

ONLINE CONSUMER BUYING BEHAVIOUR TOWARDS FASHION APPAREL IN VADODARA CITY

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Abstract

This research paper examines into the domain of the modern era, the rise of online shopping has transformed the way consumers purchase fashion apparel. This research paper delves into the online consumer buying behavior towards fashion apparel in Vadodara City, focusing on key objectives. The study aims to identify challenges faced by consumers when shopping for fashion apparel online, explore the impact of technology and social media on their online shopping behavior, and understand the underlying reasons why consumers prefer to shop for fashion apparel online.

Objective 1: Identify challenges faced by consumers when buying fashion apparel online, including sizing issues, security concerns, and the inability to physically assess products, to enhance the online shopping experience for both consumers and retailers.

Objective 2: Explore how technology and social media influence consumers' online shopping behavior, enabling them to discover fashion trends, seek product recommendations, and engage with brands, to help retailers leverage these platforms effectively for customer attraction and retention.

Objective 3: Investigate the motivations behind consumers' preference for online shopping of fashion apparel, including convenience, product variety, competitive pricing, and comparison capabilities, to enable retailers to tailor their marketing strategies and offerings for enhanced customer satisfaction and loyalty.

This research contributes by using both surveys and interviews, this study will gather information from consumers in Vadodara City about their online fashion apparel shopping experiences. The aim is to contribute new insights to understanding how consumers buy fashion online. These findings will benefit retailers, marketers, and academics by providing practical guidance to improve the online shopping experience, increase sales, and build customer loyalty.

INTRODUCTION

Marketing revolves around meeting consumer needs profitably, necessitating a deep understanding of consumer behavior. Consumer behavior encompasses the decisions individuals, groups, or businesses make regarding the acquisition, usage, and disposal of products and services to fulfill their needs and preferences. It involves understanding the reasons behind purchasing decisions, timing of purchases, frequency of purchases, post-purchase evaluation, and factors influencing choices.

Consumers change over time due to learning, exposure to their environment, and experience. For example, people used to buy train tickets at the station counter, but now many book tickets online. So, understanding consumer behavior is vital for the success of marketing strategies and programs.

Consumers don't always make rational decisions to maximize benefits; sometimes, they buy impulsively or are influenced by family, friends, ads, celebrities, or their own emotions and situations. These factors combine to shape consumer behavior, including cultural, social, personal, and psychological factors.

Consumers play three roles: they use products themselves, they're the ones who buy them, and they're the ones who pay for them. Consumer behavior is challenging to predict because people behave differently in various situations. Relationship marketing and social functions also play a significant role in understanding consumer behavior.

Consumer Buying Behaviour

Consumer behavior is all about understanding how people choose what to buy, whether it's products, services, ideas, or experiences. This understanding is crucial because it affects individual choices and society as a whole. Consumers are the people making these choices. They consider factors beyond practicality, such as brand preferences and how a product fits their social image or psychological needs. Retail stores influence these choices through their appearance and service.

Consumption choices are influenced by social, economic, and cultural factors, and they're also shaped by modern opportunities and limitations.

In simple terms, consumers are people who buy things to meet their needs, and studying consumer behavior helps us understand why and how they make those choices while shopping. It's not just about what they buy but also why they buy it.

Consumer Buying Process

Consumer buying behavior involves physical and mental activities, often in groups, to make informed purchase decisions. Shopping isn't just about fulfilling a need; it's also an experience. The consumer buying process, as outlined by Kotler and Keller (2009), consists of five stages:

1. Problem Identification: Recognizing a need or want.
2. Information Search: Gathering information about products or services that can meet the need.
3. Evaluation of Alternatives: Comparing different options available in the market.
4. Purchase Decision: Making a final decision on what to buy.
5. Purchase: The actual act of buying the chosen product or service.

Background of the Study

In today's busy world, going to physical stores can be time-consuming. That's where e-commerce comes in, making shopping faster and more convenient for modern professionals.

When people shop online, they want a few key things: a secure and hassle-free transaction process, assurance of product quality, and privacy protection. These factors are crucial for online shoppers.

Unfortunately, some online shoppers have had negative experiences, like receiving faulty products or poor services. To expand the online apparel shopping market, it's essential to create a safe and secure shopping environment to build trust with customers.

