

Apparel Shopping Styles of Young Adult Consumers in Bangalore

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Abstract

Apparels are one of the most frequently purchased product categories where young adults have the authority to make independent buying decisions, and they also become trendsetters and opinion leaders. Understanding this large segment appropriately is crucial for apparel manufacturers and marketers as they promise longevity of market and exert substantial influence on their parents, peers, as well as their own spending. The present study segmented young adult consumers based on their shopping styles towards purchase of apparels and explored the differences in the shopping styles across demographics such as gender, educational levels, and regional background. The respondents for the study were young adults who belonged to the age group of 18 – 25 years residing in Bangalore, India. The variables under study were eight shopping styles adapted from Sproles and Kendall Consumer Style Inventory- CSI (1986). The study revealed that all the eight shopping styles of the CSI were manifested among young adults in Bangalore; however, the predominant shopping style was the Perfectionist/ High Quality Conscious shopping style. Furthermore, significant differences in the shopping styles of young adults across gender, educational levels, and regional background were found.

Keywords : apparels, shopping styles, young adults, consumer styles inventory

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In today's diverse and dynamic society, there is probably no other sphere of human activity that reflects an individual's personality and lifestyle better than the apparels that he/she chooses to wear. Apparels articulate meaning and facilitate construction of identity (Crane, 2000). An individual's apparel choices may consciously and unconsciously reflect elements of his or her personality traits (Naumann, 2009). Clothes or apparels are an epitome of a culture. People in different parts of the world have their own style of dressing which symbolizes their culture and status.

Young adults attach great meaning to their appearance, and while shopping for clothes, they make their own decisions that will directly affect their appearance (Akturan & Tezcan, 2007). The clothes they select become a means for communicating and enhancing personality, attractiveness, and allow them to belong to specific groups (Tatzel, 1982). Shopping for apparels is an important part of the overall life pattern for this segment. They are the ultimate decision makers for the apparel products they consume, even if they are influenced by their parents or friends (Noble, Haytko, & Philips, 2009). Understanding this segment appropriately is crucial for apparel manufacturers and marketers as they promise longevity of market and exert substantial influence on their parents, peers, as well as their own spending (Vincent & Christy, 2011).

The present study analyzes the young adults' shopping styles for apparels. The study was conducted in the urban areas of Bangalore, which has a cosmopolitan population exhibiting a modern lifestyle. The respondents for the study were young adults who belonged to the age group of 18 – 25 years. The variables under study are the eight shopping styles adapted from Sproles and Kendall Consumer Style Inventory- CSI (1986) and the demographic profile of the respondents. The study is restricted only to young adult shopping styles towards purchase of apparels.

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In this study, the term apparels refers to all types of outer garments- formal wear and casual wear, clothing worn by young adults in India. A consumer shopping style is defined as a mental orientation characterizing a consumer's approach in making choices (Sproles & Kendall, 1986). The Consumer Style Inventory developed by Sproles and Kendall (1986) describes eight mental orientations of consumers in their decision-making process, that is, perfectionist/high-quality conscious, brand conscious/price equals quality, novelty and fashion conscious, recreational and shopping conscious, price conscious/value-for-money, impulsiveness/careless, confused by over-choice, and habitual/brand-loyal.

Design of the Study

The objectives of the study are:

- (1) To segment young adult consumers based on their shopping styles toward purchase of apparels.
- (2) To explore the differences in the shopping styles across demographics such as gender, education levels, and regional background.

Methodology

(1) Sampling : The total sample for the present study was 1478 respondents who were young adults in the age group 18-25 years residing in Bangalore. Judgmental and convenient sampling methods were adopted to select the respondents for the study. Judgmental sampling method was adopted to identify to whom the questionnaire was to be administered. One criteria adopted in the study to select respondents was that they should be in the age group of 18–25 years. Convenient sampling was adopted to administer the questionnaire to young adult visitors in malls in Bangalore. The selection of malls was based on the presence of branded apparel retails outlets in these malls and their proximity to colleges. Many college students and working people in the age group of 18-25 years frequently visit these malls for purchase of apparels. The study was conducted in the year 2013.

