

A STUDY ON FACTORS INFLUENCING PURCHASE DECISIONS AND SATISFACTION OF FEMALE CUSTOMERS TOWARDS RETAIL CLOTHING STORES IN MADURAI CITY

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Abstract

The retail apparel sector has undergone substantial expansion in recent years, with Madurai City establishing itself as an important center for clothing consumption. This research examines the purchasing behaviours and satisfaction levels of female consumers in relation to retail clothing establishments in Madurai. It delineates pivotal factors influencing these behaviours, encompassing product quality, pricing, shopping environment, promotional initiatives, salesperson conduct, and brand perception. Data were gathered utilizing a meticulously structured questionnaire disseminated to female patrons across prominent retail establishments, supplemented by secondary data sources. The results indicate that product assortment, cultural designs, competitive pricing, and brand equity exert a pronounced influence on purchasing decisions. While a majority of consumers report satisfaction regarding product quality and the shopping environment, enhancements in pricing strategies and promotional efforts have the potential to bolster customer loyalty. The research underscores the necessity of aligning retail offerings with consumer expectations to maintain market competitiveness.

Keywords:

Purchase Decision, Female Customer Satisfaction, Female Consumers, Retail Clothing Stores, Store Environment, Brand Image, Product Quality

1. INTRODUCTION

The textile and apparel sector constitutes an essential component of employment, international trade, and consumer contentment on a global scale. In light of advancing technologies, globalization, and the evolving preferences of consumers, comprehending customer purchasing behavior has emerged as a critical concern for retailers. Within the retail environment of Madurai, a multitude of apparel establishments including expansive branded showrooms and conventional outlets endeavor to captivate female consumers who prioritize quality, diversity, and a gratifying shopping experience. Female patrons signify a substantial market demographic, with their purchasing choices shaped by an amalgamation of cultural, emotional, and economic determinants. Local customs, social influences, brand prestige, and the escalating role of social media significantly inform their shopping inclinations.

Customer satisfaction is a pivotal catalyst for fostering loyalty, repeat transactions, and favorable word-of-mouth communications, particularly within tightly knit communities such as Madurai. This research investigates the determinants affecting purchasing decisions—such as product quality, pricing, shopping environment, salesperson conduct, and brand image—and their correlation with customer satisfaction, thereby providing critical insights for the enhancement of retail methodologies. Ultimately, understanding the dynamics of female consumer

behavior will pave the way for improved customer relations and sustained business growth in a competitive marketplace

2. LITERATURE SURVEY

Understanding the purchasing decisions and satisfaction levels of female clientele in the apparel retail sector necessitates a thorough examination of a multitude of psychological, social, and environmental factors. Numerous scholars have underscored that consumer behaviour within the fashion retail arena is intricate and influenced by a confluence of personality characteristics, cultural heritage, and socio-economic standing [1]. These dynamics are particularly salient in the apparel industry, wherein aesthetic preferences, brand identity, and the retail experience frequently assume pivotal roles. The in-store experience has been demonstrated to exert a significant effect on purchasing decisions.

Elements such as product aesthetics (including colour, fabric, and design), store layout, and fit during fitting sessions are essential criteria utilized by consumers when assessing garments [2]. Furthermore, research indicates that mental imagery and sensory experiences encountered within the store can elicit anticipatory emotions and foster a sense of ownership, ultimately augmenting satisfaction and shaping purchase intentions. Importantly, gender distinctions influence the manner in which these sensory stimuli are processed and responded to [3]. Customer satisfaction, particularly within both online and offline apparel environments, is a recurring theme in academic literature. Scholars have identified key contributors to online apparel satisfaction, including website usability, delivery experience, product quality, and pricing [4].

In the offline context, satisfaction is molded by the efficacy of in-store service, promotional tactics, and perceptions of the store brand [5] [6]. For instance, factors such as pricing, selection, and employee conduct have been emphasized as crucial components in determining customer satisfaction, with quality consistently identified as the primary concern [6]. Brand image and consumer loyalty also exert a significant influence on apparel purchasing behaviour. A positive perception of brand credibility, encompassing logo appeal and emotional resonance, fosters trust and fortifies consumers' allegiance to a brand [12] [13].