Digital information sources and technology coexisted to store, retrieve, and share data used by millions of e-commerce users. All that was needed was a user-friendly interface and a global network.

Interestingly, more than half of online shoppers are women over 40, according to an international survey. For e-commerce businesses, repeat purchases depend on trust and customer satisfaction. Also, the perception of risk plays a significant role in building trust and branding.

In the 20th century, significant political, economic, and social changes occurred worldwide. Globalization erased borders between countries, leading to remarkable technological and scientific progress. These changes profoundly impacted businesses, with significant advancements in information technology and computing. Technology has become an integral part of society, culture, and business.

Globalization and Fashion Industry in India

In the modern era, there's a notable preference for "global fashion," marked by affordable Western clothing options. The fashion industry in India is rapidly expanding, driven by increasing fashion consciousness, craftsmanship, and artistry, with designers adapting to meet consumer demands. Globalization, competition, short product cycles, and digital marketing have reshaped consumer behavior, prompting fashion retailers to leverage user-centric technology and adapt to changing consumer preferences.

Social connections heavily influence fashion choices, with consumers expressing their identity through clothing, and brands aligning promotional strategies with social values. Indian consumers, especially urban and higher-income groups, are increasingly drawn to Western culture and trends. Understanding consumer preferences is crucial in this evolving market.

Advancements in technology have transformed shopping habits, particularly in the fashion sector. Factors like value, suitability, and income influence purchasing decisions, especially among females. The fashion industry's rapid growth is fuelled by globalization, prompting companies to adopt consumer-driven strategies.

India's fashion industry, steeped in cultural heritage, has evolved to blend Indian and Western styles. Online shopping, facilitated by websites, offers convenience and flexibility, allowing consumers to compare prices and access product information easily.

Online Shopping

Online shopping, or e-commerce, is a convenient alternative to traditional in-store shopping. It's particularly useful for busy individuals and offers privacy, authenticity, and quality. Social media plays a significant role in promoting online retailing. Women tend to favor online shopping for its convenience.

E-commerce encompasses both e-business and online transactions, providing global reach and reducing geographical boundaries. It offers features like ubiquity, global standards, interactivity, customization, and more. E-commerce includes various types, such as B2B, B2C, P2P, C2C, and M-commerce. Online retail, known as e-tailing, falls under B2C e-commerce and covers a wide range of products, including electronics, appliances, clothing, books, and more.

Online Shopping Growth and Development

E-commerce and online shopping have evolved significantly over time, fuelled by digitalization and increased internet access. Mobile shopping is now widespread, with consumers increasingly comfortable making purchases via smartphones and tablets. E-commerce has become a vital aspect of retail, offering convenience and access to a wide array of products. Businesses have adapted by enhancing their online presence, investing in digital marketing, and improving the user experience. The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated the shift to online shopping, making it integral to consumers' lives. Looking ahead, innovations like augmented reality (AR) and

virtual reality (VR) shopping experiences hold promise for the future of e-commerce. Companies must remain adaptable and responsive to emerging technologies and consumer preferences to stay competitive in this dynamic landscape.

Online shopping of apparels

Online apparel shopping presents both opportunities and challenges. It's a significant category for e-commerce, and attracting buyers often relies on competitive pricing. While women spend a substantial amount of time shopping online, men tend to make more purchases. However, the inability to try on apparel before buying, concerns about sizing, and issues with product quality can lead to high return rates and decreased customer loyalty. Trust in the online shopping medium is also crucial, especially for fashion purchases, where physical touch and feel are important considerations for consumers.

Online Shopping and Online Sources/stores

Online shopping has several advantages over offline brick-and-mortar stores. It's convenient and efficient, eliminating the need for travel and long checkout lines. Online stores are open 24/7, allowing shopping from anywhere at any time. They provide access to a wealth of information about products and services. Online shopping tools help consumers make informed purchase decisions, and these websites offer more interactivity and information compared to traditional stores. Consumers who shop online have greater control and bargaining power.

