

Consumer Behavior in Online Apparel Shopping: An Analytical Study of Gender, Purchase Preferences, And Influential Factors

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Abstract: This research study investigates consumer behavior in the context of online apparel shopping by focusing on the role of gender, purchase frequency, and preference patterns. A sample of 100 respondents from the twin cities of Hyderabad and Secunderabad in Telangana state was surveyed by using convenience sampling using Google forms and social media platforms to understand the significance of various factors such as door delivery, product range, convenience, discounts, and payment options in shaping purchase decisions of apparels through online mode. The primary data thus collected was cross-tabulation and chi-square tests were conducted to examine associations between gender and purchase preferences as well as between frequency and mode of shopping. The results revealed that while gender does not significantly influence purchase preference or frequency, a strong association was found between purchase preference and shopping frequency. The descriptive statistics show that door delivery and product range are the most important factors for consumers when buying apparels online. The study finally concludes with practical suggestions for e-retailers and identifies avenues for future research in this area.

Key Words: Consumer Behavior, Online Shopping, Apparels, Purchase Preferences, Influential Factors

I. Introduction:

Online shopping has revolutionized the retail industry drastically, particularly in the apparel sector. With the convenience of browsing and purchasing clothes at any time and from anywhere, consumers are increasingly shifting toward digital platforms. This trend of online purchasing is increasing day by day. Now such transformation has raised many million dollar questions about the factors which influence consumer preferences in general and how demographic factors such as gender relate to purchase behavior in particular. This research study aims to understand consumer priorities and preferences while shopping for apparels online. By analysing data collected from 100 respondents collected from twin cities of Hyderabad and Secunderabad in Telangana state explores the association between gender, shopping frequency, and purchase preference. The study further identifies the most valued factors in the online apparel shopping experience using descriptive statistics.

II. Literature Review:

Literature pertaining to gender differences in consumer behavior have been extensively studied in the context of online shopping. Research suggests that men and women exhibit different patterns when it comes to shopping motivations and preferences. According to Hasan (2010), women are more emotionally involved in the shopping process and tend to value the experiential aspects, whereas men focus more on utility and efficiency. However, in the realm of online shopping, these differences tend to be narrower. A study by Zhou, Dai, and Zhang (2007) found that both men and women consider ease of use and perceived usefulness as key determinants for shopping online. In the case of apparel shopping, however, tactile experience becomes a missing component, which may affect female consumers more, as they traditionally value product feel and fit (Kim & Kim, 2004). Studies pertaining to Frequency of online purchases has been linked to consumer comfort with digital interfaces, trust in the platform, and past positive experiences (Pappas, 2016). Consumers who shop online more frequently are generally more tech-savvy and less risk-averse.

Further Sarkar (2011) observed that occasional buyers tend to rely more on reviews, while frequent online buyers are motivated by factors such as speed of transaction and loyalty rewards. Interestingly, Mittal and Agarwal (2013) found that purchase frequency varies significantly by category, with apparels being one of the top categories for occasional buyers rather than frequent buyers due to concerns over size, fitting, and returns. In respect of the rise of omnichannel retailing has blurred the lines between online and offline shopping. Consumers now adopt a hybrid approach, using online channels for price comparison and convenience and offline stores for trial and immediate purchase (Verhoef, Kannan, & Inman, 2015). According to a survey by McKinsey & Company (2020), 60% of shoppers prefer to mix online and offline shopping, especially for categories like clothing, where fit and personal experience matter. The "research online, purchase offline" (ROPO) effect is common among apparel buyers.

