



International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research in Science, Engineering and Technology

(A Monthly, Peer Reviewed, Refereed, Scholarly Indexed, Open Access Journal)



Impact Factor: 8.206

Volume 8, Issue 6, June 2025



International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research in Science, Engineering and Technology (IJMRSET)

(A Monthly, Peer Reviewed, Refereed, Scholarly Indexed, Open Access Journal)

Consumer Study on the Buying Behaviour and Preferences for Denim Tops

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ABSTRACT: The purpose of this research is to recognize the outlook of target consumers (young girls) towards fashion and their preferences in detailing of denim tops. A market research was carried out by preparing a questionnaire to analyse the consumers' attitude towards fashion, buying habits and preferences in garment design details. The target group chosen was young girls within the age group of 17 to 21 years and the garment category chosen was denim tops. A survey was conducted among 500 college going students using quantitative research method. It was proved that maximum number of respondents was fashion conscious and they preferred details like flared silhouettes, Chinese collars, set-in sleeves, yoke releasing fullness.

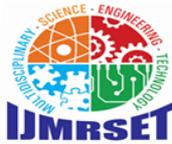
KEYWORDS: target consumers, silhouette, denim tops and correlation.

I. INTRODUCTION

Denim is an important ensemble in everyone's wardrobe irrespective of the age, sex, occupation because it enables consumers for long wearing, easy handling and above all very much affordable. Denim in India has become more of a style statement than just everyday wear apparel. Designers are experimenting with embroidery and other value additions like multi-functional finishing and eco-friendly like organic denim. When the word denim is spelled, the outfit comes to our mind is trousers, but denim is also used to make jackets, skirts, shirts and accessories like footwear, wrist watches, bags etc. The Denim Shirt is becoming a fashion statement in itself, and at Denim Club India visualizes the Denim Shirt being the trend for the upcoming seasons. A full sleeves shirt for the office-goers, or sleeve-less top for the college- going chic, the Denim Shirt is going to be seen and make its way into many wardrobes ^[1].

The women's wear market is projected to grow faster here onwards and will potentially account for about more than 25% of the total market by 2015 (Amit Gugnani, www.technopack.com). The female genders have high involvement and interest towards fashion (Auty and Elliott, 1998) and they have much more understanding towards clothing than men. In essence, today's consumers, particularly among the young are more sophisticated in fashion consumption. They seldom base on one single feature or attribute to evaluate the product. They often assess a product with multiple attributes. (Osmud Rahman 2011). Coimbatore, known as "The Manchester of South India" is the district headquarters of Coimbatore district. It is the third largest city in Tamil Nadu and houses numerous textile mills and small scale engineering units. The city is well connected to its region by rail, road and air. Industry experts believe that the city will soon experience an entire range of retail development as people in Coimbatore are capable of enough disposable income due to their entrepreneurial nature and of late are equally becoming brand conscious and lifestyle aspirant as well. According to the industry sources, as the city is a very good market and was untapped for a long time, recently, lot of national and international brands have been found doing fabulous business in Coimbatore.

Consumer buying behaviour is the key for the success of any business. The major factors that influence the consumer buying behaviour in the field of apparel are personal traits, physical traits like age, gender, personality; sociological traits include ethnic affiliation, marital status, income and education. Other factors include knowledge on textile and fashion, self-concept, interest, shopping attitude, apparel values, shopping orientation, personal belief and adoptability in apparel shopping. Consumer behaviour towards fashion clothing affects all aspects of the fashion industry, design, production, and merchandising and promotion at all levels, as much as it affects retailing (P. M. Rath, 2008). Accordingly, there are many research conducted to examine the factors that result from consumer behaviour towards fashion for making a purchase decision. Moreover, the results in the study indicate that lifestyles influenced consumer



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confidence in making purchase decisions about fashion such as exclusivity, easy of care, profession, durability, moral, conventions, welfare, quality, versatility, brand, price, age appearance (Rocha V., 2005).

In an apparel retail store, the impression of the product is formed by many inter-related factors like image, appearance, comfort, quality, value, fit and ultimately these are influenced by personal preferences, fashionability and attractiveness. The criteria that is used for evaluating a product is defined as “the particular dimensions or attributes that are used in judging the choice alternatives” (Engel et al., 2001). The most frequently used clothing criteria examined by researchers have been price, style, quality, size/fit, colour, fabric, brand name, country of origin.

Hence in this research an attempt has been taken to understand the consumers’ interest towards denim top. The main objective of the research work is to study the attitude of college going girls towards fashion and their buying behaviour to procure denim garments and preferences towards styling of exclusive denim tops.

