strategies and improve consumer attraction and preference in an increasingly competitive market.

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