(2) Data Collection Tools : For the purpose of this study, the original Consumer Style Inventory by Sproles and Kendall - CSI (1986) was adapted with the following modifications:

- (i) The three item short version of the Consumer Style Inventory, that is, the 24-item inventory was used instead of the lengthy 40-item inventory. This was done keeping in the mind the age group of the respondents who may not have the patience to fill up a lengthy questionnaire.
- (ii) The original 24 statements were partially re-worded to describe the shopping behaviour towards apparels. This was done to ensure that every respondent gave his/her opinion for each statement with apparels as the product to consider for purchase (see Appendix 1).

All items are scored on 5-point Likert- type scale ranging from *strongly disagree* to *strongly agree*. Reverse scoring for two scale items was appropriately tabulated. Item scores were summed within each style separately to create composite scores for each style. Data collection for the study commenced in November 2012 and extended till March 2013. Data analysis and interpretation was done in April and May 2013.

(3) Framework for Analysis : The data was processed and tabulated using Microsoft Excel 2007 and SPSS version 19. Data analysis was performed using software package - IBM SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences) version 19. Reliability test using Cronbach's coefficient alpha was used to test the reliability of the scales and

Table 1. Gender of Respondents

Gender	Frequency	%
Male	804	54.4
Female	674	45.6
TOTAL	1478	100

Table 2. Education Level of the Respondents

Education Level	Frequency	%
UG	1131	76.5
PG	289	19.6
Others [Diploma/PUC etc]	58	3.9
TOTAL	1478	100

assess the internal consistency of individual constructs, subscales, and overall scale. The rule of thumb is that the coefficient alpha must be above 0.7 for the scale to be reliable. The reliability for the present study was significant (Cronbach's alpha : 0.737). The statistical tools used for analysis are: General descriptive analysis, Levene's *t*-test for equality of variances, and ANOVA. Under descriptive analysis, no attempt was made to analyze the age of the respondents as it has been reported that differences in attitudes and behaviour of adolescents and youth under reference for this study were not due as much to age as to the education cohort. It was, therefore, assumed that no significant differences would result from analyzing differences in the age of the respondents.

Analysis and Results

The total number of respondents for the study (Table 1) were 1478, of which 804 (54.4%) were male respondents and 674 (45.6%) were female respondents. The Table 2 reveals that 1131 (76.5%) respondents were college going students pursuing undergraduate courses, 289 (19.6%) were pursuing postgraduate courses, and 58 (3.9%) respondents were PUC or diploma holders under the age of 25 years.

Bangalore is a cosmopolitan city with influx of people from all over the country. The respondents of the study were representing 28 different states of India, signifying diverse ethnic and cultural background. The respondents were re-grouped according to the state of origin into four regions as North, South, East, and West. The regional background of the respondents given in the Table 3 reveals that 1053 (71.2 %) respondents hailed from the Southern part of India, 165 (11.2%) hailed from the Eastern part, 156 (10.6 %) respondents hailed from the Northern part of India, and 104 (7%) hailed from the Western part of India. Details depicted in the Table 3 confirm the fact that Bangalore is a cosmopolitan city with an influx of people from all over the country. The demographic profile of Bangalore city shows that 88% of the population is from the southern states such as Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Andhra Pradesh, and Karnataka (Source: Bangalore City Development Plan JNNURM). This is clearly reflected through the higher representation of respondents from the Southern part of India in the sample of the study.

Segmenting Young Adults Based on their Shopping Styles

The respondents were segmented according to their preferred shopping style based on the mean values for each shopping style. The results are presented in the Table 4.

Table 3. Regional Background of Respondents

Region	Frequency	%
South	1053	71.2
East	165	11.2
North	156	10.6
West	104	7.0
Total	1478	100

Table 4. Preferred Shopping Style of Young Adults

Shopping Style	Mean	Std. Deviation
Perfectionist/High Quality Conscious	3.8207	.77958
Confused by Overchoice	3.3276	.89247
Recreational and Shopping Conscious	3.2832	.95680
Impulsiveness/Careless	3.2551	.77968
Price Conscious/Value for money	3.2251	.65830
Habitual/Brand Loyal	3.1973	.89077
Novelty and Fashion Conscious	3.0063	.88608
Brand Conscious/Price Equals Quality	2.8637	.87226

(1) Objective 1: To segment young-adult consumers based on their shopping styles towards purchase of apparels.

