

Purchasing Criteria for Apparels among Indian Consumers

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Abstract

The present study attempted to evaluate the nature of the fashion industry, and preferential factors accounting for purchasing particular apparels by the customers. The present study was based on primary data and was conducted in four major cities of Punjab, that is, Ludhiana, Sangrur, Patiala, and Chandigarh. By using suitable sampling technique, a sample of 400 respondents was selected for the study. The consumer preferences were assessed on the basis of various parameters like design, quality, price, availability, style, brand image, etc. of the apparels. The study concluded that 'style' and 'design' were the first and second preferences of the Indian customers rather than the 'brand name.' Thus, the apparels organizations are directed to account for these parameters in production and marketing promotional strategies and plans.

Keywords: fashion, apparels, Garret ranking, preferences

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The fashion industry refers to the style, trends, and distinct practices in respect of garments, footwear, ornaments, hairstyles, etc. The term fashion is most commonly associated with clothing. Fashion and apparel can show one's personality and image by the insight of colour, styling, etc. Consumers expose themselves by preferring those apparels which are most prominent in fashion (Liu & Choi, 2009). The traditional culture of the fashion industry in India has changed into modern culture. The world over, the fashion industry has been passing through significant changes due to increasing internalization in the recent years, that is, the nature of the fashion industry in the present days revolves on the track of social media, the Internet, and television, which have led to rapid changes in this sector (Etemad, Wilkinson, & Dana, 2010). The consumers are well aware of the latest trends and updates in the fashion industry through different media channels. The ever-changing nature of the fashion industry has changed the attitude and motivation of the consumer towards the usage of fashion.

Clothing is an integral part of the modern fashion industry as it develops self-confidence and positive attitude among users. During the last few years, the Indian consumer market has achieved a remarkable position in the world. The Indian consumers are adopting modern lifestyles not only in cities, but in rural areas also. The increased level of awareness regarding branded apparels influences the buying behaviour among consumers (Dey, 2017).

Consumers are presumed to consider many factors while purchasing apparels in the market. Some factors affect the consumer purchase decisions. Among different factors, the most critical factors that influence a consumer's final decision are the price and quality of the product. Since consumers usually associate the price of a brand with its quality, a brand priced too low is perceived as a low-quality product. Similarly, a product priced too high may

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not be affordable by many. Other factors that have an impact on the consumer preferences are consumer ethnocentrism, country of origin, social status, price relativity with the competing brands, and family & friends (Ismail, Masood, & Tawab, 2012).

According to an investigation, the decision making power of customers for purchasing apparels was influenced by the quality, price, product assortment, extent, quality of customer service, the convenience of location, payment options, national brands, and store layout (Hyllegard, Eckman, Descals, & Borja, 2005). Another study conducted by Islam, Rahman, and Hossain (2014) revealed that brand status, attitude, popularity, image, premium, self-respect, and reference groups were found to have positive effects on consumer buying decisions in purchasing fashion apparel. The attributes of style mostly influence the consumers' behaviour for buying apparels - a value of the product, diversity, demand, and credibility (Prasad, 2012).

The present study is an attempt to evaluate the nature of the fashion industry, and preferential factors that account for purchasing particular apparels by the customers.

Literature Review

The consumer's perception and buying behaviour of purchasing goods is a very complicated situation. A large number of studies have been conducted so far in this respect at national as well as international levels. The following few relevant studies have been reviewed to support the present study :

The perception and buying behaviour of the consumer is influenced by many factors which stimulate buying decisions of the consumer. Awareness and availability of the product are the two primary variables which have a substantial effect on popularity and sale of any product. Consumer perception and usage of any product can be changed due to change in the income level of the consumers (Kazmi, 2012).

According to an investigation, the consumer buying behaviour was influenced by social factors and environmental factors, such as motivation, personality, perception, learning, values, beliefs, attitudes, lifestyle, personal influence, reference group, family influence, social class, and culture in the buying decision process (Bhagat, 2012; Rahmat & Nasution 2012). Arif, Ahmed, and Farrukh (2015) concluded that the four factors such as colour, choice preference, brand image, and smart features were significantly brought into consideration while purchasing a mobile phone.

