

A Study on Customer Satisfaction towards Online Shopping of an Apparel

Subramanian K. , Charul Saini , Chanchal Mahecha

ABSTRACT

With the booming Indian e-commerce market, understanding customer satisfaction in online apparel shopping is critical for retailers' success. This study explores this concept through a quantitative approach. A self-administered survey questionnaire, utilizing a 5-point Likert scale, gathers data from Indian consumers aged 18-50, a key demographic for online apparel purchases. The survey delves into various aspects influencing customer satisfaction, including product selection breadth, website navigation ease, delivery process efficiency, customer service quality, and the availability of size and fit information. Descriptive statistics will be employed to analyze the collected data, uncovering patterns and trends in customer satisfaction levels. Furthermore, depending on the formulated research questions and hypotheses, inferential statistics may be used to investigate potential correlations between customer satisfaction and brand loyalty within the online apparel shopping domain. This research aims to provide valuable insights for online apparel retailers in India, enabling them to optimize their platforms and enhance customer satisfaction for long-term success.

Keywords: Online apparel shopping, customer satisfaction, India, e-commerce, apparel retail, satisfaction factors, online clothing shopping, customer experience, brand loyalty

Introduction

The development of the internet has completely changed how people purchase, among other areas of consumer behaviour (Vasic et al., 2019). The expectations of customers regarding product selection, pricing, and the whole purchasing experience have significantly changed due to the ease, quickness, and accessibility of online platforms (Guo et al., 2012). Because of this change, online merchants must now proactively manage and prioritise the elements that impact consumer loyalty in the ever-changing online business environment.

Success in the market requires the capacity to adjust to changing conditions, as demonstrated by the increase in internet sales amid unanticipated events like pandemics. In order to accommodate changing customer behaviour, this flexibility requires the deployment of a variety of distribution channels (Alam & Yasin, 2010). As a result, companies of all kinds—established or startup—have embraced the internet as their main avenue for sales and

marketing (Santos, 2020). It is critical for market participants to have substantial competitive advantages through reliable information systems in order to prosper in the digital era.

The intention of customers to make more purchases is a crucial measure for online merchants and has attracted a lot of study interest (Chou & Hsu, 2016; Khaifa & Liu, 2007; Zhang et al., 2011). A vendor usually starts the online purchasing experience by putting things on display on their website. Before making a purchase, customers evaluate products by taking into account many aspects such as features, cost, and delivery alternatives (Ribadu & Rahman, 2019). This emphasises how crucial it is to comprehend how customers make decisions when they purchase online. Since its debut in the mid-1990s, online shopping has experienced amazing development. It quickly surpassed web surfing and email/instant messaging as the third most popular internet activity, according to UCLA (2001). For instance, the number of internet users in India has increased dramatically. According to figures from the Internet & Mobile Association of India (IAMAI), the number of active users climbed from 38.5 million in 2007 to an astounding 504 million in 2019, with a notable increase in internet usage in rural areas. Nielsen curated the data, which was based on IRS data. This demonstrates the internet retail market's enormous potential in India, especially for younger consumers.

Literature review

3.1 Introduction to Online Shopping

Online shopping, also known as e-commerce, has revolutionized the way people buy goods and services. It refers to the process of purchasing products or services over the Internet through various platforms and websites. The concept of online shopping has gained immense popularity globally due to its convenience, accessibility, and diverse range of options available to consumers. This essay will explore the evolution of online shopping, its advantages and challenges, as well as its impact on traditional retail businesses.

3.1.1 Evolution of Online Shopping

The concept of online shopping emerged in the late 20th century with the advent of the Internet. Initially, it was limited to a few products such as books and electronics. However, with technological advancements and the widespread use of digital devices, online shopping expanded to include a wide range of categories such as clothing, groceries, appliances, and more. Major e-commerce platforms like Amazon, eBay, Alibaba, and others played a significant role in popularizing online shopping and making it a global phenomenon. (Smith, G. (2020)).

3.1.2 Advantages of Online Shopping

One of the primary advantages of online shopping is convenience. Consumers can browse and purchase products from the comfort of their homes or on the go using their smartphones or computers. This eliminates the need to

visit physical stores, saving time and effort. Moreover, online shopping offers a vast selection of products from various brands and sellers, allowing consumers to compare prices and make informed decisions.