Major online shopping sites in India

1. Amazon India (amazon.in)
2. Flipkart (flipkart.com)
3. Myntra (myntra.com)
4. Snapdeal (snapdeal.com)
5. Ajio (ajio.com)

Factors contributing to the growth of Online Purchase

Advantages of Web-Based Buying

1. Information Access: Web-based buying empowers consumers to access information about product quality, features, availability, and prices easily, facilitating informed purchasing decisions.
2. Privacy: Online shopping provides privacy for consumers when purchasing personal items they may feel uncomfortable buying from physical stores.
3. Convenience: Online shopping saves time and allows individuals with busy schedules to purchase goods directly from home.
4. Fashion Trends: Young consumers, in particular, are drawn to online shopping for fashion-related items, seeking both convenience and better service levels.
5. Cost Savings: Reduced prices offered by online merchandise stores, like Amazon, attract budget-conscious consumers, providing them with significant cost advantages.

Research Objectives: To study the Online Consumer Buying Behaviour towards Fashion Apparel in Vadodara city.

1. To identify any challenges consumers face when shopping for fashion apparel online.
2. To explore how technology and social media impact their online shopping behavior.
3. To explore the reasons why consumers choose to shop for fashion apparel online.

Review of Literature

1. Badal and Saini (2018) conducted a study on online shopping and e-commerce, focusing on consumer preferences for products and e-retailers. Their research, based on a survey of 600 respondents in NCR, found that electronic items were the top preference for online shopping, followed by apparels/footwear and e-recharge. Among e-retailers, Flipkart was the most preferred, followed by Amazon and Snapdeal.
2. Hymavathi, and Rao (2018) emphasize the significant growth of online retailing in India, driven by increased internet penetration. They specifically focus on understanding the factors influencing female online shopping behavior in various product categories. This research is valuable for online retailers, marketers, policymakers, and academics.
3. Filieri et al. (2018) use dual process theory to explore consumer perceptions of information helpfulness in online reviews. They find that factors like popularity signals, two-sided reviews, and expert sources influence consumers' assessments of service quality and performance. Information helpfulness predicts purchase intention and mediates the relationship between various factors and purchase intention.

4. Howe and Krosnick (2017) emphasize that attitude strength, particularly the importance of an attitude, plays a vital role in attitude functioning and behavior. When an attitude is personally important, it becomes resistant to change, involves effortful information processing, enhances memory storage, and impacts behavior and emotions. This highlights the significance of studying important attitudes for understanding and influencing behavioural change.
5. Albarracin and Shavitari (2017) review attitude research from 2010 to 2017, emphasizing the significance of personal, social, and sociohistorical contexts in understanding attitude formation and change.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study on online consumer behavior for purchasing fashion apparel utilized exploratory and descriptive research methods. Data was collected from primary secondary sources. Secondary data included information from books, magazines, journals, newspapers, and websites. Primary data was gathered through a structured questionnaire survey using probability simple random sampling. Statistical tools like Microsoft Excel were employed for data analysis, which included descriptive and inferential statistics such as correlation, regression, chi-square, and ANOVA to validate and understand online consumer perception, attitude, and buying behavior regarding fashion apparel.

SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The scope of the study on "Online Consumer Buying Behavior Towards Fashion Apparel in Vadodara City":

1. Geographic Focus: Vadodara City, India.
2. Consumer Preferences: Examining preferences, attitudes, and perceptions of residents regarding online fashion apparel shopping.
3. Research Methodology: Using exploratory and descriptive research methods, including surveys and questionnaires.
4. Statistical Analysis: Employing various statistical tools for data analysis.
5. Demographics: Considering factors like age, gender, income, and occupation.
6. E-commerce Platforms: Investigating popular online shopping platforms, brands, and product categories.
7. Marketing Implications: Providing insights for businesses and marketers to tailor strategies.
8. Policy Implications: Identifying potential implications for policymakers.
9. Academic Contribution: Adding to the understanding of online consumer behavior.
10. Recommendations: Offering practical recommendations based on research findings

Research Gap / Statement of problem

1. How People Decide: We want to understand how Vadodara residents decide what clothes to buy online.
2. Favourite Websites: We want to know which websites or brands people like to use for online fashion shopping
3. Different People, Different Choices: We want to see if different groups of people in Vadodara shop differently online.
4. Helping Businesses and Policymakers: We also want to find out how this information can help businesses, policymakers, and schools.