Price perception and perceived risk further shape store image and purchasing intention, particularly within the apparel domain [8]. In this framework, promotional strategies and the conduct of sales personnel serve as mediators between brand image and customer satisfaction. Demographic factors are equally crucial. Research has indicated that variables such as age, educational attainment, and income levels impact both the frequency of purchases and the methods of payment utilized [7] [9]. Younger consumers are inclined to display fashion awareness, brand loyalty, and shopping behaviours influenced by peers, while older

shoppers exhibit habitual purchasing behaviours and heightened price sensitivity [7] [10]. Women have emerged as autonomous and brand-conscious decision-makers, motivated by lifestyle considerations and an increase in disposable income [9]. In the contemporary competitive landscape of apparel retail, environmental and cultural values are also ascending in significance. A burgeoning segment of consumers, especially women, prioritize sustainability, favoring organic textiles owing to health and environmental concerns [11].

Cultural identity and tradition similarly exert a profound influence, particularly in regions where traditional textile values converge with modern expectations [3]. Ultimately, aligning retail strategies with consumer expectations is imperative for long-term customer retention. Research indicates that when retailers deliver value-oriented experiences through effective marketing, credible branding, and personalized service they enhance customer loyalty and foster positive word-of-mouth referrals [16]-[18]. Product attributes such as style, durability, and functionality remain robust predictors of satisfaction, particularly among female consumers [19] [20].

In conclusion, prior investigations corroborate the notion that a multitude of interconnected factors including the retail environment, pricing strategies, brand reputation, cultural influences, and demographic characteristics, shape the purchasing decisions and satisfaction levels of female consumers in the apparel sector. This analysis establishes the foundational framework for examining the manner in which these variables impact female consumers' shopping behaviours at retail apparel stores, a prominent ethnic and traditional apparel retailer situated in Madurai City.

3. SCOPE OF THE STUDY

This study investigates the purchase behavior and satisfaction levels of female shoppers at retail clothing stores in Madurai City. The research specifically targets women aged 16 and above who have recently bought apparel from selected textile and garment outlets. It encompasses both branded showrooms and independent retailers, analyzing the influence of factors such as price, product quality, store ambiance, brand image, and salesperson engagement on customer decisions. The objective is to provide actionable insights for retailers to improve customer satisfaction and refine their marketing strategies. The study is geographically restricted to Madurai and excludes online shopping and male consumers from its scope.

4. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To find out the key factors that significantly impact the purchasing decisions of female customers within clothing retail outlets.
- To evaluate the degree of satisfaction experienced by female consumers in relation to apparel retailing.
- To investigate the association between demographic characteristics and preferences during apparel selection.
- To understand the influence of factors such as product quality, pricing strategies, store ambiance, salesperson conduct, and brand image on purchase decision.

- To identify the customers satisfaction levels among various retail clothing establishments within Madurai City

5. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study possesses a descriptive nature and seeks to examine the purchasing behavior and satisfaction levels of female consumers in relation to apparel retail establishments. The research was executed in the city of Madurai, situated in Tamil Nadu, India. Primary data was gathered through a meticulously structured questionnaire, which was administered to female customers who had engaged in purchases at retail clothing establishments. The researcher personally visited various apparel retail outlets and acquired the primary data by elucidating the questionnaire to each participant. Secondary data was obtained from reputable journals, websites, research articles, and corporate reports pertaining to consumer behavior within the textile and apparel sector. The convenience sampling method was employed to select respondents from a diverse array of prominent apparel retail outlets in Madurai. The sample distribution is mentioned in Table.1.

Table.1. Sample Distribution

Name of the Store	No. of. Respondents
Pothys	104
The Chennai Silks	119
AK Ahmad	92
Rajmahal Silks	83
Kiskintha Garments	68
Naachiyars	41

The data collected is subjected to analysis utilizing Percentage Analysis, Garrett Ranking Technique, Chi-Square Test, and Multiple Linear Regression. These analytical tools were utilized to assess the correlation between influential factors and customer satisfaction, as well as to examine the associations between demographic variables and purchasing preferences.

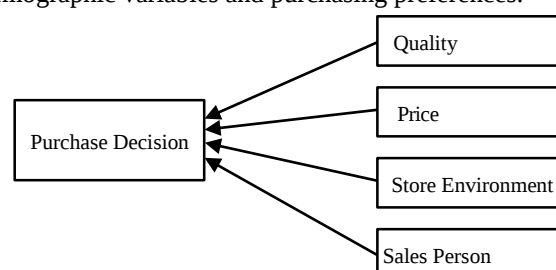


Fig.1. Research Model

The research model demonstrates the connection between the dependent variable, Purchase Decision, and the independent variables, Quality, Price, Store Environment, Salesperson, and Brand Image. This insight aligns with the dynamics of the retail clothing sector, where consumer decisions are strongly shaped by in-store experiences, perceived product value, and brand perception.