The entire respondent group of the study is categorized into their preferred shopping styles in Table 4. The results indicate that perfectionist/high quality consciousness (3.8207) was the predominant trigger for young adults in their purchase-decisions for apparels followed by confused by overchoice (3.3276), and recreational & shopping conscious (3.2832). The impulsive style has a mean of 3.2551 followed by price conscious/value for money (3.2251). Brand loyalty has a mean of 3.1973, novelty and fashion conscious has a mean of 3.0063, and the least preferred shopping style is brand conscious/price equals quality with a mean of 2.863.

The preferred shopping style of young-adult consumers depicted in the Table 4 is analyzed to describe their apparel shopping behavior.

(1) Perfectionist/High Quality Conscious (mean : 3.8207) is the predominant style of young adults in their purchase-decisions for apparels. This group of respondents sought maximize quality by choosing the best products. They set high standards and have high expectations from the products they buy and aim to get the best choice and value for money. Being higher in perfectionism, these consumers could be expected to shop more carefully, more systematically, or by comparison.

(2) Confused by Overchoice (mean : 3.3276) is the second style prevalent among the respondent group. Items loaded on this style suggest that these shoppers feel confused and overloaded with information. They find it hard to choose the best clothes or stores to shop. They feel the quantity of different consumer brands is confusing. The amount of information available about these different brands adds to the confusion. Hence, this factor is named Confused by Overchoice consumer. They are aware of the many brands and stores from which to choose and have difficulty making those choices.

(3) Recreational and Shopping Conscious (mean : 3.2832) is the third preferred shopping style of young adults. Items loaded on this factor indicate that shopping is an enjoyable and pleasant activity. Identified characteristics show that the respondents did not feel that shopping wastes time, because shopping is an enjoyable, pleasant, fun filled activity.

(4) The fourth preferred shopping style among young adults is the **Impulsiveness/Careless style** with a mean of 3.2551. Items loaded on this factor indicate that these shoppers are impulsive and careless in making their purchases. They regret their impulsive shopping behaviour. Consumers who score high on this factor tend to buy in the spur of the moment and later regret their impulsive behaviour. They are also unconcerned about getting best products by shopping as quickly as they can.

(5) Price Conscious/Value for Money (mean : 3.2251) is ranked fifth as the preferred style of young adults. Consumers of this characteristic look for sale prices and generally appear to be conscious of lower prices. They tend to carefully watch their spending and try to get the best value for the money spent on apparels. This may also be due to the need to drive the maximum value for their limited resources (most of the respondents were college – going students), which is also in line with theoretical economics as reported by Schiffman and Kanuk (1997) that consumers, especially low income earners, are always economical in their purchase decisions and always consider the functional (quality) aspects of a product in order to make a purchase that is not just satisfactory, but a perfect one (maximum value for money).

(6) Habitual, Brand-Loyal Consumer (mean : 3.1973) is the sixth preferred shopping style of young adults. This style reflects the characteristic of shoppers who are habitual in buying the same brands regularly. They have strong loyalty towards the brands as well as stores. They appear to have favourite brands and stores and have formed habits in choosing these.

(7) Novelty and Fashion Conscious (mean : 3.0063) is the seventh preferred style of young adults. Items of this factor indicate that fashionable attractive styling is important to them. These shoppers compare brands and take time to shop carefully, indicating that they are comparison shoppers. They usually have one or more outfits of the newest style. They keep up to date with styles and being in style is important to them.

(8) The least manifested shopping style among the young adult respondent group is **Brand Consciousness/Price Equals Quality** with a mean of 2.863. This shopper style prefers buying the best selling and most expensive brands. They buy the well known national and international brands and shop at nice department or specialty stores. They tend to believe that a higher price means better quality. Brand name, quality, and price are the most important purchasing criteria for these shoppers.

✎ **Testing of Hypotheses Based on Shopping Styles and Demographic Variables [Gender, Educational Level, and Region]** : To study the differences in shopping styles between male and female respondents, the *t* - test was conducted. In order to study the differences in shopping styles among the regions and educational levels of the respondents, ANOVA was performed.