- To investigate the interest of target consumers towards fashion and trends.
- To study the fundamental factors that influences the consumers’ buying intention of denim tops.
- To understand the consumers’ preferences of design details in denim tops.

II. METHODOLOGY

2.1 Development of Hypothesis:

Based on the review of literature from the previous research works and books the following hypotheses were developed for the current study.

H1: College going girls within the age group of 17-21 are fashion conscious.

H2: Style i.e., the design details is an important factor in selecting a garment among college going girls

H3: Quality is an important factor for selection of denim products

H4: Brand name is an important cue in buying decision for college going girls

H5: Fit is an important attribute in purchasing denim top among college going girls

H6: Price is an important attribute in purchasing denim top among college going girls

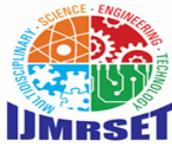
H7: Colour is not an important attribute in purchasing denim top among college going girls

2.2 Instrument

Questionnaire was prepared to get the data from the samples. Few questions were close ended and many were framed based on the 5 point likert scale. The statement is made and the respondents indicate their degree of agreement or disagreement on a five point scale (Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Neither Agree nor Disagree, Agree, Strongly Agree). A pilot study was conducted with 25 participants to assess the applicability and efficacy of the measuring instrument for denim tops. Based on the results obtained and observations made in the pilot study, small modifications were made and few illustrations were done in the instrument for easy identification of the design details. The final version of self-administrated questionnaire was prepared and organised into four sections. In the first section very few questions were framed to collect demographic informations. In order to understand the attitude of consumers’ towards fashion, a cluster of questions were added to the second part of the questionnaire. In the third section main focus was given to prioritise the factors that influences the consumer s’ buying decision of torso garment. The last section is to assess the preference of design details in denim tops like silhouette, sleeve, collar and yoke.

2.3 Selection of sample

There are nearly 50 arts and science colleges in and around Coimbatore (www.coimbatore.com). The colleges that are located within the city limits were focussed for the study to obtain the urban culture and the number of colleges identified was nearly ten. It was found that on an average there are 2,500 girls students in a college, hence the total population is assumed as 25,000 girls. From the pilot study conducted and the literature the response rate was calculated as 80%, the precision level or the marginal error as $\pm 5\%$ (0.05), confidence level as 95% and the variability as 0.5% was obtained. The total sample size determined is 473 and hence the final sample size is rounded to 500 samples considering the missing. We identified our target consumers as young girls and the category chosen for the study was girls’ denim top to co-ordinate with trousers and skirts. A field study was done to analyse the consumers’ lifestyle, attitude towards fashion and preferences. The collected data was analyzed using statistical tools. Random



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sampling method is adopted for the study. Arts and science colleges were selected for the sample identification as the dress code is not as strict as professional colleges in Coimbatore.

2.4 Conduct of Survey

The arts and science colleges located in the heart of city like Race Course, Peelamedu and Ganapathy were identified. Since the intention of the research are focused on consumers who have a sense of buying fashion clothing, arts and science college has been selected as the best place to collect the information. The main reason observed behind this is the arts and science courses are easy, simple; more practical when compared to any other professional courses and the dress code is not as strict as in any other professional colleges. This observation is made from the pilot study done and few discussions made with the students. A structured and self-administrated questionnaire which consists of three sections was prepared as discussed above. Questionnaires were distributed to students and the filled forms were obtained from them in person.

2.5 Data collection and analysis

The data analysis decision for Likert items is usually made at the questionnaire development stage. Likert scale data are analyzed at the interval measurement scale. Descriptive statistics recommended for interval scale items include the mean for central tendency and standard deviations for variability. Hence, the mean score was calculated to understand the attitude of the consumers towards fashion, the preferences of the style and their priority in selection of denim outfits.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

3.1 Consumer attitude towards fashion consciousness

Questions were based on their interest towards fashion, their adaptability to change in fashion, their interest in seeking information about their updates in fashion currents. Among five hundred samples maximum number of consumers has given positive responses towards their interest in fashion. The sum of the points obtained in this category by each respondent was calculated. It was categorized under three score values (Grade I with maximum 35 points – Highest response, II with maximum 21 points - middle value, III with maximum seven points - lowest response)

Table -1 Consumer attitude towards fashion consciousness

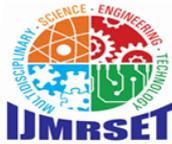
Grade	Score values	Total no of respondents	Percentage
I	35	312	62.40%
II	21	171	34.20%
III	7	17	3.40%

From the above table 1, it is evident that 62.40% (312 respondents) have given great response towards interest in fashion conscious, followed by 34.20% (171 respondents) who falls in middle value and only 3.40% (17 respondents) fall under lowest value. It is evident that the college going girls are highly fashion conscious and they tend to update their knowledge in current fashion affairs through medias and are ready to adapt changes in fashion. The hypothesis 1 is positively supported from the obtained results.