6. HYPOTHESIS

- H₀₁: There is no significant relationship between product price and the purchase decision of female customers in retail clothing stores.
- H₀₂: There is no significant relationship between product quality and the purchase decision of female customers.
- H₀₃: Store environment has no significant influence on the purchase decision of female customers
- H₀₄: There is no significant relationship between brand image and the purchase decision of female customers.
- H₀₅: Promotional activities have no significant impact on the purchase decision of female customers

6.1 DEMOGRAPHIC FACTOR

The below table summarizes the demographic profile of respondents, including age, education, occupation, income, and marital status. The sample is diverse, but a significant proportion falls within the 20–30 years age group, suggesting that younger female customers form a major market segment for retail clothing stores.

Table.2. Demographic factor

Factors	Particulars	Respondents
Age	Less than 20 yrs	34
	20 – 30 yrs	210
	30 – 40 yrs	146
	40 – 50 yrs	88
	Above 50 yrs	29
Education	SSLC	16
	HSC	194
	UG	226
	PG	62
	Others	9
Fam+Family Income	Less than 20000	56
	20000 - 30000	90
	30000 - 40000	121
	40000 - 50000	99
	Above 50000	141
Occupation	Student	96
	Employee in private sector	157
	Employee in government sector	26
	Entrepreneur	41
	Daily Labour	4
	Homemaker	179
	Retired	4
Marital status	Married	343
	Unmarried	164

From the above table it is inferred that most of the respondents are within the income category of Above 50000 (141) followed by 30000 – 40000 (121), 40000 – 50000 (99), 20000 – 30000 (90) and less than 20000 (56). It is inferred that most of the respondents are Homemakers (179) and Private Sector Employees (157), while Students and Government Employees have moderate representation. Entrepreneurs, Daily Labourers, and Retired individuals form the smallest segments. Majority of the respondents. (68%) are married, followed by 32% are single.

6.2 PREFERENCE OF BUYING APPAREL BY THE RESPONDENTS

This table shows the calculation of percent positions used to convert respondents' rankings into Garrett scores for ranking preferences. This step is essential for identifying the most preferred apparel types, as higher Garrett scores reflect higher preference among respondents

$$\text{Percent Position} = 100(R_{ij} - 0.5)/N_j$$

where, R_{ij} = Rank given for the i^{th} variable by j^{th} respondents.
 N_j = Number of variable ranking j^{th} respondent.

Table.3. Determination of percent position from Garette Table

Rank	Percent Position value	
1	5.50%	81
2	16.60%	69
3	27.70%	62
4	38.80%	56
5	50%	50
6	61.10%	44
7	72.20%	38
8	83.33%	31
9	94.44%	19

It is observed from the above table through percent position formula and from the garrett table rank 1 has the garrett table value of 81 followed by rank 2 has 69, and rank 9 has 19.

Table.4. Preferred apparel of Respondents

S.No	Factors	Garrett Mean Score	Rank
1	Kurta	76.9	1
2	Salwar suits	63.8	2
3	Sarees	61.2	3
4	Tops	54.8	4
5	T Shirts	45.1	5
6	Lehenga	42.9	6
7	Night Wear	42.2	7
8	Shirts	40.07	8
9	Frock	32.1	9

The Garrett Ranking analysis elucidates that Kurta possesses the highest average score (76.9), establishing it as the most favored attire among the respondents at retail clothing store at Madurai. This is succeeded by Salwar suits (63.8) and Sarees (61.2), thereby indicating a pronounced inclination towards

traditional and semi-traditional garments among the female clientele. Contemporary apparel such as Tops and T-Shirts garnered lower rankings, with average scores of 54.8 and 45.1, respectively. Attire including Lehenga, Nightwear, Shirts, and Frocks attained the lowest rankings, implying that they are considered niche acquisitions and are selected less frequently within this retail environment. This pattern reflects cultural predilections and the establishment's focus on ethnic and traditional apparel.