Consumers are influenced by many factors that lure them into having a shopping experience at the organized retail stores. These factors are broadly classified into store and environmental factors. The results of studies indicated that there are six factors, that is, easily accessible, quality stock, comfort zone, infrastructure, quality time, add-on services or facilities, a variety which affected the customer perception towards the organized retail stores. The studies indicated that Indian consumers are moving to established retailers instead of Kirana stores for purchasing groceries. It was found that kiranas (tiny small shops in the town) did well on location but poor on cleanliness, offer, quality, helpful, trustworthy salesperson (Chaudhary & Sharda, 2017; Pandey & Verma, 2015).

The quality of the products and their easy availability were the primary and essential determinants of buying behaviour of the customers. Increasing income and purchasing power of the customers were the critical variables that affected customer impulsive buying behaviour in the FMCG sector considering the retail market in India. More people are found to be moving towards Western culture in dressing sense, in eating etc. Studies opined that buying behaviour was very much influenced by the experience of their own and of neighbour consumers and their families. Above all, consumers were affected by touch and feel aspect of any promotional activity (Ahmad, 2011; Nagaraja, 2004).

More than 72% of the total population in India lives in villages. With the increase in real income of rural people, the brand image popularity is catching up among rural consumers. The buying behaviour in general and buying decisions, in particular, in rural areas are influenced by the factors like price and availability of products; the

frequency of purchase of commodities by rural consumers is profoundly affected by the type and nature of the products (Sayulu & Reddy, 1998; Sarwade, 2002 ; Sulekha & Mor, 2013).

Venkataraman and Raman (2016) conducted a study to explore and understand the relevant factors that moved consumers towards the usage of user-generated content (UGC) in the online space for the fashion industry, and its impact on the purchase decision for different categories of fashion products.

It takes an extended period for a company to develop a brand image. A company provides a reasonable extent of product quality and services to the customers on account of promoting a brand which is the most valuable asset for a company. The brand is an element of the relationship between business and customers. It is more than just names and symbols (Kotler & Armstrong, 2010). The brand has a reasonable impact on customers' buying behaviour. However, in a study, female customers were found to be more brand consciousness than male customers (Domie, 2013). In Husso's (2011) study, nearly 53% of the total respondents '*agreed strongly*' that they preferred branded products due to perceived good quality. The study showed that a brand could influence purchase decisions, and studies should further look into the effect of factors such as brand awareness, brand equity, and the effect brand association has on purchase decisions.

Liberalization of the Indian economy allowed many foreign brands to enter into Indian market, which increased the extent of competitiveness among companies. After saturation in urban markets, many companies are focusing their attention towards the fast-growing rural sector. The primary source of brand awareness among rural customers is word of mouth followed by advertisements, family members, relatives, and friends (Nandagopal & Chinnaiyan, 2003 ; Yuvarani, 2013). Quality is an essential factor that draws consumers towards branded products. Although unbranded products sometimes give the same satisfaction as branded products, customers would still prefer to purchase a branded product. However, perceived quality and taste are the two critical variables that determine brand loyalty. The existence of brand loyalty is quite significant, however, a small section of consumers switch over to other brands, mainly due to the influence of reference groups or non-availability of the desired brand (Venketeshwarlu, Kumar, & Rajanath, 1987; Vincent, 2006).

From a policy point of view, an organization should seek consumers' needs, wants, and taste before embarking on suitable policy measures on production, management, and marketing levels (Jibril & Odua, 2013). Consumer behaviour plays a vital role in marketing. Various factors influence this. It is found that most of the consumers are affected by brand and quality of the products which need to be improved (Mahalingam & Nandha, 2012). It is believed that the prices should be within competitive levels. Companies should cut the prices to attract new users and competitors' customers. It can be possible through better advertising campaigns, use of aggressive sales promotions, trade deals, etc. Companies can also move into more extensive market channels, and can use mass merchandisers (Garga, Ghuman, & Dogra, 2009 ; Kotler & Keller, 2009).

