DETERMINANTS AND OUTCOMES OF CLOTHING CHOICES AMONGST YOUTH:

A SURVEY BASED INVESTIGATION

Akriti Shakya¹ and Charu Swami²,

Research student¹ and Assistant Professor,² Department of Home Science, Dayalbagh Educational Institute (Deemed University), Agra, (Uttar Pradesh) India.

Abstract

According to United Nations Report (2014), India has world’s largest youth population with 60% of Indian population below 35 years of age. As India is set to become the youngest country by 2020, it becomes inevitable to neglect this vital and powerful segment of our nation - the Youth. The problem of youth’s choice of clothing has been a topic of major discussion in recent times. In this area of research concern, expression, personal, social, environmental and psychological factors play a major role. The present research was directed towards understanding the determinants and outcomes of clothing choices amongst youth. A study was conducted on out on 100 university students from two different subject streams: Science and Commerce. The study was conducted using a self-constructed questionnaire with constructs related to personal, social and psychological factors affecting clothing choices amongst youth. A standard tool, Neymann-Kohlstedt diagnostic test was administered to judge the extrovert and introvert personalities of the respondents. Clothing consciousness scores were calculated based on age, gender of the respondents, their social orientation and personality types.

Key words: Reference group, Youth, Extrovert personality, Introvert personality

1. Introduction

As India is set to become the youngest country by 2020, it becomes inevitable to neglect this vital and powerful segment of our nation - the Youth. 'Youth' is a mindset defined by age, geography, economic
and social class. One of the greatest challenges to access the minds of India’s urban young is to be able to cut through the social, economic and cultural diversities as they often end up creating confusion.

The problem of youth’s choice of clothing has been a topic of major discussion in recent times. Clothing is used all over the world not only for protection and modesty, but also for the purpose of constructing socially meaningful messages about oneself. Clothes may also be worn by certain people to make ideological, political, and other kinds of socially relevant statements. In effect, clothes constitute a nonverbal language system and thus are of obvious relevance to semiotic inquiry, revealing how connotation operates in one specific domain of material culture.

Clothing is a choice-making domain that is supposed to fulfill both functional and symbolic needs of the individuals. The advent of liberalization, rise of information communication technology and growing consciousness about the self have altered the clothing choices pattern of the Indian youth. Recent years have witnessed the intermingling of traditional Indian values with western values (Kumar, 2009). Indian youth's aspirations and values are group dominated, based upon family and group acceptance. Social acceptance is also given high priority (Baneerjee, 2008). A study conducted by Allen (2001) on the impact of human values on product (brand) preference has also suggested that values influence product preference directly and indirectly via prioritizing the importance of tangible attitudes.

Clothing is considered to be one’s “second skin”, and interest in clothing is highest during late teens and early twenties. The expression of self through clothing behavior is clearly visible during these years. Clothing is used all over the world, not only for protection and modesty, but also for the purpose of constructing socially meaningful messages about oneself. Clothes may also be worn by certain people to make ideological, political, and other kinds of socially relevant statements. In effect, clothes constitute a non-verbal language system, and thus, are of obvious relevance to semiotic inquiry, revealing how connotation operates in one specific domain of material culture.

The choice of clothing is influenced by personal characteristics and demographics, such as, age, occupation, economic situation, gender, marital status, and personality. Individual’s preference for certain type of clothing is also dependent on these variables which constantly transform during stages of life.
Clothing helps in enhancing the self-image of the individuals. For the Indian youth, it may signify global values and lifestyle. Clothing serves to help individuals with low self-esteem adapt in the social setting, and for those with high self-esteem, it acts as an expressive function. Roach-Higgins and Eicher (1992) noted that dress provides two basic functions for humans: as a modifier of body processes and as a medium for communication. According to Lennon (1989) clothes “are society’s way of showing where we belong in the order of things, our role and position in the social pageantry”. Clothing is an instrument of self-determination, self-definition, and self-representation.

In India, over 50% of the current population is under 25 years old. Youth especially belonging to 18-30 age groups; is contributing heavily to the rapid change in the Indian economy which essentially is on the radar of every marketer in India. Today’s youth is fashion conscious. They indulge in fashion in a competitive spirit to look smart, up-to-date and attractive. Young college consumers are highly involved in fashion clothing and these college consumers form an important segment of the Indian apparel market. In addition, this segment has a high propensity to allocate a disproportionate part of their overall annual income on clothing, besides interest in fashion.