(2) Objective 2 : To explore the differences in the shopping styles among young adults across demographics such as gender, educational levels, and regional backgrounds.

➔ **H1** : There is no significant difference in the shopping styles of young adults towards purchase of apparels across gender.

Table 5. *t* test for Shopping Styles Across Gender

	Gender	Mean	<i>F</i>	Sig.	Sig. (2-tailed)
Perfectionist/High Quality Conscious	Male	3.7954	3.224	.073	.173
	Female	3.8510			.170
Brand Conscious/Price Equals Quality	Male	2.9505	.001	.974	.000
	Female	2.7597			.000
Novelty and Fashion Conscious	Male	2.9838	.671	.413	.286
	Female	3.0333			.286
Recreational and Shopping Conscious	Male	2.9619	18.634	.000	.000
	Female	3.6682			.000
Price Conscious/Value for money	Male	3.2488	8.510	.004	.131
	Female	3.1967			.127
Impulsiveness/Careless	Male	3.2313	.129	.719	.200
	Female	3.2837			.201
Confused by Overchoice	Male	3.3118	.944	.331	.457
	Female	3.3465			.459
Habitual/Brand Loyal	Male	3.2454	1.598	.206	.023
	Female	3.1396			.023

Gender	Brand conscious	Recreational shopper	Habitual brand-loyal
Male	High	Low	High
Female	Low	High	Low

Source: Refer Table 05

It is found that there is a significant difference in shopping styles across gender ($p < 0.05$) on three factors of consumer-decision making styles (Brand Conscious, Recreational-Hedonistic Consumer, and Habitual Brand-loyal consumer).

The gender differences in shopping styles indicated in the Table 5 are summarized as follows :

Male respondents were found to be more brand conscious than female respondents. Female respondents had higher levels of Recreational and Shopping Consciousness as compared to male respondents. Male respondents had higher levels of brand loyalty as compared to female respondents. As gender difference is significant for three shopping styles, the null hypothesis is rejected and it is concluded that there is a significant difference in the shopping styles of young adults towards purchase of apparels across gender.

However, with respect to the other five factors, no significant differences ($p > 0.05$) in consumer decision styles between men and women are found. These factors are: Perfectionist Consumer, Novelty and Fashion Conscious, Price Conscious, Impulsive Consumer, and Confused by Overchoice consumer. Both male and female customers paid equal attention to quality, price, variety of offered goods, latest fashion, and behaved in the same way regarding impulsiveness in decision-making process.

This study found statistically significant gender differences on three factors, which is in line with most other research (Mitchell & Walsh, 2004). Female consumer behaviour tends to be similar as indicated in Underhill's study (1999). This study further indicates that male consumers became similar to female consumers among the young-adult consumers with respect to Perfectionism, Price Consciousness, Impulsiveness, and Confused by Over Choice (Anić, Suleska, & Rajh, 2010). Gender differences in purchase behavior were attributed to changing behavioural pattern and lifestyle leading to the evolution of a new brand of women who are product and brand conscious (Uma & Saifil Ali, 2013).

Table 6. ANOVA Indicating Differences in Shopping Styles Across Education Level of Young Adults

		Mean	F	Sig.
Perfectionist/ High Quality Conscious	UG	3.8112	.375	.771
	PG	3.8628		
	Other	3.7907		
Brand Conscious/ Price Equals Quality	UG	2.8523	1.003	.390
	PG	2.9010		
	Other	2.9186		
Novelty Brand Conscious/ Price Equals Quality	UG	3.0067	.046	.987
	PG	3.0035		
	Other	3.0155		
Recreational and Shopping Conscious	UG	3.2791	2.966	.031
	PG	3.3206		
	Other	3.1395		
Price Conscious/Value for Money	UG	3.2302	1.144	.330
	PG	3.2361		
	Other	3.0155		
Impulsiveness/Careless	UG	3.2646	.278	.841
	PG	3.2494		
	Other	3.0426		
Confused by Overchoice	UG	3.3198	.530	.662
	PG	3.3426		
	Other	3.4341		
Habitual/Brand Loyal	UG	3.1716	2.126	.095
	PG	3.3032		
	Other	3.1705		

Differences in Shopping Styles across Educational Levels

➔ **H2 :** There is no significant difference in the shopping styles of young adults towards purchase of apparels across educational levels.