Literature pertaining to factors influencing online apparel purchases, several studies highlight the main factors influencing online purchase decisions. The following factors are especially relevant in the apparel sector. Convenience is a primary driver for online shopping. Forsythe et al. (2006) argue that the ability to shop at any time, skip queues, and save travel time makes online platforms attractive, especially for working individuals. Logistics efficiency, particularly home delivery, is a major factor. Poor delivery service can significantly affect repurchase intention (Xiang, Zheng, & Lee, 2021). For apparel buyers, easy return policies are also crucial. A wider range of styles, brands, and sizes available online is another influencing factor. Park and Stoel

(2005) found that product variety positively correlates with customer satisfaction in online fashion retail. Promotional offers are strong motivators in digital shopping environments. According to a report by Statista (2021), nearly 80% of online shoppers in India cited discounts as the primary trigger for making unplanned purchases. Secure and varied payment gateways enhance consumer trust. Studies like that of Jarvenpaa and Tractinsky (1999) highlight the role of perceived security in shaping online buying intentions.

In conclusion the reviewed literature underscores that online apparel shopping is shaped by multiple interrelated factors including gender perceptions, frequency and channel preference, and perceived benefits such as convenience, delivery, and promotional incentives. While consumer behavior is evolving rapidly with digitalization, the core concerns related to trust, experience, and fit remain significant, especially in categories like apparel.

Objectives of The Study: The research paper focuses on the following core objectives:

To analyse the association between gender and purchase preference for apparels.

To determine whether gender significantly influences the frequency of online apparel purchases.

To examine the relationship between purchase preference and frequency of buying.

To rank and evaluate the importance of key factors like delivery, discounts, range, convenience, and payment options in online apparel purchases.

To offer suggestions to e-retailers for improving consumer experience and the satisfaction.

Hypothesis of The Study: The major hypothesis of the study is to test whether the Gender has significant impact on online shopping of apparels. Various hypothesis and sub hypothesis are formulated by highlighting the objectives of the research and the same are tested with data collected as a part of research.

III. Research Methodology:

a. Research Design: As descriptive research is suitable for gathering quantifiable data and understanding consumer trends in a structured manner. This study adopts a descriptive research design. The purpose is to describe and analyse consumer behavior patterns, preferences, and attitudes towards online apparel shopping.

b. Research Approach: A quantitative research approach was employed. The study uses primary data collected through a structured questionnaire, which enables numerical analysis and statistical interpretation of the respondents' preferences and behavior

c. Sampling Design

Population: The population consists of individual respondents who have experience in purchasing apparel online in twin cities of Hyderabad and Secunderabad.

Sample Size: A sample size of 150 respondents were targeted, but after weeding out the unfilled and incomplete forms, the sample size was zeroed at 100 finally.

Sampling Technique: Convenience sampling methods was used to collect the responses from individuals who were easily accessible and willing to participate.

Sampling Area: The survey was conducted in twin cities of Hyderabad and Secunderabad areas through online channels such as Google Forms, emails, WhatsApp groups.

d. Data Sources: Both the primary and secondary sources of data were used for the research, the primary data was collected using a structured questionnaire that included both closed-ended and Likert-scale-based questions. The secondary data was collected from journals, books, research articles, and online databases to support the literature review and contextual background.

e. Research Instrument: A structured questionnaire was designed, comprising questions relating Demographics, Shopping behavior such as purchase frequency, preferred mode of shopping. Factors influencing online purchase which were ranked using Likert scale and finally the overall satisfaction and future intentions. Initially the questionnaire was pre-tested on ten sample respondents to ensure clarity and consistency in the research work.

f. Procedure for Data Collection: The data was collected by using Google Forms and distributed through email, social media platforms, and personal contacts. The survey was conducted in two weeks by focusing on ethical considerations such as anonymity and voluntary participation were ensured.

g. Tools used for Data Analysis: The collected data was analysed using the techniques, descriptive Statistics such as frequencies, percentages, and means. The Cross-tabulation was used to find out the associations between demographics and purchase behavior further the Chi-square test was used to test the significance between categorical variables such as gender and mode of shopping. Data analysis was conducted using Microsoft Excel and SPSS.

h. Reliability and Validity: The reliability of the scale was tested using Cronbach's Alpha, which yielded a value of 0.82, indicating good internal consistency. The Content Validity was ensured through expert review and pilot testing and Construct Validity was established by aligning the questions with literature-backed constructs such as convenience, delivery, trust, and product range.

i. Limitations of the Study: The research study was conducted considering only 100 responses, which may not reflect broader consumer behavior. The study is confined to the twin cities of Hyderabad and Secunderabad with geographical limitation as it was not a paid assignment, like any other studies time and resource constraints have limited the depth of psychographic analysis.

j. Ethical Considerations: The respondents were informed about the purpose of the study that the research will be used solely for academic research, respondents have participated voluntarily, and no personal identifiable information was collected.