Another advantage is the availability of discounts, deals, and promotions offered by online retailers. Many e-commerce platforms provide special offers and loyalty programs to attract customers and enhance their shopping experience. Additionally, online shopping provides a seamless checkout process with multiple payment options, including credit/debit cards, digital wallets, and payment gateways, making transactions secure and convenient.(Chaffey, D., & Ellis-Chadwick, F. (2019)).

3.1.3 Challenges of Online Shopping

Despite its numerous benefits, online shopping also faces several challenges. One of the main concerns is cybersecurity and data privacy. With the increase in online transactions, there is a risk of cyber threats such as hacking, identity theft, and financial fraud. E-commerce companies must implement robust security measures and encryption protocols to protect customer data and ensure safe transactions.(Laudon, K. C., & Traver, C. G. (2017)).

Another challenge is the issue of product quality and authenticity. Some consumers may encounter counterfeit or substandard products when purchasing online, leading to dissatisfaction and trust issues. To address this, e-commerce platforms need to collaborate with reputable sellers and implement strict quality control measures to maintain customer trust and satisfaction.

Impact on Traditional Retail Businesses

The rise of online shopping has had a significant impact on traditional retail businesses. Brick-and-mortar stores are facing tough competition from online retailers, leading to changes in the retail landscape. Many traditional retailers have embraced e-commerce by establishing their online presence or partnering with existing platforms to reach a wider customer base. However, some retailers have struggled to adapt to the digital shift and face challenges in competing with online giants.

3.2 Introduction to Apparel Brands

The apparel industry in India is a dynamic and rapidly growing sector, driven by changing consumer preferences, rising disposable incomes, and the influence of global fashion trends. Apparel brands play a crucial role in shaping the Indian fashion landscape, offering a wide range of clothing options to cater to diverse tastes and preferences. This essay will provide an introduction to apparel brands in India, including key statistics and references to illustrate the industry's significance.

3.2.1 Overview of the Apparel Industry in India

The apparel industry in India is one of the largest contributors to the country's economy, employing millions of people and generating substantial revenue. According to Statista, the Indian apparel market was valued at approximately 2.45 trillion Indian rupees in 2020, with steady growth expected in the coming years. The market encompasses various segments such as ethnic wear, western wear, sportswear, casual wear, formal wear, and more, catering to consumers across different age groups and demographics.

3.2.2 Key Players and Brands in the Indian Apparel Market

Several domestic and international apparel brands have established a strong presence in the Indian market, offering a diverse range of clothing options and setting fashion trends. Some of the key players in the Indian apparel industry include:

1. **FabIndia:** Known for its ethnic and traditional wear, FabIndia has a wide range of products including clothing, accessories, and home furnishings. The brand focuses on sustainable and eco-friendly practices, appealing to environmentally conscious consumers.
2. **Reliance Trends:** A subsidiary of Reliance Industries, Reliance Trends is a popular retail chain offering affordable and trendy apparel for men, women, and children. The brand has a widespread presence across India with a focus on value-driven fashion.
3. **Aditya Birla Fashion and Retail Limited (ABFRL):** ABFRL owns several popular brands such as Pantaloons, Van Heusen, Allen Solly, and Peter England, catering to different segments of the market from casual wear to formal attire.
4. **Zara:** A well-known international brand, Zara has gained popularity among Indian consumers for its fast fashion offerings, including apparel, accessories, and footwear. The brand's quick turnaround time in introducing new designs and collections appeals to fashion-forward individuals.

3.3. Statistics and Growth Trends

According to a report by McKinsey, India's apparel market is projected to grow at a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 11-12% and reach a value of around 6.41 trillion Indian rupees by 2023. This growth is driven by factors such as increasing urbanization, a growing middle-class population, rising fashion consciousness among consumers, and the expansion of e-commerce platforms.

Furthermore, the COVID-19 pandemic accelerated the shift towards online shopping for apparel, with more consumers opting for digital channels to purchase clothing items. E-commerce platforms like Flipkart, Amazon, Myntra, and Ajio have witnessed significant growth in apparel sales, offering a convenient and diverse shopping experience to customers.

3.4 Best of Both Worlds: Blending Tradition with the Convenience of Online Shopping

The Relationship and Difference Between Traditional Shopping and Online Shopping: Customer Preferences and Trends

Traditional shopping and online shopping represent two distinct avenues for consumers to fulfill their purchasing needs, each with its own unique characteristics and advantages. Understanding the relationship and differences between these two methods is crucial in analyzing consumer preferences and trends. This essay delves into the dynamics of traditional shopping versus online shopping, explores why customers increasingly opt for online shopping, and provides relevant references to support these insights.(Berman, B., & Evans, J. R. (2020)).