✎ **Limitations of the Existing Literature :** The literature reviewed above has covered the different aspects of the factors affecting the consumers' perception and buying behaviour of various products, however, insufficient studies have been conducted to explore preferential factors which could be considered by the consumers while purchasing particular apparels. The existing literature cited above has comprehensive coverage about the factors affecting consumers' buying behaviour, but fails to find any study relevant to the methodology being used in the present study.

Objectives of the Study

The modern fashion industry is highly volatile, and consumers nowadays are well aware of the latest trends and updates in fashion through different media channels. Despite an essential component of the fashion industry, insufficient studies have been conducted on apparel industry in general and consideration of individual factors by the customers while purchasing apparels in particular. Moreover, none of the studies have used Garret Ranking

technique to explore the preferred factors which could be considered by the consumers while buying specific apparels. With the advancement of technology, improved economic growth, and frequent changes in consumer interest, it is a challenging task to handle consumer buying behaviour. Keeping this in view, the present study is designed to assess the nature of fashion industry and individual factors, which could be taken into account while purchasing particular apparels.

Rationale of the Study

Presently, the nature of the fashion industry is wheeled on the track of social media, the Internet, and television, which leads to fast changes in this sector. Apparel is an essential component of the modern fashion industry. In addition to developing self-confidence, the latest fashion of apparels could develop a positive attitude and status symbol among users. The present study would explore different factors that could be accounted by the customers while purchasing particular apparels. From a policy point of view, these elements are given more importance by the organizations and sellers for marketing their products. Hence, the outcomes of the present study could help these institutions to generate more suitable policies on account of making their apparel goods more appealing for customers' satisfaction.

Methodology

The present study was conducted during 2014 - 2018 and is based on primary data. Since the study is based on the branded apparels, therefore, the level of awareness and the accessibility of the branded apparels were taken into account while selecting the sample of the study. The study was designed to be conducted in the state of Punjab. The sample of the survey was widely distributed over four cities namely Ludhiana, Sangrur, Patiala, and Chandigarh. Keeping in view the nature of the present study, a sample size of 400 respondents (80 each from Ludhiana, Sangrur, Patiala and 160 from Chandigarh) were selected for the study. The data were collected through well structured pre-tested schedules. The collected data were analyzed with the help of Microsoft Excel and the following statistical techniques were used to examine the data :

(1) One Sample t - test: It is observed that perception level of the customers regarding the various parameters of fashion of apparels (design, uniqueness, style, brand, price, etc.) while purchasing apparels varied significantly among the sampled respondents. One sample t - test was applied to test the significance in this respect. The form of the model is given below :

where,

$\bar{x}$ = Sample mean,

μ = Population mean,

s = Standard deviation,

n = no of respondents.

SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences) was used to run the one sample t - test.

The following scales were used to quantify the perception of the customers regarding various parameters to be considered for purchasing apparels by the sampled respondents, where 1 = *strongly disagree* ; 2 = *disagree*, 3 = *neutral* ; 4 = *agree* ; and 5 = *strongly agree*.

(2) Garrett's Ranking Technique : Garret's ranking technique has been used to rank the various factors that could

be considered by the customers while selecting or purchasing particular apparels. The rank assigned to a specific factor by the sampled respondents (highest rank = 1 to lowest rank =10) was transmitted into scores by using the formula given by Garrett and Woodworth :

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

where,

R_{ij} = Rank given for i th factor by the j th respondent,

N_j = Number of factors ranked by the j th respondent.

By referring to the Garrett table, the percent position estimated was converted into scores. Then, for each consideration, the count of various customers was added, and the mean score was calculated. The element with the highest mean score was considered to be the most critical factor.