3.2 Consumers buying behaviour

3.2.1 Conventional interest of consumers' in denim clothing

From the data compiled it is very much evident that 91.2% of the samples are interested in wearing denim outfits and the maximum denim collection they owned in their wardrobe is ranked as trouser (43.2%), shirt (29.8%), skirts (12.6%), jackets (7.4%) and A - line frocks (4.6%). The consumers' interest towards branded product was also obtained and analysed, from the findings it is clear that 94.5% were interested towards branded products out of which 37.6% were interest in international brands, 45.4% in national brands and 17% of consumers towards local brands available only in Coimbatore market. The frequency of usage of denim apparel by the consumers were also collected and mentioned in the table 2.



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Table - 2 Consumer's interest in denim outfits

	Type of collection	N	Percentage %
Actual	Daily	59	11.8
	Mostly weekdays	154	30.8
	Mostly weekends	212	42.4
	Occasionally	63	12.6
	Total (a)	488	97.6
Missing	(b)	12	2.4
	Total (a+b)	500	100

The result states that 42.4% of the consumers use denim products mostly weekends, followed by mostly week days (30.8%), daily (12.6%) and occasionally (11.8%). It is proven that the majority of people use denim during their weekends and next major group uses week days.

3.2.2 Ranking of the attributes based on consumers' priority

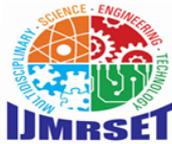
The second part of the questions was prepared to obtain the information regarding the important factors that determines consumers' choice to buy the denim garment. Eight attributes were finalised for the study like quality, price, colour, style, fabric, comfort, fit and brand based on the consumer's behaviour and apparel product preferences studies already done by Hines and Swinker (2001), Herbst and burger (2002), and Osmud Rahman (2011) on denim apparel and other clothing.

The responses were obtained using Likert scale (1-5 strongly disagree to strongly agree). The relative significance of each attribute was measured in by calculating the mean value of the scores. The standard deviation of the scores was also calculated. Then the correlation was calculated using the Pearson's correlation coefficient method.

Table - 3 Ranking of factors prioritising consumer buying decision

Rank	Attributes	n	Missing	Mean	S.D
I	Style	494	6	4.53	0.8822
II	Quality	494	6	4.03	1.2736
III	Brand	491	9	3.75	1.2403
IV	Comfort	491	9	3.54	1.4367
V	Fit	490	10	3.41	1.3864
VI	Fabric	490	10	2.7	1.5062
VII	Price	491	9	2.09	1.0515
VIII	Colour	490	10	1.67	0.8835

Based on the mean scores obtained, the attribute were ranked in order of importance or prioritise the value. The evaluation is done based on the mean value obtained, higher the value for an attribute, maximum is the grade given by the consumers. From the table 3 it is evident that style ($n = 494$, $\bar{X} = 4.53$), was the first and foremost factor preferred by the college going girls in selecting their denim apparel followed by quality $\bar{X} = 4.03$. Thus hypothesis 2 and 3 was supported. The hypothesis 4 is highly supported by the result tabulated in the table 5, the mean value for brand rated by consumer is $\bar{X} = 3.75$. The young girls preferred to be more comfortable ($\bar{X} = 3.54$) in their outfits what they adorn especially for denim tops. Fit is ranked as fifth important cue by respondents and hence the hypothesis 5 is not supported. Price of the product ($\bar{X} = 2.09$) were given less importance and hence hypothesis 6 was not supported and the least priority was given to colour $\bar{X} = 1.67$, thus hypothesis 7 is positively supported. Colour is not an important



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factor in selecting denim top among young girls; this may be because denim widely comes in shades of blue colour, hardly ever black and other colours.

3.3 Preferences of design details of the garment

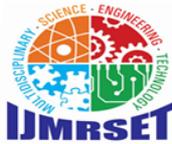
The selected target consumers were asked to select their preferences of design details for ladies top. Six aspect of the garment design was considered like length, silhouette, collar, sleeve, yoke and surface embellishments on the garment. The mean value was calculated for the scores obtained and tabulated. The evaluation is done based on the value attained; higher the value for a detail, maximum is the preference for it by consumers.

