

## Research Paper

## Consumer behavior regarding women's decisions concerning fashion in the emerging market.

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### ABSTRACT

*The women's wear market in India has the potential to grow into a Rs.61,572 crore market size by 2010. Maturing at the rate of 15.2 percent, as compared to the growth of the apparel sector at 14.7 percent over last years' performance, women's wear has enjoyed a steady 32 percent market share. In fact, it is the segment that currently shows the highest growth rate among all major apparel segment.*

### Introduction-

The Indian women apparel market has undergone a transformational phase over the past few years - growing number of working women, changing fashion trends, rising level of information and media exposure, and entry of large number of foreign brands have given the industry a new dimension. As a result, various industry majors operating in men apparel segment have now started to diversify themselves into women wear in order to exploit the highly lucrative market. The market, in the past five years, posted a growth rate of good 14%. And with the growing presence of organized retail and rapidly spreading mall culture, the industry is all set to grow further in future, according to "Women Wear Market Forecast to 2010," a research report by RNCOS., Anonymous,(2008), Business wire.

Women have long been typecast as shopaholics, addicted to shopping while men avoid it whenever possible. The latest figures do nothing to quash the stereotype by showing that women spend double what their male counterparts do on fashion. The women's wear market has proved to be the most dynamic and fast paced arena within the clothing and footwear sector, accounting for over 50 per cent of total sales. Considered to be worth pound 18.9bn it dwarves menswear, which is valued at pound 9bn with only a quarter of the market share according to Verdict Research findings. Over the last 10 years, the women's clothing market has been shaped by the emergence of several leading value retailers led by Primark. Despite only accounting for 18.5 per cent of the total clothing market, increased growth at the premium end, is a signal that the value market has reached saturation. Consumers are predicted to start to trade up over the next few years

Earlier, most of the national level branded players were present only in the men's wear segment. First important transition happened in September 2002 when the leading Indian apparel company, Madura Garments launched a line of readymade women's western wear under the brand name "Allen Solly Women's wear". Later Indus League launched women's wear under Schuller's range. Also, Raymond entered this segment with its designer range "Be". Apart from these, many other branded such as Benetton, Mango, Wills Sports and Black Berry's launched exclusive women's wear

in the country.

### Definitions and Concepts-

The Oxford English Dictionary defines fashion as "The Current popular custom or style especially in dress or social conduct".

The consumers who processed high values of fun, enjoyment, and excitement in their lives were indeed more fashion-conscious. In addition, fashion leaders were younger, had higher clothing expenditures and shopped more often for clothes than non-fashion leaders. Significant differences were found between early fashion adopters and followers. The former were more frequent media users, more responsive to retail promotional activities, and more likely to mix and match old and new fashion items in their wardrobe to build new outfits; Innovators bought more stylish clothing (rather than practical), and were encouraged to visit a store after receiving a phone invitation from a sales associate. Apparel fit is defined as the relationship between the size and contour of the garment and those of the human body. Fit problems arise as an incongruent relationship between the garment and the human body occurs (Huckabay, 1992). Whether the "Body focus" is defined as those aspects of the body that are most often associated With reasons for dieting or social acceptance (Lokkenetal.,2003).

### Literature review-

Previous studies have indicated women's role in purchasing has been aided by their Increasing role in house hold financial decision making (Pastore,1998), a fact endorsing The importance of fashion marketing to women. In fact, one American study shows that while men shop, women actually buy (Pastore, 1998).

Fit evaluation is a complicated process in which the relationship of the garment to be body is analyzed based upon certain criteria. Fit evaluation determined by Individuals wearing garments tends to be subjective. Two individuals who have the me body measurements may perceive clothing fit differently (Alexanderetal.,2005 Demarest and Langer, 1996; Drewnowski and Yee, 1987; Mintz and Bentz, 1986) who have differentiated between the concerns of men, women, adolescents and children. Halliwell and Dittmar (2003) report on the negative affect

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(affective component) of women's and men's body image concerns and their attitudes towards ageing.

Body size dissatisfaction is regarded as part of the concept of body image and relates predominantly to the quantitative assessment of different parts of the body. It is measured as the discrepancy or difference between self-perceived real and ideal body size (Thompson and Gray, 1995; Showers and Larson, 1999). Literature supports the hypothesis that men experience much less body size dissatisfaction than do women (Mintz and Bentz, 1986; Demarest and Langer, 1996; Halliwell and Dittmar, 2003). Tiggeman and Pennington (1996) examined body dissatisfaction over the life span and found that gender differences in levels of body dissatisfaction begin to appear around the age of 13 or with the onset of adolescence, and they continue well past middle adulthood. High levels of body size dissatisfaction have also been correlated with a higher prevalence towards eating disorders (American Psychiatric Association, 1994; Keel et al., 2001; Mintz and Bentz, 1986).