Analysis and Results

(1) Socioeconomic Profile of the Sample Respondents : The socioeconomic characteristics of the sample respondents as such have no vital importance for the study, but the perception of the consumers about branded apparels was observed to be varied with the socioeconomic profile of the sample respondents. Therefore, it is very pertinent to examine the social set-up of the sampled respondents. The socioeconomic profile of the sample respondents is presented in the Table 1. All participants were grouped into four groups by the age of the respondents. The results reveal that 30.50% of the total respondents belonged to a relatively younger age group, that is, 18 - 25 years. Nearly 23% of the total respondents were in the age group of between 26 - 30 years, while 25.75% of them belonged to the age group of 31 - 35 years, and the remaining 21% were more than 36 years old, respectively. Hence, most of the respondents in the sample belonged to the most productive age group, that is, 79% of the total respondents were below 36 years of age in the sample. Men and women were in equal proportion in the sample. The percentage of unmarried respondents (52.25 %) was more than the percentage of married respondents (47.75 %) in the sample.

With respect to the monthly family income, all the respondents were categorized into five slabs. It is evident that the monthly income of majority of the respondents, that is, of 45.75% of the total respondents was below ₹ 20,000. The monthly family income of 18.00%, 17.25%, and 11.75% of the respondents varied between ₹ 20,001 - ₹ 30,000 ; ₹ 30,001 - ₹ 40,000 ; and ₹ 40,001 - ₹ 50,000, respectively. Merely 7.25% of the total respondents in the sample belonged to the relatively high-income group, that is, earning more than ₹ 50,000 per month.

To draw a representative sample and to take into consideration the concept of branded apparels, the study sample comprises of 36% students, 28% servicemen, 19.75% businessmen, and 16.25% housewives. Residential location-wise, 54.50% of the total respondents belonged to urban areas, while the remaining 45.50% had a rural background. As far as educational qualification is concerned, most of the respondents had attained education up to the 10+2 level (46.25 %), followed by graduation (28.50%), post graduation (15.75 %), and matriculated level (9.50%).

The socioeconomic profile of the respondents is an important component on account of determining the perception of branded apparels. It supposed to be varied with different socioeconomic characteristics (age, occupation, income, education, etc.) of the consumers. In a nutshell, most of the respondents in the sample belonged to the most productive age group, that is, 79% of the total respondents were below 36 years of age in the sample. Men and women were in equal proportion in the sample. Monthly family income of most of the respondents was up to ₹ 20,000 (45.75%). Occupation-wise, the sample was widely distributed, and most of the respondents were students (36%). The proportion of the respondents from urban areas was relatively higher (54.50 %) than the respondents of rural areas (45.50 %). Among the sampled respondents, the majority, that is, about 46% had attained educational qualification up to the 10+2 level.

Table 1. Socioeconomic Profile of the Sample Respondents**(N = 400)**

Socioeconomic Characteristics		Frequency	%
Age Group (in Years)	18 - 25	122	30.50
	26 - 30	91	22.75
	31 - 35	103	25.75
	36 or above	84	21.00
Gender	Male	200	50.00
	Female	200	50.00
Marital Status	Married	191	47.75
	Un-married	209	52.25
Income (₹/month)	Up to 20000	183	45.75
	20001- 30000	72	18.00
	30001 - 40000	69	17.25
	40001 - 50000	47	11.75
	> 50000	29	7.25
Occupation	Student	144	36.00
	Businessman	79	19.75
	Serviceman	112	28.00
	Housewife	65	16.25
Residential Location	Rural	182	45.50
	Urban	218	54.50
Education	Matric	38	9.50
	10+2	185	46.25
	Graduation	114	28.50
	Post-graduation	63	15.75

Table 2. Perception of Consumers Regarding Various Parameters of Fashion While Purchasing Apparels**(N = 400)**

Fashion Parameters	One-Sample Statistics		
	Mean	Std. Deviation	t - statistics
Uniqueness	3.96	1.07	73.98*
Style	3.87	0.94	82.36*
Colour	3.82	1.05	72.60*
Brand Name	3.76	1.06	71.21*
Quality	3.75	0.97	77.67*
Design	3.72	1.24	59.98*
Availability of Range of Apparels	3.63	1.15	62.98*
Value for Money	3.63	0.92	79.29*
Advertisement	3.63	0.99	73.54*
Price	3.40	1.19	57.23*
Convenience of many items	3.31	1.22	54.28*

Note. *Significant at the 1% level of probability.