Four categories like length till waist, hip, thigh and knee were framed in the questionnaire. From the table 4, it is evident that tops till the hip level are the most preferred by the girls followed by thigh, waist and knee length. Silhouette is outline of the garment that determines structure of the garment. Four major silhouettes mentioned in the questionnaire are princess line, flared, empire line, hour glass, since these are most commonly used and feasible silhouettes in torso garment. Empire line is the maximum preferred silhouette among the consumers followed by flared, princess line and hour glass. The collars listed in the questionnaire were shirt, flat, Chinese and shawl. Last option given was collarless, this was intentionally mentioned to find out whether consumers don't prefer collar at all in their garment. From the table 4 it is clear that, the consumers preferred Chinese collar in their top. The next priority given was to flat collar. Shirt and shawl collar were the least preferred collars.

The choice of sleeve mentioned in the questionnaire was plain, bell, raglan, cape and the last one sleeveless. From the table 4 it is clear that set-in sleeve styles like plain and cape were most preferred by the consumers than raglan. Sleeveless and bell sleeve were given less importance. Yoke is the segment of the garment that holds, releases the fullness. The preference of yoke mentioned in the questionnaire was simple, yoke with fullness, yoke releasing fullness and partial yoke. From the table 4 it is apparent that yoke releasing fullness was the most preferred one followed by styles like partial yoke, yoke with fullness and simple yoke. Surface ornamentation adds value to the garment. Surprisingly result tabulated in the table 4 proves that the consumers are not very much interested in having ornamentation on denim tops. The highest mean value of the score obtained is 2.39; it is for embroidery followed by painting, patch and appliqué.

Table – 4 Preferences of design details

S.No	Design detail	Variations	n	Missing	Mean	SD
1	Length	Waist length	490	10	2.34	1.35
		Hip length	488	12	4.41	1.03
		Thigh length	493	7	3.58	1.31
		Knee length	495	5	2.27	1.28
2	Silhouette	Princess line	482	18	2.56	1.29
		Flared	486	14	3.67	1.35
		Empire line	489	11	4.5	1.05
		Hour glass	490	10	2.05	1.05
3	Collar	Shirt	486	14	2.41	1.38
		Flat	482	18	2.83	1.55
		Chinese	487	13	3.22	1.35
		Shawl	489	11	2.34	1.3
		Collarless	486	14	4.05	1.34
4	Sleeve	Plain	488	12	4.3	1.16
		Bell	483	17	2.54	1.43
		Raglan	486	14	2.84	1.31
		Cape	492	8	3.13	1.29
		Sleeveless	489	11	2.87	1.41
5	Yoke	Simple	493	7	2.72	1.46
		With fullness	492	8	2.92	1.39
		Releasing fullness	489	11	4.06	1.18



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		Partial yoke	495	5	3.69	1.08
6	Surface Embellishment	Patch	462	38	2.22	1.64
		Appliqué	466	34	2.08	1.4
		Embroidery	466	34	2.39	1.47
		Painting	457	43	2.34	1.58

IV. CONCLUSION

The scenario of fashion adoption among the people in Coimbatore has changed with the emergence of International brands into the market and the materialization of two big shopping malls has totally changed the retail sector of the city as well. Based on the analysis of data obtained from the current study it has been proved that the young girls in Coimbatore are very much interested in fashion and they are adaptable to changes. According to the survey results, the first and foremost attribute the target consumers look into while buying their denim top was style of the garment i.e., the design detailing. The respondents stated that they wanted to be stylish and look attractive to impress their peer groups. They also added, when they dress-up well as they desire, it increases their confidence level and subsequently make them to be successful in their endeavours. The basic or general expectation of the garment among the college going girls is that “aesthetic”. The look or appearance of the outfit should be good and pleasing with an additional feature of “quality” i.e., value to the currency what they spend on the product.

The study also proves that the college going girls believe in the branded products. They say that the branded products offer them good quality and value for the money. One more major attribute that influence the target group in brand is “prestige” among their friends and thereby to increase their self-image or self-esteem in the society.

Coimbatore being a conservative city, people are slowly moving towards the direction of accepting and adapting the fashion products. The college going girls prefer tops of ‘hip length’ followed by ‘thigh’ level. They are very much conservative that the garment should be at crotch level or slightly above it. Their preference towards the silhouette focuses on empire line, as they did not want their denim top to be “figure hugging” style. The other detailing preferred in the garment like collar, sleeve and yoke were also considered and the top options chosen was Chinese collar, set-in sleeve styles and yoke releasing fullness. This study along with the trend forecasting results will help the freelance designers, manufacturers, people who are in the field of denim to develop the tops suitable to co-ordinate with skirt or pant.

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