The ANOVA results presented in the Table 6 indicate that there are significant differences in the shopping styles across educational levels of respondents. PG students were more Recreational and Shopping Conscious as compared to UG and others ($p < 0.05$). As educational level is significant for Recreational and Shopping Conscious style, the null hypothesis is rejected and it is concluded that there is a significant difference in the shopping styles of young adults towards the purchase of apparels across educational levels.

Differences in Shopping Styles across Regions

➔ **H3 :** There is no significant difference in the shopping styles of young adults towards purchase of apparels across regional background.

The results in the Table 7 indicate that there is a significant difference in shopping styles across regional

Table 7. Differences in Mean for Shopping Styles Across Regions

	Mean	F	Sig.	
Perfectionist/ High Quality Conscious	North	.0811128	2.255	.080
	South	-.0437542		
	East	.1522233		
	West	.0224066		
	Total	-.0049152		
Brand Conscious/Price Equals Quality	North	-.0868303	2.703	.044
	South	-.0126457		
	East	.2041854		
	West	-.0160948		
	Total	.0043238		
Novelty and Fashion Conscious	North	-.1273052	1.926	.123
	South	.0156108		
	East	.1151740		
	West	-.1018932		
	Total	.0046073		
Confused by Overchoice	North	-.0726794	1.800	.145
	South	.0304228		
	East	-.0012702		
	West	-.1888453		
	Total	.0012466		
Recreational and Shopping Conscious	North	.1269768	1.199	.309
	South	-.0220780		
	East	-.0114369		
	West	.0879494		
	Total	.0013821		
Price Conscious/Value for money	North	-.1171347	5.255	.001
	South	.0640978		
	East	-.1492174		
	West	-.2330703		
	Total	.0013797		
Impulsiveness/Careless	North	-.0026552	.677	.566
	South	.0218628		
	East	-.0715966		
	West	-.0821672		
	Total	.0015586		

backgrounds of the respondents ($p < 0.05$). Young adults from the South were more 'price conscious' and perceived more value for money as compared to other regions. Young adults from the East were more 'brand conscious' compared to other regions. As the regional background of young adults has a significant influence on the Price Conscious/ Value for Money and Brand Conscious/Price Equals Quality shopping styles, the null hypothesis is

rejected and it is concluded that there is a significant difference in the shopping styles of young adults towards purchase of apparels across regional background.

Discussion

The study reveals that Perfectionist/High Quality Conscious is the predominant style of young adults in their purchase-decisions for apparels. Manufacturers and fashion designers should give utmost importance to the quality aspects more than any other attribute of the apparel as young adults consider quality as the most important criteria for purchase decision for apparels. The study revealed that young adults are also price conscious; they also look for value for money in their purchase decisions for apparels. This aspect should be factored into all product development decisions for apparels. An earlier study conducted by me (Vincent, 2006) with a younger age group (8-16 years) also revealed that quality is the most important attribute in their purchase decisions.

There were significant gender differences on three factors of consumer-decision making styles. Male respondents were found to be more brand conscious than female respondents. Female respondents had higher levels of Recreational and Shopping Consciousness as compared to male respondents. Male respondents had higher levels of brand loyalty compared to female respondents. Manufacturers and marketers should consider these important aspects in their advertisement strategies to increase their appeal to consumers.

Young adults from the South were more price-conscious and perceived more value for money as compared to young adults from other regions. The young adults from the East were more brand conscious compared to their peers from other regions. Though apparently, the young adults in India display similar characteristics, a deeper examination reveals the finer differential qualities attributed to regional background. These aspects are vital and are often ignored while targeting this group as a valued consumer base. Similarly, it is commonly understood that young adults are very brand conscious, and many previous studies extend credence to this perception. Ironically, in this study, the Brand Conscious/Price Equals Quality was the least manifested style among the respondent group. One major reason could be that the majority of the respondents were from the Southern region, and they were found to be more associated with the Price Conscious/Value for Money category.