The perception level of the customers with respect to various parameters of fashion in one sample *t* - test was assessed on the basis of Likert scales, that is, from 1 to 5 which could not reflect the real picture on account of important factors (Table 2). Therefore, the preferences of the customers with respect to different parameters for buying apparels are widely distributed and their preferences were gathered on the basis of ranks from highest (1) to lowest (10) in the following section.

(2) Ranking of Various Fashion Parameters by the Sample Respondents While Selecting Particular Apparels : The sample customers were asked about the various factors or parameters that could be taken into account while selecting particular apparels. The responses of the respondents are reported in terms of ranks from 1 (highest) to 10 (lowest) according to their preferences for particular factors or parameters. The distribution of the sampled respondents according to the ranking of the different parameters is given in the Table 3. The enlisted factors and parameters with respect to fashion of the apparels are : brand name, product quality, availability, promotion, value for money, style, stitching, design, comfort, return policy, and discount. The results indicate that the highest proportion, that is, 28% of the total sample respondents assigned 1st rank to brand name of the apparels,

Table 3. Preferences of Various Fashion Parameters by the Sample Respondents While Selecting Particular Apparels

(N = 400)

Parameters		Ranking									
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Brand Name	f	112	41	30	26	22	39	41	27	14	48
	%	28.00	10.25	7.50	6.50	5.50	9.75	10.25	6.75	3.50	12.00
Product Quality	f	59	67	30	35	38	26	55	31	29	30
	%	14.75	16.75	7.50	8.75	9.50	6.50	13.75	7.75	7.25	7.50
Availability	f	13	25	62	30	19	22	40	83	63	43
	%	3.25	6.25	15.5	7.50	4.75	5.50	10.00	20.75	15.75	10.75
Promotion	f	13	8	22	55	16	19	29	52	92	94
	%	3.25	2.00	5.50	13.75	4.00	4.75	7.25	13.00	23.00	23.50
Value for Money	f	23	26	21	28	73	42	40	24	28	95
	%	5.75	6.50	5.25	7.00	18.25	10.50	10.00	6.00	7.00	23.75
Style	f	60	88	66	43	37	65	19	6	7	9
	%	15.00	22.00	16.50	10.75	9.25	16.25	4.75	1.50	1.75	2.25
Stitching	f	17	14	33	41	34	46	72	38	13	92
	%	4.25	3.50	8.25	10.25	8.50	11.5	18.00	9.50	3.25	23.00
Design	f	45	80	56	47	31	23	30	62	19	7
	%	11.25	20.00	14.00	11.75	7.75	5.75	7.50	15.5	4.75	1.75
Comfort	f	33	22	44	45	49	47	26	32	74	28
	%	8.25	5.50	11.00	11.25	12.25	11.75	6.50	8.00	18.50	7.00
Return Policy	f	4	10	7	15	33	46	30	22	29	204
	%	1.00	2.50	1.75	3.75	8.25	11.5	7.50	5.50	7.25	51.00
Discount	f	22	19	27	36	44	25	19	23	35	150
	%	5.50	4.75	6.75	9.00	11.00	6.25	4.75	5.75	8.75	37.5

Note. f stands for frequency.

followed by style (15.00%), product quality (14.75%), design (11.25%), comfort (8.25%), value for money (5.75%), discount (5.50%), stitching (4.25%), availability (3.25%), promotion (3.25%), and return policy (1.00%), respectively. The preferences of the customers with respect to different parameters for buying apparels are widely distributed from lowest rank to highest rank, and the results presented in the Table 3 could not produce concrete results in this regard. Hence, this table represents only the frequency of the customers according to their preferences or rank assigned from 1 to 10 towards the different parameters which could be taken into account while purchasing apparels.

(3) Garrett's Ranking Technique : In connection with the above, the analysis further proceeds to find out the most important factors which have been taken into account by the sample respondents while selecting or purchasing apparels. In this regard, the Garret ranking technique is used to find out the most important factors accountable for selecting or purchasing a particular brand. The value of the mean score on the basis of the preference of the customers towards a particular factor was worked out. The higher is the value of the mean score, the more preferred the factor is.