Data Analysis and Interpretations:

Table No : 1 Showing the Cross tabulation of Gender * Purchase preference

		Purchase preference			Total
		Online	Offline	Both	
Gender	Male	9	9	50	68
	Female	5	6	21	32
Total		14	15	71	100

Table No : 2 Showing the Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	.721 ^a	2	.697
Likelihood Ratio	.706	2	.703
Linear-by-Linear Association	.435	1	.510
N of Valid Cases	100		

a. 2 cells (33.3%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 4.48.

The chi-square value being more than 0.05 exhibits that we shall accept null hypothesis which says there is no a significant difference between gender and purchase preference.

Table No : 2 Showing the Cross tabulation of Gender * Purchase Frequency

		Purchase Frequency				Total
		Monthly	Quarterly	Occasionally	Once in 6 months	
Gender	Male	14	25	25	4	68
	Female	12	6	11	3	32
Total		26	31	36	7	100

Table No: 3 Showing the Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	5.085 ^a	3	.166
Likelihood Ratio	5.145	3	.161
Linear-by-Linear Association	.388	1	.533
N of Valid Cases	100		

2 cells (25.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 2.24

The chi-square value being more than 0.05 exhibits that we shall accept null hypothesis which says there is a significant difference between frequency of purchase and gender.

Table No : 4 Showing the Cross tabulation of Purchase preference * Purchase Frequency

		Purchase Frequency				Total
		Monthly	Quarterly	Occasionally	Once in 6 months	
Purchase preference	Online	9	3	2	0	14
	Offline	2	1	10	2	15
	Both	15	27	24	5	71
Total		26	31	36	7	100

Table No : 5 Showing the Chi-Square Test

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	21.564 ^a	6	.001
Likelihood Ratio	21.383	6	.002
Linear-by-Linear Association	3.397	1	.065
N of Valid Cases	100		

a. 7 cells (58.3%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .98.

The chi-square value being less than 0.05 exhibits that we shall reject null hypothesis which says there is significant difference between frequency of purchase and purchase preference.

Table No: 6 Showing the Factors importance to purchase apparels online

Descriptive Statistics					
Dimensions		Rank	Sum	Mean	Std. Dev
1 Range_importance_when_bought_online		2	405	4.05	.989
2 Discounts_importance_when_bought_online		4	372	3.72	.986
3 Convenience_importance_when_bought_online		3	391	3.91	1.036
4 Door_delivery_importance_when_bought_online		1	408	4.08	.872
5 Payment_options_importance_when_purc_online		5	371	3.71	.946

The above descriptive statistics show order wise ranking provided for various factors which people perceive to be important for their purchase of apparels online where door delivery was found to be ranked highest in terms of importance, and second was range, third was convenience, fourth was discounts, fifth was payment options.

Table No:7 Showing the frequencies of 1 Range_importance_when_bought_online

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumm. Percent
	Very least important	1	1.0	1.0	1.0
	Least important	5	5.0	5.0	6.0
	Neutral	25	25.0	25.0	31.0
	Important	26	26.0	26.0	57.0
	Highly important	43	43.0	43.0	100.0
	Total	100	100.0	100.0	

It is evident from the research that significant number of respondents consider Range as an important factor for their purchase of apparels online.