Managerial Implications

Several managerial implications might be derived from this study. Manufacturers and fashion designers should give utmost importance to the quality aspects more than any other attribute of the apparel as young adults consider quality as the most important criteria for purchase decision for apparels. They should consider consumers as individuals with unique preferences and styles that determine their buying behaviour. Marketers should highlight the quality features of the apparels in advertisements to attract the attention of this consumer segment. Marketers aware of the “recreational shoppers” among young Indians can provide pleasant environments to young adult shoppers that will attract them, without neglecting quality.

Conclusion

The study has high relevance for the Indian context on several aspects due to the following reasons: The study focuses on the youth population, which is the major proportion of the entire population of the country. Apparels are the most frequently purchased product category for this group. They are the ultimate decision makers for the apparel products they consume, even if their parents or friends influence them. This consumer segment is the trendsetter for the others, and also, they offer longevity of market. It makes a lot of sense to develop specific marketing strategies for this segment that would be sustainable in the long run.

Apparel manufacturers, fashion designers, and marketers might use the findings of this study to segment consumers according to the shopping styles in order to target and position their products more effectively. Multi-national companies can use the findings of this study to tailor their marketing strategies to specific characteristics of consumers while entering the Indian market.

Limitations of the Study

- ✦ This study is limited to young adults who belonged to the age group of 18-25 years.
- ✦ The study was conducted on young adults residing in the cosmopolitan city of Bangalore in India. Inferences drawn do not provide conclusive evidence to any social characteristics, in particular of people in this region.
- ✦ The findings of the study cannot be extended to smaller cities, towns, and rural areas in India on counts of socio-cultural diversity and contextual factors.

Directions for Future Research

- ✦ The study can be extended to other parts of the country to substantiate the findings and generalize the apparel purchasing behaviour of young adults in India.
- ✦ The age group of the respondents could also be expanded to include consumers of other or all age groups.
- ✦ Focused studies can also be done on only either male or female consumers to explore the indepth apparel shopping styles.
- ✦ Other consumer items such as footwear, bags, and other accessories ; perfumes; FMCG products ; durable goods etc., could be considered and the shopping styles could be analyzed.
- ✦ The study revealed that the least manifested shopping style among the young adult respondents in Bangalore is the Brand Consciousness / Price equals Quality shopping style. This aspect alone could be researched to confirm its applicability in other regions and age groups.
- ✦ The study also revealed that the young adults are price conscious and seek value for the price paid for the apparels. A further study could be undertaken to validate this finding with young adult population of other states/regions.

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Appendix 1. Consumer Shopping Styles Inventory

The following statements describe consumer shopping styles. Please study the list carefully and then indicate your agreement ranging from 'strongly disagree' to 'strongly agree'. Scale: 1- Strongly disagree, 2 – Disagree, 3 – Neither Agree nor Disagree, 4 – Agree, 5 – Strongly Agree

S.No		1	2	3	4	5
1	Getting very good quality of clothes is very important to me.					
2	When it comes to purchasing clothes, I try to get the very best or perfect choice.					
3	In general, I usually try to buy the best overall quality of apparels.					
4	The well-known national brands are for me.					
5	The more expensive brands are usually my choices.					
6	The higher the price of the apparel, the better the quality.					
7	I usually have one or more outfits of the very newest style.					
8	I keep my wardrobe up-to-date with the changing fashions.					
9	Fashionable, attractive styling is very important to me.					
10	Shopping for clothes is not a pleasant activity to me.					
11	Going shopping for clothes is one of the most enjoyable activities of my life.					
12	Shopping at the stores for clothes wastes my time.					
13	I buy most of my clothes at sale prices.					
14	The lowest price outfits are usually my choice.					
15	I look carefully to find the best value for the money.					
16	I should plan my shopping more carefully than I do.					
17	I am impulsive when purchasing clothes.					
18	Often, I make careless purchases of clothes I later wish I had not.					
19	There are so many brands to choose from that I often feel confused.					
20	Sometimes, it is hard to choose which stores to shop for clothes.					
21	The more I learn about apparel brands, the harder it seems to choose the best.					
22	I have favourite brands I buy over and over.					
23	Once I find a brand I like, I stick with it.					
24	I go to the same stores each time I shop.					