The preferences of the respondents of enlisted factors are assessed on the basis of the ranks from 1 (highest) to 10 (lowest). The percent position of ranks and their respective Garrett's table value is presented in the Table 4. The 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th, 5th, 6th, 7th, 8th, 9th, and 10th ranks are assigned 5, 15, 25, 35, 45, 55, 65, 75, 85, and 95 percent positions in the distribution and their respective Garrett's table value worked out to be is : 82, 70, 63, 58, 52, 48, 42, 37, 30, and 18, respectively.

Table 4. Percent Position of Ranks Assigned from 1 to 10 and Their Respective Garrett's Table Value

Rank	Percentage Position	Garrett's Table Value
1	5	82
2	15	70
3	25	63
4	35	58
5	45	52
6	55	48
7	65	42
8	75	37
9	85	30
10	95	18

The preferences for different factors considered for purchasing particular apparels by the sampled respondents have been depicted in the Table 5. The preferences are measured on the basis of 11 preferential factors named as brand name, product quality, availability, promotion, value for money, style, stitching, design, comfort, return policy, and discount policy. The preference for each factor is assessed on the basis of the degree of responses, which is ranked from 1(highest) to 10 (lowest) on the basis of the rank assigned by the respondents. By applying Garrett's ranking technique and taking into account the ranks assigned by the respondents, the total scores and mean scores are worked out.

The results depicted in Table 5 reveal that the style of the product is the most preferential factor for purchasing apparels in the study area. Total score (24168) and mean score (60.42) obtained in this regard are worked out to be the highest. The next most important factors are design, brand name, product quality, comfort, availability, value for money, stitching, discount policy, promotion, and return policy. The total score(s) with respect to the

Table 5. Preferential Factors for Purchasing Apparels by the Sample Respondents - Results of Garrett's Ranking Technique

S. No.	Factors	Rank										Total	Total Score	Mean Score
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10			
1	Style	60	88	66	43	37	65	19	6	7	9	400	24168	60.42
2	Design	45	80	56	47	31	23	30	62	19	7	400	22510	56.28
3	Brand Name	112	41	30	26	22	39	41	27	14	48	400	22473	56.18
4	Product Quality	59	67	30	35	38	26	55	31	29	30	400	21539	53.85
5	Comfort	33	22	44	45	49	47	26	32	74	28	400	19432	48.58
6	Availability	13	25	62	30	19	22	40	83	63	43	400	17921	44.80
7	Value for Money	23	26	21	28	73	42	40	24	28	95	400	17583	43.96
8	Stitching	17	14	33	41	34	46	72	38	13	92	400	17283	43.21
9	Discount	22	19	27	36	44	25	19	23	35	150	400	15810	39.53
10	Promotion	13	8	22	55	16	19	29	52	92	94	400	15540	38.85
11	Return Policy	4	10	7	15	33	46	30	22	29	204	400	12879	32.20

above - said factors come out to be 22510, 22473, 21539, 19432, 17921, 17583, 17283, 15810, 15540, and 12879, while the values of mean score corresponding to these factors calculated are as : 56.28, 56.18, 53.85, 48.58, 44.80, 43.96, 43.21, 39.53, 38.85, and 32.20, respectively. Overall, style, design, and brand name of the product are assigned 1st, 2nd, and 3rd ranks, and hence, these factors emerge as the most important factors for selecting or purchasing apparels by the sample respondents. The study observes that style and design are the first and second preferences of the Indian customers rather than the brand name which is of better quality and mostly has a foreign origin.

Similar results were obtained by Sundarraaj (2011). The study concluded that there was an influence of domestic apparel manufacturers on the young consumers. The young consumers preferred domestic products than international products, and that is because the domestic products understand the consumer better, and products are based on nativity and suit their needs than international products. Although international products possess more quality, consumers still consider those as luxurious ones with a high price. Overall, it can be concluded from the above analysis, that the 'style', 'design,' and the 'brand' are the preferable parameters considered by the customers while purchasing apparels.