In the last decade, the consumer culture has made its inroads in India and per capita income has also increased. This has led to increase in the purchasing power. Moreover, India represents a substantial youth population. Hence, it is justified to explore the general values which this group holds and to know if these bear any relationship with the clothing behaviour.

The overall purpose of this research study was to gain deeper understanding of different factors which are significantly related to clothing selection of young students and benefits achieved through their respective clothing selection. In literature review, we made an effort was made to find the information which can reveal student clothing selection criteria and reasons associated with it. The literature reviewed does not establish enough insight in the Indian context with regard to the general values influencing clothing behaviour. Very little information is available on personal, societal, environmental, and psychological reasons responsible for factors responsible for clothing selection amongst youth. Hence, it is desirable that further research is carried out to study all the variables in unison and thus verify the
outcomes of the appropriate clothing choices. This in turn will also benefit fashion companies to understand young student consumers and their lifestyle to gain success in the domestic market.

2.0 Methodology

Keeping in the mind the above facts, a problem was formulated to study personal, social and psychological factors involved in clothing choice-making with the following objectives-

(i) To understand the concept of clothing choice amongst the youth.

(ii) To determine the effect of determinants viz. personal, social and psychological factors on clothing choices of youth.

(iii) To ascertain the features preferred by the youth for selection of clothing.

In the context of the present research, certain hypothesis were framed based in the objectives of the study

**Hypothesis H01**: The demographics, namely age and gender leave no effect on the clothing choices of youth.

**Hypothesis H02**: The social factors, namely societal norms reference group and media have no effect on the clothing choices of youth.

**Hypothesis H03**: The psychological factors, namely extrovert personality and introvert personality; have no effect on the clothing choices of youth.

In the view of the foregoing discussion, the conceptual frame work of the study was as follows:
3.1 Locale of the study

The sample size was 100 respondents. The study was related to clothing choices of youth. As a result, the students of science and commerce streams of a local university in Agra, India was purposively selected for the present study. A self-made Questionnaire was administered incorporating the questions related to personal, social and psychological factors affecting clothing choices amongst youth. A standard tool Neymann-Kohlstedt diagnostic test was administered to judge the extrovert and introvert personalities of the respondents. Descriptive statistics (means, standard deviations, etc.) and inferential statistics (‘z’ test) was applied.

Copyright © Universal Multidisciplinary Research Institute Pvt Ltd
3.0 Results and Discussion

3.1 Demographic profile of the sample:

The samples were selected from two streams- Science and Commerce for an equal representation. The age group of the respondents was categorized as ≤ 20 years and more than 20 years. 49 respondents were belonged to the first category whereas 51 were the respondents whose age group was above 20 years. The range of the age group of the respondents was 18-25 years, as the study was concentrated on the clothing choices of youth. Gender wise the sample constituted more of the female respondents that was 56%.

There were some basic parameters which were taken in consideration which the youth may consider while purchasing clothes. The parameters included were- expenditure on clothing, frequency of buying a dress, place of purchasing clothing, inspiration for buying clothing, payment of clothing etc. were taken into consideration.

Accordingly a questionnaire was framed and filled by selected respondents (youth) to fulfill the objectives of the study.

3.2 Objective-I : To understand the basic parameters of clothing choice amongst the youth-

There were some basic parameters which were taken in consideration which the youth might consider while purchasing clothes. The parameters included were- expenditure on clothing, frequency of buying a dress, place of purchasing clothing, inspiration for buying clothing, payment of clothing etc. The results obtained are illustrated below-
Figure 1: Showing expenditure on clothing per month

- Above figure shows the monthly expenditure on clothing per month. 52% respondents spent 500-1500 rupees, 38% respondents spent 1000-3000 rupees and 10% respondents spent 3000-5000 rupees. This shows the majority of the respondents (52%) spent 500-1500 rupees every month on clothing.

Figure 2: Showing frequency of buying a new dress

- The figure shows the frequency of purchasing clothing amongst youth. 10% respondents bought their new dress every week, 36% respondents every month and 54% respondents bought after every 6 months. It shows that the majority of the respondents bought a new dress after every 6 months.
Figure 3: Showing the source of payment for clothing

- The above figure shows that 2% respondents paid for clothing themselves, whereas relatives and friends were the source of payment for 4% of respondents. Maximum numbers of respondents (94%) were dependent on their parents for their clothing purchase.