6.3 FACTORS INFLUENCING RESPONDENTS IN BUYING APPAREL AT RETAIL CLOTHING STORES

This table lists and ranks the key factors influencing apparel purchases, such as quality, price, brand image, store environment, and salesperson behaviour. Quality and store environment are top-ranking factors, showing that product excellence and a pleasant shopping atmosphere strongly influence female customers' buying decisions.

Table.4. Factors influencing respondents in buying Apparel

S.No	Factors	Mean	Rank
1	Promotion	4.28	1
2	Salesperson	4.27	2
3	Advertisement	4.16	3
4	Social Media	3.77	4
5	Aesthetics	3.39	5
6	Culture	3.37	6
7	Celebrity	3.16	7
8	Peers and Friends	2.4	8

The analysis of mean scores elucidates that Promotion (4.28) emerges as the preeminent factor, closely followed by Salesperson behavior (4.27) and Advertisement (4.16). This indicates that both personal selling initiatives and promotional tactics profoundly influence purchasing decisions. The impact of social media influence (3.77) is characterized as moderate, reflecting an escalation in digital engagement. Aesthetic appeal (3.39) and cultural influence (3.37) are deemed to possess moderate significance, while the effects of celebrity endorsements (3.16) and peer/friend recommendations (2.40) are the least impactful. The results suggest that female consumers exhibit a greater reliance on retail-driven promotional signals and in-store experiences as opposed to external social influences.

6.4 ASSOCIATION BETWEEN DEMOGRAPHIC VARIABLES AND PURCHASE PREFERENCES

This table presents Chi-square test results assessing the relationship between demographic characteristics and purchase preferences. Significant associations were found between certain demographics (such as income, age, and education) and purchase-related factors, indicating that marketing strategies should be tailored to specific customer segments.

Table.5. Association between Demographic Variables and Purchase Preferences

Demographic Variable	Tested Variable	Chi-square Value	df	p-value
Family Income	Frequency of Purchase	10.186	4	0.037
Education	Mode of Payment	16.404	4	0.003
Age	Frequency of Purchase	4.215	4	0.378
Marital Status	Mode of Payment	3.102	4	0.54
Age	Source of Awareness	13.9	4	0.021

From the above table it is evident that the results of the Chi-square test, there is a significant association between family income and purchase frequency ($p = 0.037$), suggesting that customers with greater incomes typically buy clothing more frequently. Similarly, there is a significant association ($p = 0.003$) between the form of payment and education level, with highly educated clients favouring digital payment options. There is no apparent association between purchase behaviours and other demographic variables like age or marital status.

6.5 RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PURCHASE EXPERIENCE AND FACTORS INFLUENCING PURCHASE DECISION

This table displays the results of regression analysis, measuring the impact of independent variables (quality, price, store environment, salesperson, and brand image) on purchase decision. Store environment and quality have the strongest positive effects on purchase decisions, suggesting that these should be priority areas for improvement.

Table.6. Relationship between Purchase Experience and Factors Influencing Purchase Decision

Factors	Reg Coefficient	T	R ²	F	Sig	H0
Quality	0.3	4.542	.039	20.633	.000	Rejected
Price	.173	3.789	.028	14.357	.000	Rejected
Store Environment	.313	5.402	.055	29.181	.000	Rejected
Sales Person	.223	4.266	.035	18.202	.000	Rejected
Brand Image	.206	4.052	.031	16.420	.000	Rejected

The regression analysis indicates that all five independent variables Quality, Price, Store Environment, Salesperson, and Brand Image exert a statistically significant positive influence on purchase decisions, as evidenced by p-values below 0.05 and the rejection of null hypotheses. Among these factors, Store Environment ($B = 0.313$) emerges as the most influential, followed by Quality ($B = 0.300$) and Salesperson ($B = 0.223$). These results highlight that consumers highly prioritize a pleasant and well-maintained store setting, superior product quality, and effective interaction with sales staff when making purchasing choices. While Price and Brand Image also contribute to purchase

decisions, their impact is comparatively moderate. Also, the below table shows the individual regression equations for each independent variable in relation to purchase decision. The coefficients confirm that all factors positively influence purchase decision, with store environment and quality yielding the greatest predicted changes in customer decision scores.