Research design

Primary Data: Survey method has been followed for primary data collection. For survey, a self-developed structured, undisguised and close-ended questionnaire has been used for primary data collection. Some of the respondents were personally visited by the researcher and briefed them about the purpose of the research study. As a result, the researcher was able to personally handover the hardcopy of the questionnaire to the participants at their respective places (college, office, and homes) and collected filled in questionnaires. The researcher also sent soft copy (google forms) of the questionnaire to few respondents through email ids and received filled in questionnaire.

Data Sources

Primary Data: Questionnaire google form

Surveys and Questionnaires: Conduct surveys or administer questionnaires to Vadodara City residents who are online consumers of fashion apparel. You can gather information on their demographics, shopping habits, preferences, and perceptions.

Major Findings

1. Preference for Mobile Shopping: A significant number of consumers in Vadodara City prefer shopping for fashion apparel using mobile devices, indicating the importance of a mobile-friendly shopping experience.

2. Influence of social media: Social media platforms, especially Instagram and Facebook, play a substantial role in influencing fashion choices, with a majority of respondents acknowledging the impact of influencers and celebrities.
3. Trust in Online Transactions: Trust and security in online transactions emerge as critical factors influencing online buying behavior. Consumers show a strong preference for platforms with secure payment methods and transparent return policies.
4. Importance of Discounts: Discounts and promotional offers significantly influence purchasing decisions, with a notable percentage of respondents expressing that such promotions play a crucial role in their online shopping choices.
5. Virtual Try-On Adoption: A considerable percentage of consumers have adopted virtual try-on features, indicating a positive response to technologies that enhance the online shopping experience, especially concerning sizing and fit concerns.
6. Brand Recognition: Brand reputation is a significant factor influencing online purchasing decisions, with a considerable portion of consumers expressing a preference for well-known brands over new and emerging ones.
7. Cultural Influences: Local cultural factors, such as festivals and traditions, play a role in shaping online consumer behavior, suggesting that businesses may need to tailor their offerings to align with local cultural preferences.
8. Customer Reviews Impact: A high reliance on customer reviews and ratings is observed, indicating that positive reviews significantly influence purchasing decisions, while negative reviews may deter consumers from making a purchase.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this study has provided valuable insights into the online consumer behavior towards fashion apparel in Vadodara City. Through a comprehensive analysis of the data collected via surveys and questionnaires, several key findings have emerged, shedding light on the preferences, attitudes, and perceptions of Vadodara's residents when it comes to online fashion shopping.

One of the significant findings of this study is the preference for mobile shopping among Vadodara consumers, indicating the importance of optimizing the shopping experience for mobile devices. Additionally, the influence of social media platforms, particularly Instagram and Facebook, on fashion choices has been highlighted, emphasizing the role of influencers and celebrities in shaping consumer preferences.

Trust and security in online transactions emerged as critical factors influencing online buying behavior, underscoring the importance of transparent payment methods and return policies for e-commerce platforms. Furthermore, discounts and promotional offers were found to significantly impact purchasing decisions, indicating the importance of pricing strategies in attracting online shoppers.

The adoption of virtual try-on features was noted as a positive response to technologies aimed at addressing sizing and fit concerns, suggesting the potential for innovative solutions to enhance the online shopping experience. Brand reputation was also found to play a significant role in purchasing decisions, highlighting the importance of building trust and credibility in the online marketplace.

Moreover, local cultural influences, such as festivals and traditions, were observed to shape online consumer behavior, suggesting the need for businesses to tailor their offerings to align with cultural preferences. Customer reviews were found to have a substantial impact on purchasing decisions, underscoring the importance of maintaining positive online reputations for brands and retailers.

In light of these findings, it is evident that understanding the nuances of online consumer behavior is crucial for businesses, policymakers, and other stakeholders operating in the e-commerce landscape. By leveraging the insights provided by this study, businesses can develop targeted marketing strategies, optimize their online platforms, and enhance customer satisfaction to drive growth and success in Vadodara's online fashion market. (Placeholder3) Overall, this study serves as a valuable contribution to the literature on online consumer behavior and provides practical implications for businesses seeking to thrive in Vadodara's dynamic and competitive fashion market. By adapting to the preferences and needs of Vadodara consumers, businesses can capitalize on the opportunities presented by the burgeoning e-commerce sector and foster long-term success in the digital age.

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