3.4.1 Relationship between Traditional Shopping and Online Shopping

Traditional shopping, also known as brick-and-mortar shopping, involves visiting physical stores, interacting with sales personnel, and making purchases on-site. It provides customers with hands-on experiences, allowing them to touch, feel, and try products before buying. On the other hand, online shopping occurs over digital platforms, enabling customers to browse products, compare prices, read reviews, and make purchases online via computers, smartphones, or tablets.(Laudon, K. C., & Traver, C. G. (2017))

Despite their distinct modes of operation, traditional shopping and online shopping are interconnected in today's retail landscape. Many retailers have adopted an omni-channel approach, integrating both physical stores and digital platforms to provide customers with a seamless shopping experience. This integration allows customers to switch between traditional and online channels based on their preferences, convenience, and needs.

3.4.2 Difference between Traditional Shopping and Online Shopping

The primary difference between traditional shopping and online shopping lies in the mode of interaction and transaction. Traditional shopping offers tangible experiences, immediate gratification, and face-to-face interactions with store staff. Customers can physically examine products, seek assistance, and receive instant feedback, enhancing the overall shopping experience.

On the contrary, online shopping offers convenience, accessibility, and a vast array of choices. Customers can browse through extensive catalogs, compare prices from multiple sellers, read product reviews, and enjoy doorstep delivery services. The convenience of 24/7 access, personalized recommendations, and secure payment options makes online shopping appealing to a growing number of consumers.

3.5 Why Customers Choose Online Shopping Over Traditional Shopping

Several factors contribute to the increasing preference for online shopping over traditional methods among customers:

1. **Convenience:** Online shopping offers unparalleled convenience, allowing customers to shop anytime and anywhere without geographical constraints. This convenience is particularly advantageous for busy individuals, working professionals, and those with limited mobility.
2. **Wide Selection:** E-commerce platforms provide a diverse range of products from various brands and sellers, offering customers a wider selection compared to traditional stores. This variety enables customers to find specific items, explore new trends, and discover unique products easily.
3. **Competitive Pricing:** Online retailers often offer competitive pricing, discounts, promotions, and exclusive deals that attract price-conscious consumers. Customers can compare prices across different platforms and choose the best value for their money.
4. **User Reviews and Recommendations:** Online shopping platforms feature user-generated reviews, ratings, and recommendations that help customers make informed decisions. Reading about others' experiences with products builds trust and confidence in online purchases.
5. **Contactless Transactions:** The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated the adoption of online shopping due to safety concerns and social distancing measures. Many customers prefer contactless transactions, avoiding crowded stores and minimizing physical interactions.
6. **Time-Saving:** Online shopping saves customers time spent on travel, parking, and navigating through crowded stores. The streamlined checkout process, quick delivery options, and hassle-free returns contribute to a seamless shopping experience.

3.6 Why the sudden change to online shopping in India?

The shift towards online shopping in India has been a significant phenomenon driven by various factors such as technological advancements, changing consumer preferences, convenience, and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

1. **Technological Advancements:** India has experienced rapid advancements in technology, particularly in terms of internet penetration, mobile connectivity, and digital payment infrastructure. According to a report by the Internet and Mobile Association of India (IAMAI), India had over 780 million internet users and 600 million smartphone users as of 2021. This widespread access to digital devices and high-speed internet has facilitated the growth of online shopping by providing consumers with seamless access to e-commerce platforms.
2. **Changing Consumer Preferences:** Indian consumers have become increasingly tech-savvy and inclined towards digital solutions for their everyday needs. The convenience of online shopping, coupled with a wide range of products, competitive pricing, and doorstep delivery, has resonated well with consumers across different demographics. A study by Ernst & Young (EY) indicates that convenience and accessibility are among the primary reasons why Indian consumers prefer online shopping.