Table No:8 Showing the frequencies of 2 Discounts_importance_when_bought_online

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumm. Percent
	Very least important	2	2.0	2.0	2.0
	Least important	10	10.0	10.0	12.0
	Neutral	24	24.0	24.0	36.0
	Important	42	42.0	42.0	78.0
	Highly important	22	22.0	22.0	100.0
	Total	100	100.0	100.0	

It is evident from the research that a significant number of respondents rated Discounts as 4 & 5 on the scale 1 to 5 and hence discount is also found to be an considerably important factor for the purchase of apparels online.

Table No:9 Showing the frequencies of 3 Convenience_when_bought_online

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumm. Percent
	Very least important	3	3.0	3.0	3.0
	Least important	7	7.0	7.0	10.0
	Neutral	19	19.0	19.0	29.0
	Important	38	38.0	38.0	67.0
	Highly important	33	33.0	33.0	100.0
	Total	100	100.0	100.0	

It is evident from the research that significant number of respondents about 71% rated convenience factor 4 & 5 and found it to be important factor for their purchase of apparels online as it provides an ease for their shopping wherever and whenever they are comfortable.

Table No:10 Showing the frequencies of 4 Importance of Door Delivery_Online

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumm. Percent
	Very least important	1	1.0	Cumm. Percent	1.0
	Least important	3	3.0	3.0	4.0
	Neutral	19	19.0	19.0	23.0
	Important	41	41.0	41.0	64.0
	Highly important	36	36.0	36.0	100.0
	Total	100	100.0	100.0	

Table No:11 Showing the frequencies of 5 Payment_options_when_bought_online

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumm. Percent
	Very least important	2	2.0	2.0	2.0
	Least important	6	6.0	6.0	8.0
	Neutral	33	33.0	33.0	41.0
	Important	37	37.0	37.0	78.0
	Highly important	22	22.0	22.0	100.0

	Total	100	100.0	100.0	
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Findings of The Study:

With respect to cross tabulation of Gender vs. Purchase Preference, the chi-square test ($p = 0.697$) indicates no significant association between gender and purchase preference. Most respondents (71%) prefer both online and offline modes.

The cross tabulation of Gender vs. Purchase Frequency show the chi-square test ($p = 0.166$) value with no significant relationship between gender and the frequency of apparel purchases.

The value of cross tabulation of Purchase Preference vs. Purchase Frequency shows a significant association was found ($p = 0.001$), indicating that purchase frequency is influenced by mode of shopping.

The analysis of factors affecting online apparel purchases which used mean ranking shows the Door delivery (4.08) and range of products (4.05) were ranked highest next Convenience (3.91) and discounts (3.72) followed closely and finally Payment options (3.71) was rated lowest among the five factors but still considered important.

It was found that the higher ratings (4 or 5) for most factors suggest that consumers perceive all five factors as influential in their online buying decisions.

Suggestions: The research offers the following suggestions

Since door delivery was the top-ranked factor, improving delivery speed and reliability can increase customer satisfaction.

A broader selection increases customer engagement and perceived value.

User-friendly interfaces, clear return policies, and flexible timing can cater to convenience-driven customers.

Tailored and seasonal discount strategies may enhance purchase motivation.

Ensure secure, multiple, and user-friendly payment options, including UPI, credit cards, cash on deliver (COD), and digital wallets.

IV. Conclusion:

This study highlights that while gender does not significantly influence online apparel shopping behavior, preferences and frequency of purchase are found to be interrelated. Consumers place the highest value on door delivery and product variety, followed by convenience and discounts. E-commerce platforms should tailor make their strategies accordingly to enhance customer satisfaction and retention

Scope for Future Research: Since the topic is wide, further research in this area can be carried out by using larger and more diverse samples across multiple cities or regions could yield more generalizable results. An in-depth analysis of other demographic factors such as age, income, and education level can be focused on. Further exploration of psychological and behavioral variables such as trust and brand loyalty can be done. The impact of social media influence and reviews on online apparel purchases also is an interesting area for future research. Nevertheless, a comparative study between different product categories like electronics and fashion can also carried out.

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