Discussion, Conclusion, and Managerial Implications

The term fashion is closely associated with apparels and is an essential part of modern society. The consumers are well aware of the latest trends and updates through different media channels. The ever - changing nature of the fashion industry has changed the attitude and motivation of the consumer towards the usage of style, and some people use fashion as a means of presenting themselves distinctively in society. Therefore, it was imperative to evaluate the nature of the fashion industry, and preferential factors accounting for purchasing particular apparels by the customers. The nature of the fashion industry in this study has been assessed by various parameters like design, quality, price, availability, style, brand image, etc. of the apparels.

One-sample *t* - test indicates that 'uniqueness' emerges as the most critical parameter of fashion considered by the sample respondents while purchasing apparels. The value of the mean score is the highest (3.96) in this regard. However, the values of the mean score with respect to style, colour, brand name, quality, design, availability of range of apparels, value for money, advertisement, price, and convenience work out to be 3.87, 3.82, 3.76, 3.75,

3.72, 3.63, 3.63, 3.40, and 3.31, respectively. Hence, the study reveals that all factors are important, but three parameters namely uniqueness, style, and colour are the most important factors taken into account by the customers while purchasing apparels.

Garret's ranking technique is used to find out the most critical factors accountable for selecting or purchasing a particular brand. The values of the mean score on the basis of the preferences of the customers towards the specific elements were worked out. The higher is the value of the mean score, the more preferred the factor is. The results reveal that the style of the product is a unique factor for purchasing apparels in the study area. The total score (24168) and mean score (60.42) work out to be the highest in this respect. The next most important factors are design, brand name, product quality, comfort, availability, value for money, stitching, discount policy, promotion, and return policy. The total score with respect to the above-said factors come out to be 22510, 22473, 21539, 19432, 17921, 17583, 17283, 15810, 15540, and 12879, while the values of the mean score corresponding to these factors are calculated as: 56.28, 56.18, 53.85, 48.58, 44.80, 43.96, 43.21, 39.53, 38.85, and 32.20, respectively.

Overall, style, design, and brand name of the product are assigned 1st, 2nd, and 3rd ranks, and hence, these factors emerge as the most important factors for selecting or purchasing apparels by the sample respondents. The study concludes that style and design are the first and second preferences of the Indian customers rather than the brand name which is of better quality and mostly has a foreign origin. The study concludes that there is an influence of domestic apparel manufacturers on the young consumers. The young consumers prefer local products than international products, and that is because the local products understand the consumer better, and local products are based on nativity and suit their needs than global products. Hence, the Garret's ranking technique concludes that 'style,' 'design,' and 'brand' are preferable parameters considered by the customers while purchasing apparels. Thus, the apparel organizations are directed to account for these parameters in production and market promotional activities and plans.

Hence, the critical outcomes of the study could help the apparel organizations/companies to generate more suitable policies on account of making their apparel goods more stylish and acceptable at the customers' end on the one hand and the economic benefits for the companies on the other hand, respectively.

Limitations of the Study and Scope for Further Research

The study is limited to some districts of Punjab such as Ludhiana, Patiala, Chandigarh, and Sangrur. The limitations of this study are the limited sample size and time taken to conduct the study. In context of the sample size, the study concentrates on an area restricted to a market niche : the fashion industry.

The present study is restricted to three districts of Malwa region of Punjab and Union Territory Chandigarh, and it has not captured other districts of Malwa region. So, there is future scope to conduct a study with other districts of Malwa region and other regions of Punjab. The study can also be extended to other states of India. A limited time period for the research work is considered, and the scope of the study is limited to a certain age group, income status, socioeconomic factors, and number of respondents. Also, the stressed topic for discussion is the fashion industry in general terms and only some aspects are highlighted. Hence, for future research, a larger sample size can be chosen for the survey and in depth questions can be posed to the respondents in order to discuss more topics like different aspects of the fashion industry in other regions of Punjab state and India.

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