Figure 4: Showing the place of purchasing of clothing

- The above figure shows that 36% of the respondents tried new shops for their clothing purchase; whereas 25% were those who bought their clothing from the same previous shop.
Figure 5: Showing inspiration for purchasing new clothing

- Indian youth are greatly influenced by the movies. The result of the study replicated the same with 33% and the youth being influenced by the celebrities for their clothing choices. 28% of the respondents were influenced by friends making it obvious that the youth are greatly affected by peer approval.

Figure 6: Showing the criteria for selection of clothing
• 49% of the youth preferred clothing which matched with their age, 24% just followed the fashion, while 14% selected the clothing which made them look younger and 12% chose their clothing mature.

![Financial considerations of youth for clothing](image)

**Figure 7: Showing financial considerations of youth for clothing**

• The above figure shows consideration of respondents when they bought their clothing, 55% respondents carefully calculated how much they spent for their clothing, 22% respondents were always ready to pay extra for the design of their choice despite a lower budget, and 16% respondents looked for discount in their clothing.
The above figure shows the clothing type youth preferred to wear most often. 68% preferred casual clothing, 30% preferred formal outfits and 2% preferred sporty outfits.

Decision for buying clothes is influenced by personal characteristics such as buyer’s age, occupation, economic situation, lifestyle, personality and self-concept (Kotler 2001). A person’s demand for products is depending on occupation and financial situation, as well as the stage in the life. A person’s lifestyle affects his/her activities, interests, and opinions and also affects the choice of products (Armstrong et al. 2005). Moreover, all individuals have their unique personality of different characteristics, which is often portrayed with traits, such as self-confidence, dominance, sociability, autonomy, defensiveness, adaptability, and aggressiveness (Blackwell et al. 2001).

3.3 Objective -II: To determine the effect of determinants viz. personal, social and psychological factors on clothing choices of youth.

The other factors affecting clothing choices considered was social grouping, which is composed of small groups, social roles and status. Some of these groups have a direct influence on a person, namely
membership groups, that a person belongs to, and reference groups which serve as direct (face-to-face) or indirect points of comparison or reference in forming a person’s attitudes or beliefs”.

Clothing is considered a nonverbal source of communication in itself, which makes it an important aspect for communication analysis. It provides a plethora of information about a wearer without having to meet or talk to that person (Howlett et al., 2013).

Table 1: Table showing clothing consciousness scores based on age of the respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Statistical Values</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>≤ 20 years</td>
<td>Above 20 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N= 100</td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>S.D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clothing consciousness score</td>
<td>30.75</td>
<td>4.82</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The above table indicates that the mean score for clothing consciousness score as per the age of the respondents. The result shows that personal factor (age) has no effect on clothing choice. The mean scores for both the age groups were found to be insignificant. The z calculated (test value) is 0.36 which indicates that there was no significant difference found. The reason for this could be attributed to the fact that age of respondent did not vary a great extent. Since the age group was (18-25); as a result age was not a factor which affects clothing choices of youth.

Accordingly for the objectives of the study hypothesis were framed as in the section 2.0 and analyzed as follows:

3.3.1 Hypothesis H<sub>0</sub>1:
In the first hypothesis, the objective was to evaluate the effect of demographics e.g. age and gender on the clothing choices of youth. The sample demonstrated low level of significance, with a sample mean of 30.75 and 31.07 for males and females respectively and calculated z test value of 0.36. It was argued that clothing choice consciousness of youth did not get affected by their age.

On the other hand the clothing choice consciousness score was calculated based on gender. It was found that there was no significant difference with a mean value of 31.23 and 30.74 and calculated z test value was 0.54. Although not statistically significant, a surprising result was obtained with male respondents having high mean scores on clothing consciousness compared to female.

Table 2: Table showing clothing consciousness scores based on gender of the respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Statistical Values</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>S.D</td>
<td>Mean</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N=100</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>56</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clothing consciousness score</td>
<td>31.23</td>
<td>4.78</td>
<td>30.74</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Similarly the clothing choice consciousness score was calculated based on gender. No significant difference was found but a surprising result was obtained with male respondents having high mean scores compared to females. This is a general phenomenon that males are more conscious in clothing choices than females, but in this study, it was found that the males were more conscious in clothing choices than females. This shows a new trend that the males becoming more clothing conscious with changing times.