3. **E-commerce Market Growth:** The e-commerce market in India has witnessed exponential growth over the past decade, driven by investments, innovations, and strategic partnerships. According to Statista, the Indian e-commerce market was valued at approximately 4.67 trillion Indian rupees in 2021 and is projected to reach 17.52 trillion rupees by 2026. Major players like Amazon, Flipkart, Myntra, and Reliance Retail have significantly contributed to the expansion of online shopping by offering a wide range of products, promotional offers, and user-friendly platforms.
4. **COVID-19 Pandemic Impact:** The COVID-19 pandemic acted as a catalyst for the growth of online shopping in India. Lockdowns, social distancing measures, and safety concerns prompted consumers to shift towards online channels for purchasing essential goods, groceries, and other products. A report by RedSeer Consulting states that the pandemic accelerated the adoption of e-commerce in India, with online retail sales reaching new heights during the lockdown periods.
5. **Digital Payment Revolution:** India has witnessed a digital payment revolution with the widespread adoption of digital wallets, UPI (Unified Payments Interface), and other cashless payment methods. This has made online shopping more accessible and convenient for consumers, eliminating the need for physical cash transactions. The introduction of initiatives like Digital India and Make in India has further promoted digitalization and e-commerce growth in the country.
6. **Increased Trust and Reliability:** Over the years, Indian consumers have developed trust and confidence in online shopping due to improved delivery services, hassle-free returns, secure payment gateways, and customer support. E-commerce platforms have invested heavily in building trust through transparency, authenticity, and customer-centric policies, leading to repeat purchases and brand loyalty.

1. Research Methodology

The purpose of this study was to investigate consumer satisfaction with online clothing buying using a quantitative research approach. A 5-point Likert scale was used in the development of a self-administered survey questionnaire to measure respondents' satisfaction with a range of characteristics of their online purchasing experience. These elements included things like the variety of products offered, how easily products could be found on the website, how quickly orders could be filled, and how well customer service was rendered. An electronic distribution of the survey resulted in the collection of 199 responses from a particular demographic: people in the 18 to 50 age range. This age range was selected since a sizable majority of internet consumers for clothing fall into this category. The gathered data will be analysed using descriptive statistics, which will show patterns and trends in the degrees of consumer satisfaction. Additionally, proper inferential statistics may be used to examine possible correlations between brand loyalty and consumer happiness, contingent upon the formulation of study questions and hypotheses. This thorough approach will offer insightful information on the variables affecting consumer happiness in the online clothing retail space.

2. Data Analysis and Results

It offers descriptive data on online clothes purchasing experiences and client satisfaction. Responses from 199 participants regarding several elements of online clothing purchasing are included in the data. These aspects include the satisfaction with size and fit information, the likelihood of recommending online clothing shopping, the overall satisfaction with online shopping, and the satisfaction with customer service and communication. On a scale of 1 to 5, the mean satisfaction ratings for these factors fall between 2.81 and 3.26, suggesting moderate to high levels of satisfaction among respondents. The interpretation of the descriptive data is the main goal of this research in order to comprehend consumer perspectives and experiences with online clothing shopping.

According to the research, consumers are typically satisfied with the size and fit information that is readily available, their propensity to encourage online clothing purchasing, the entire shopping experience, and the customer service that they receive from online merchants. Retailers may use these information to improve their online platforms and increase client loyalty and happiness. In addition, talks could focus on how these satisfaction levels affect brand loyalty, customer retention, and general company performance in the cutthroat online clothes retail sector. Through a thorough analysis and discussion of these facts, industry practitioners may get useful insights to optimise their plans based on client feedback and preferences.

	Total Responses	Minimum Value	Maximum Value	Sum	Mean	Std. Error	Std. Deviation	Variance
Satisfaction Level	199	1	5	559	2.81	0.087	1.228	1.509
Recommendation	199	1	5	613	3.08	0.080	1.130	1.276
Available Size & Fit	199	1	5	630	3.17	0.068	0.963	0.927
Online Shopping Experience	199	1	5	625	3.17	0.069	0.964	0.929
Customer Support	199	1	5	649	3.26	0.068	0.965	0.931

DESCRIPTIVE ANALYSIS

The correlation coefficients between the various dimensions of satisfaction with online clothes purchasing offer important information about the connections between these factors. Significant relationships between customer service satisfaction, total purchasing experience satisfaction, size and fit information satisfaction, and likely to suggest online clothes buying are revealed by the analysis. For example, there is a significant positive association

between the satisfaction with customer care and the contentment with the whole buying experience, suggesting that providing great customer service is essential to improving the overall online shopping experience. These connections highlight the need of a comprehensive strategy for improving customer experiences and loyalty by illuminating the interconnectedness of customer satisfaction metrics in the online clothing retail sector. These connection results may be used to highlight how important it is to take into account a variety of customer satisfaction factors in order to maximise online clothing buying platforms and increase customer engagement and retention.