Table.7. Regression Equations for Purchase Decision

Factors	Constant	Coefficient	Equation
Quality	2.98	0.3	$2.98 + 0.3X_1$
Price	3.569	.173	$3.569 + .173X_2$
Store Environment	2.888	.313	$2.888 + .313X_3$
Salesperson	3.310	.223	$3.310 + .223X_4$
Brand Image	3.385	.206	$3.385 + .206X_5$

It is observed from the above table the regression analysis reveals how each independent variable influences the purchase decision score when other factors are held constant. Specifically, a one-point enhancement in Store Environment leads to a 0.313-unit increase in the purchase decision score. These findings underscore that Store Environment and Product Quality are the most significant predictors of purchase decisions. Consequently, retail clothing stores should focus on enhancing store ambiance and ensuring high product quality to effectively boost customer purchase behaviour

6.6 SATISFACTION LEVEL OF CUSTOMERS REGARDING THEIR PURCHASE EXPERIENCE AT CLOTHING OUTLETS

Table.8. Satisfaction level of customers

Satisfaction Level	Frequency	Percent
Satisfied	273	53.8
Highly satisfied	190	37.5
Neutral	43	8.5
Dissatisfied	1	.2
Highly dissatisfied	0	0
Total	507	100.0

From the above table, it is inferred that majority of the customers are satisfied with the purchasing experience at Pothys (53.8), followed by highly satisfied (37.5), Neutral (8.5), and Dissatisfied (0.2).

7. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

- To find out the key factors that significantly impact the purchasing decisions of female clientele within clothing retail establishments.
- Promotion emerged as the most influential factor (Mean = 4.28), closely followed by Salesperson behavior (Mean = 4.27) and Advertisement (Mean = 4.16).
- Factors such as Social Media (3.77), Aesthetics (3.39), and Culture (3.37) had moderate influence, while Celebrity endorsements (3.16) and Peer/Friend recommendations (2.40) had the least impact.

- To evaluate the degree of satisfaction experienced by female consumers in relation to apparel retailing
- 53.8% of respondents were satisfied, 37.5% highly satisfied, 8.5% neutral, and only 0.2% dissatisfied.
- No respondents reported being highly dissatisfied, indicating overall positive shopping experiences.
- To investigate the association between demographic characteristics and preferences during apparel selection
- Significant association was found between family income and purchase frequency ($p = 0.037$), higher-income groups purchase apparel more frequently.
- Education level was significantly related to the mode of payment ($p = 0.003$), with more educated customers preferring digital payments.
- No significant association was found between age and purchase frequency or marital status and payment mode.
- Age was significantly related to the source of awareness ($p = 0.021$).
- To understand the influence of factors such as product quality, pricing strategies, store ambiance, salesperson conduct, and brand image on purchase decision.
- Regression analysis confirmed that all five factors: Quality, Price, Store Environment, Salesperson, and Brand Image had a statistically significant positive effect on purchase decisions ($p < 0.05$).
- Store Environment ($B = 0.313$) had the strongest impact, followed by Quality ($B = 0.300$) and Salesperson ($B = 0.223$).
- To identify the customers satisfaction levels among various retail clothing establishments within Madurai City
- Kurta ranked as the most preferred apparel (Garrett score = 76.9), followed by Salwar suits (63.8) and Sarees (61.2). Contemporary wear like Tops (54.8) and T-shirts (45.1) ranked lower, while niche items like Lehenga (42.9), Nightwear (42.2), Shirts (40.07), and Frocks (32.1) were least preferred, reflecting cultural clothing preferences in Madurai.

8. CONCLUSION

This research offers an in-depth analysis of the decision-making processes regarding purchases and the levels of satisfaction experienced by female customers in relation to retail clothing establishments within Madurai City. The findings suggest that the retail environment and the quality of products are the primary determinants influencing purchasing decisions, followed closely by factors such as the conduct of sales personnel, pricing strategies, and brand perception. Garrett Ranking analysis uncovers a pronounced inclination towards traditional and semi-traditional garments, including kurtas, salwar suits, and sarees. Chi-square analysis elucidates significant correlations between family income and frequency of purchases, as well as between educational attainment and payment methods, thereby underscoring the impact of demographic variables on shopping behaviors. Regression analysis substantiates that all independent variables exert a statistically significant positive influence on purchasing decisions. The outcomes of this study imply that

retailers ought to prioritize the enhancement of store ambiance, the maintenance of high product quality, and the investment in comprehensive training for sales personnel. Strategic promotional efforts, competitive pricing structures, and a coherent brand image can further reinforce customer loyalty. By aligning marketing strategies with the expectations of female consumers, retail clothing outlets in Madurai can secure ongoing growth in a highly competitive marketplace.

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