Fit problems have plagued the women's apparel industry for along time. Kurt Salmon Associates, a consultant company, has found that more than 50 percent of consumers are unable to find well-fitting garments. Also, research shows that fit problems are the primary factors causing customers to return apparel products they purchase from catalog to web site retailers (Anderson, 2004). Manufacturers and retailers install 3D body scanners and computer-aided design (CAD) systems to assist a made-to-measure process. The made-to-measure process is aided with a 3D body scanner that extracts body measurements without physically touching human bodies. Although research indicates that the 3D scanner is an efficient tool to help improve fit, apparel firms, such as Levi-Strauss and Brooks Brothers, have conducted the Customized process but not successfully turned a profit. The high rate of customer returns could be a result of fit problems (Lee et al., 2002). Researchers have analyzed fit problems on garments made for females with figure

variations, women who are more body focused might buy certain products that they believe will give them a better body, or might wear clothes that they believe highlight the best aspects of their body and hide the worst aspects. Women tend to be more body focused than men according to Beebe (1995) and Lokken et al. (2003). Lokken et al. (2003) suggest that even women with low body focus have a strong desire to be thinner than they are and that men who have a high body focus report that their body shape is similar to their ideal body shape. Research has shown that for every decade of age women, naturally, tend to increase in weight by between 5-10 lbs (Garner, 1997). Prevos (2005) also confirms that women's ideal body size increases as they grow older. However, women nearly always perceive they should be lighter than they are, regardless of their weight, and men prefer them to be slightly heavier than they think they should be. These findings hold true up to the age of 50 when men would prefer women to be lighter than they are (Prevos, 2005). These findings, again, reveal the negative affect on women's perceptions of their own bodies. Interestingly, Halliwell and Dittmar (2003) describe the "double standards of previous studies reported that the importance of appearance did not decrease with age (Kozar, 2005) and appearance was more important for women than for men (Oberland and Tornstam, 1999). In our young and beauty-oriented society, people want to appear as young and beautiful as possible regardless of age (Hoffman, 1970).

Because of the cultural value (or ideals of beauty), appearing old has been undesirable; thus, older individuals are often dissatisfied with their appearance.

In addition to the physical change, older individuals experience changes in social roles (e.g. retirement, loss of family members and friends) and develop new social relations. Studies have noted the importance of personal appearance and clothing in social interactions (e.g. Kaiser, 1997). Physical appearance conveys the most readily available information about personality, gender, age, race, and socioeconomic status of a person. Thus, appearance does influence the formation of first impression. Johnson et al. (1977) found that wearing fashionable clothing was associated with a positive impression of sociability. Thus, dress may enhance older women's tendency toward social interaction.

An older adult female may engage in appearance management to enhance her self-esteem, but this management of her appearance does not necessarily translate to a concern for being in fashion. Gurel and Gurel (1979) identified various dimensions of clothing interest suggesting that people may share an interest in dress, but that the nature of that interest may vary from person to person.

The varying nature of interest in dress speaks to the different functions appearance management serves for different individuals, as suggested by Creekmore (1974). The relationship between fashion involvement and social participation is logical as fashion by nature is a social process.

A retail environment may influence consumers' inferences about merchandise, service quality, and store image (Baker et al., 1994). Fashion is primarily concerned with newness (Evans, 1989), and is often considered as a novel way for fashion adopters to express their "self" to others (Midgley and Wills, 1979). Fashion is a representation of the pursuit of individuality, within a socially acceptable uniqueness (Sproles, 1985).

Body image issues appear to affect younger women more often and in more negative ways than older women. It seems that body image stabilizes or, at least, becomes less of an issue as women mature. Despite the fact that older women tend to possess a larger disposable income (and free time as children leave home, and they retire) than their more youthful counterparts (Borland Helan and Akram Selina, 2007) age is no barrier to wanting to look good: women on body image, age and advertising, QMRIJ, 10, 3.

The tendency of fashion retailers to stock only small sizes in store, requiring larger women to have ask for larger sizes, causes embarrassment. With older women, generally, more interested in "fashionable" clothing today, the retailers would be advised to stock larger sizes in store. With the increases in the number of "larger" younger women this would also open up sales to this group too. With the "psychology of sizing" also increasingly an issue, retailers are being forced to consider increasing the size of the garment for the same size label.

#### Hypothesis:-

H0:- Lifestyle and age are individually and jointly associated with dress preference

H1:- Lifestyle and age are not individually and jointly associated with dress preference

H0:- Women's dress preference varies from location to location.