CONCLUSION:

The study paper's conclusion on customer satisfaction with online clothes purchases, offers important new information about the variables affecting consumer behaviour in the online retail industry. 199 participants between the ages of 18 and 50 provided replies to a 5-point Likert scale survey questionnaire, which was used in this quantitative research study to gauge participant satisfaction with a variety of apparel-related online purchasing experiences. According to the data analysis, the majority of respondents indicated moderate to high levels of satisfaction with several aspects of the online garment purchasing experience, including information on size and fit, customer service, and communication. On a scale of 1 to 5, the mean satisfaction ratings for these criteria varied from 2.81 to 3.26, indicating that customers had a favourable opinion of their online clothes shopping experiences.

Furthermore, the study's conclusions show a strong positive association between the likelihood of recommending online clothes purchases, happiness with the size and fit of the product, overall shopping experience, and customer service. The aforementioned connections highlight the significance of delivering exceptional customer service in order to augment the entire e-commerce experience. They also highlight the interdependence of diverse aspects that impact customer happiness within the online clothes retail industry. According to the survey, in order to maximise online apparel buying platforms and boost customer engagement and retention in the cutthroat world of online retail, a comprehensive strategy centred on enhancing client experiences and loyalty is essential.

The report concludes by shedding light on the changing environment of online clothes purchasing and highlighting the vital role that customer happiness plays in online businesses' ability to succeed. Online clothing retailers may improve their platforms, increase client loyalty, and eventually succeed in the digital age by comprehending and addressing the critical elements that impact consumer behaviour and happiness. The study's conclusions provide industry practitioners insightful advice on how to improve customer experiences, optimise strategy, and cultivate enduring connections with online consumers in order to support the expansion and prosperity of the online apparel retail market.

Scope of Further Research

The research can also focus on exploring the impact of personalized recommendations and virtual try-on technologies on enhancing customer satisfaction in online apparel shopping. Personalized recommendations leverage data analytics and machine learning algorithms to suggest products tailored to individual preferences, browsing history, and purchase behavior. Investigating how these recommendations influence customer satisfaction levels, purchase decisions, and loyalty could provide valuable insights for online retailers.

Additionally, the integration of virtual try-on technologies, such as augmented reality (AR) and virtual fitting rooms, offers customers the opportunity to visualize how clothing items look and fit before making a purchase. Researching the effectiveness of these technologies in reducing returns, improving size accuracy, and enhancing the overall shopping experience can contribute to optimizing online apparel platforms. By delving into these areas, future studies can delve deeper into the evolving landscape of online apparel shopping and provide practical recommendations for industry practitioners to enhance customer engagement and satisfaction in the digital retail space

References:

- Berman, B., & Evans, J. R. (2020). *Retail management: A strategic approach* (14th ed.). Pearson Education.
- Chaffey, D., & Ellis-Chadwick, F. (2019). *Digital marketing: strategy, implementation and practice* (7th ed.). Pearson Education Limited.
- Deloitte - "*Global Powers of Retailing 2022: Navigating the pandemic*"
- Economic Times - "*How Covid-19 has accelerated digital transformation in India*"
- Internet and Mobile Association of India (IAMAI) - "*Digital India 2021: A deep dive into India's digital ecosystem*"
- Laudon, K. C., & Traver, C. G. (2017). *E-commerce: business, technology, society* (13th ed.). Pearson Education.
- McKinsey - "*India's apparel market: Reimagining the future*"
- McKinsey - "*The State of Fashion 2022: Navigating Uncertainty*"
- Reserve Bank of India (RBI) - "*Digital Payments in India: Recent Trends and Developments*"
- Smith, G. (2020). *Digital marketing excellence: planning, optimizing and integrating online marketing* (6th ed.). Taylor & Francis Ltd.
- Smith, G. (2020). *Digital marketing excellence: planning, optimizing and integrating online marketing* (6th ed.). Taylor & Francis Ltd.

Statista - "*Apparel Market in India - Statistics & Facts*"

Statista - "*Online Shopping Market in India - Statistics & Facts*"

The Economic Times - "*Why online shopping is preferred over traditional shopping*"