H1:- Women's dress preference doesn't vary from location to location

H0:-Women's dress preference varies from situation to situation.

H1:- Women's dress preference doesn't vary from situation to situation.

H0:-Older women relate more positively to fashion than younger women.

H1:- Older women relate more negatively to fashion than younger women.

H0:- The influence of increasing age of women's affects their changing perceptions and interpretations of clothing.

H1:- The influence of increasing age of women's doesn't affects their changing perceptions and interpretations of clothing

H0:-Fashion involvement will have a direct positive effect on social participation.

H1:- Fashion involvement will not have a direct positive effect on social participation.

H0:-Fashion involvement will have a direct positive effect on self-esteem.

H1:- Fashion involvement will not have a direct positive effect on self-esteem

H0:-Women's clothing purchases affected by moods and emotions?

H1:- Women's clothing purchases doesn't affected by moods and emotions?

H0:- Brand names affect women's clothes' or fashion purchases.

H1:- Brand names don't affect women's clothes' or fashion purchases.

H0:- Women in the rural areas tended to be more conservative in their dress than women living in urban areas.

H1:- Women in the rural areas tended to be less conservative in their dress than women living in urban areas

H0:-Women's are satisfied with fit preference of current sizes available.

H1:- Women's are not satisfied with fit preference of current sizes available.

#### **Women's fashion and Aging-**

Aging is associated with lowering one's self esteem due to changes in physical appearance and social roles. Social participation and appearance management directly influenced self-esteem .Both appearance management and fashion involvement indirectly influenced self-esteem through social participation .An interest in fashion and appearance management in general play a more important role in the lives of older adult women than typically thought. To maintain self-esteem in old age, individuals should be encouraged to participate in social activities and appearance management activities. The fashion and personal care industry should have an awareness of older female consumers' needs and develop and provide age-related products and services.

#### **Older Women and fashion-**

The older population has concerns about their physical appearance. As individuals get older, they experience physical changes such as body postures, wrinkles, and changes in hair color and skin tones. Despite the bodily changes associated with aging, Research suggests that aging is associated with changes in physical appearance and social roles. Personal appearance and dress seems important in the daily lives of older female adults; however, little is known about appearance management and fashion involvement regarding social participation and self-esteem in old age. The present study sought to examine the

relationships among appearance management, fashion involvement, social participation, and self-esteem.

#### **Component Lifestyle-**

The component lifestyle has emerged out as one of the most important lifestyle segments of Indian women .Indian women's are more flexible towards changing situation .They are not driven by any fixed ideology driven by life-style. Managing women consumers of component lifestyles is going to be the real challenge for Indian women's wear industry as these consumers don't have any fixed philosophy of life, and any rigid lifestyle of their own. Product range of women's wear manufacturer may be designed accordingly to the age group of the customer, as dress preference of Indian women's is significant associated with age. Company's women's casual wear range must have many variants according to location, and age and lifestyle-wise need of the consumers.

#### **Fitting preference and Women's satisfaction-**

A large percentage of females, particularly those who wear size 16 and above, are dissatisfied with retail environments, fashion and provision among major UK market players. Most women shopped from the high street and departmental stores, the larger women had great difficulty in finding well-fitting fashionable clothing and certain categories are most problematic. Lack of appropriate sizes is a major source of dissatisfaction. This creates negative emotions in terms of :merchandise choice, visual merchandising, store environment, sales personnel attitude, pricing policies and promotional activities.

#### **Large size women's-**

The majority of women with a bottom-heavy figure profile are dissatisfied with the current clothing sizes sold in retail outlets. They rely on custom-made clothing or alterations after purchasing an outfit or purchasing different sizes of the same style and colour for the top and bottom. Development of proper-fitting slopers/basic patterns was the purpose of this study. A sloperis basic or master patterns with comfort ease but without seam allowances that is used to make other styled patterns. Apparel manufacturers need to consider the development of suitable slopers for different body types in manufacturing clothes that fit and not only for the proportionate figure.

#### **Rural women and Urban Ladies-**

Generally-speaking, younger ladies, in particular, the "fashion conscious," preferred brighter colors such as red, rose/pink, or white. "women in the rural areas tended to be more conservative in their dress than women living in urban areas".

"Rural women when coming to the cities would like to look good and they tend to dress well" "Urban ladies, wearing bright clothes, like to be seen as sophisticated in their dress". The colors of the women's clothes is viewed as important, e.g." lady like color" such as pink. The color black made the ladies look "slimmer and more confident".

#### **Clothing preference and satisfaction-**

The need to identify consumer's clothing preference and create satisfaction is paramount to fashion industry. The apparel consumers today have difficulties finding clothes that provide appropriate fit. The comfort and fit are among the highest determinants for apparel purchase today's market. The good fit is largely dependent on consumer's fit preference. The psychological factors to body size and shape influence individuals' perception of size and fit. The rationalization could be associated with number of

factors such as sizing variation within sizing system, diets, physical exercise, sedentary lifestyles and changes in ideals in masculinity and femininity.

#### Who influences women's clothing or fashion purchases?

- Spouses
- Peers
- Parents
- Reference groups
- Magazines
- Television
- Husbands ,friends, and relatives were most frequently noted as influencing the women. When the influence of the mass media was investigated, women prefer looking for new things in magazines .Peers have the most influence on teenagers, with mimicry and “following along” prevalent. It was noted new products or goods introduced into a group of teenagers by one, frequently results in others in the group purchasing or requesting their parents to purchase the same or similar products or goods. Teens were noted to spend more time watching television, reading magazines especially fashion magazines, and looking at posters and street ads than other generations. Thus teens may be more influenced by mass media than other age groupings. women prefer go shopping with female friends, rarely with husbands because women felt their spouses would attempt to hurry their shopping, not allowing them time to browse.

#### Key Findings

- Increasing at a CAGR of over 17%, women apparel market is expected to cross Rs.61,000 Crore by 2010.
- Branded women apparel market is projected to rise at a rate close to 25% and surpass Rs. 18,000 Crore by 2010.
- Premium segment apparel is forecasted to account for close to 20% of total women apparel market by 2010.
- Western wear, along with lingerie, will emerge as the fastest growing segment.
- Organized players are expected to account for over 40% lingerie market by 2009.
- Demand for textile and apparel machinery is anticipated to increase at more than 100% till 2011.
- Demand for ready-made garments in rural market is projected to hit a CAGR of around 16.50% by 2010.

#### Opportunities for further research-

The current weakness in women's ready-to-wear size standardization charts also needs to be analyzed. Analyze the fit preference with respect to fashion consciousness.

Areas like swim-wear, sports wear, bath wear are yet to be explored and need to be concentrated.

Also eco-friendly apparels have a huge potential in near future.

Plus size garments also require attention from the retailer's perspective.

Additional studies should carried out upon a range of female age groups, including an over-50 age group, that also includes other mediating factors such as education level, income level, marital status, ethnicity and whether working or retired.

The fashion and personal care industry should be aware of older consumers' needs and develop and provide age-related products and services

#### Conclusion-

From the research observations, it may be concluded that the component lifestyle has emerged out as one of the most important life-style segment of Indian women. That means, Indian women are more flexible

towards changing situation. They are not dominated by any fixed ideology-driven lifestyle. In near future, Indian society is going to see more versatile women.

Dress preference varies from situation to situation .Dress preference for participation in formal gathering and in workplaces may differ from dress preference in informal participation. Dress preference is associated with age and lifestyle

Women in the rural areas tended to be more conservative in their dress than women living in urban areas”.” Rural women when coming to the cities would like to look good and they tend to dress well”

Understanding the fit preference of female consumers could help apparel companies to produce and meet demands for comfortable and well fitting clothes or women. The fit problem present in current ready to wear market signals to the industry that significant it problem exist in the sizes available and substantial steps need to be taken to update the outmoded sizing system.

Apparel companies are interested gaining insight into the fit preferences to their consumers .Dissatisfaction with fit and inability to find the right size have been stated as the top reason for the majority of apparel returns

The issue of appropriate dress sizes is an implication of the research that also needs addressing by the industry. The tendency of fashion retailers to stock only small sizes

in store, requiring larger women to have to ask for larger sizes, causes embarrassment.

With older women, generally, more interested in “fashionable” clothing today, the retailers would be advised to stock larger sizes in store. With the increases in the numbers of “larger” younger women this would also open up sales to this group too.

Fashion involvement had a direct positive effect on social participation; it did not have a direct effect on self-esteem. However, fashion involvement did have an indirect effect on self-esteem through social participation.

Most of the women purchase is depended upon mood and emotions. Majority of women's in urban areas are brand conscious. The younger women's are more fashion savvy as compared to older women's and they purchase based on product characteristics.

The product characteristics (fashion ability, styling choice, color, option, fabric selections)were key retail sectors. The women want more choice in style,fashion,colour,fabric and size option ,better quality, pricing, non-patronising and larger sales girls, integrated displays and opportunity for feedback.

#### Appendix-1

##### Research Modal-

Women's Fashion

Lifestyle and Age

Dress Preference Location and situation

Older Women

Fashion rural area and urban area	dress affecting self-esteem in older females” –“2006”;JFMM,10,4.
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