Accordingly the hypothesis for the objective was framed as in the section 2.0 and analyzed as follows:

3.2.2 Hypothesis H02:

Copyright © Universal Multidisciplinary Research Institute Pvt Ltd
In the second hypothesis, the objective was to evaluate the effect of social factors; societal norms, reference group, media on the clothing choices of youth. The sample demonstrated high level of significance with a sample mean of 29.9, 31.96 and calculated Z test value was 2.46, and hence a significant difference was obtained. Thus the hypothesis was rejected and the results indicated that the social factors had a significant effect on the clothing choices of youth.

**Table 3: Table showing clothing consciousness score based on social orientation**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social orientation score</th>
<th>Low</th>
<th>High</th>
<th>Statistical Values</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>S.D</td>
<td>Mean</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n= 100</td>
<td>50</td>
<td></td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clothing consciousness score</td>
<td>29.9</td>
<td>4.73</td>
<td>31.96</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The above table shows clothing consciousness score based on social orientation. The respondents having high social orientation scores had high level of clothing consciousness score. Calculated Z test value was 2.46, and hence a significant difference was obtained. Thus the hypothesis was rejected and the result indicated that the social factors like societal norms, reference groups, and peer group had a significant effect on the clothing choices of youth respondents.

**Table 4: Table showing clothing consciousness score based on personality type**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Personality type</th>
<th>Relatively extrovert</th>
<th>Relatively introvert</th>
<th>Statistical Values</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>S.D</td>
<td>Mean</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n= 100</td>
<td>50</td>
<td></td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clothing consciousness score</td>
<td>29.38</td>
<td>3.81</td>
<td>32.48</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
This tabulation classifies the personality types as relatively extrovert and relatively introvert. The scores were calculated for the specific personality types. The respondents having introvert personality had low clothing consciousness score and having extrovert personality had high clothing consciousness score. A significant difference was obtained between the personality type and the clothing choices. The z calculated value was 3.89. This indicates that extrovert personality were more conscious about their clothing choices.

For the objective of the study the hypothesis was framed as in the section 2.0 and analyzed as follows:

3.2.4 Hypothesis H₀₃:

In the third hypothesis, the objective was to evaluate the effect of psychological factors; extrovert personality and introvert personality on the clothing choices of youth. The sample demonstrated high level of significance for relatively extrovert and relatively introverts personality with a sample mean of 29.38 and 32.48; the z calculated value was 3.89. A significant difference was obtained between the personality types and the clothing choices thus the hypothesis was rejected. It can be concluded that respondents having introvert personality had low clothing consciousness score and having extrovert personality had high clothing consciousness score this indicates that extrovert personality were more conscious about their clothing choices.

Davette Angelo, (2010) also found that fashion personality characteristics and shopping behaviors of African-American and Caucasian-American college students was compared. Ethnicity was found to be an influence on fashion personality characteristics and shopping behaviors.

3.3 Objective- III: To ascertain the features preferred by the youth for selection of clothing.
According to Eicher (1995), “Dress is a coded sensory system of non-verbal communication that aids human interaction in space and time”. Goldsmith (1996) states that, college students have unique self-image as fashion innovators and consider themselves more exciting, dominating and colorful than fashion followers. Some clothing features are mostly considered while purchasing of clothing, such as comfort, durability, latest fashion, well-known brand, self-image etc.

12 clothing features were listed in the table which could be considered by youth while selecting their clothing. Some of the features considered important by youth in selection of clothing were comfort, durability, good fit, latest fashion and brands were also given equal importance by them while purchasing their clothing.

The above table indicates highest ranking with the highest weight average 98 and the lowest weight average 50.6 related to clothing features.

Tamboli (2008) also stated that price, comfort, good design and good quality are four of the most important factors among the purchasing criteria. The brand name is not the most important factor when buying clothes.

4.0 Conclusion of the study:

This research contributes to the literature by identifying a number of influencing factors that are important for understanding clothing consciousness. This study has been helpful to understand the concept of clothing choices. It was found that clothing boosts up the morale, increases confidence level and illustrates self- image. The exploration of influencing factors in this study gives further insight for clothing consciousness. The study shows that personal social, and psychological factors are responsible for clothing choices of youth. The consciousness scores calculated revealed that the respondents of extrovert personality were more conscious than introvert personality for their clothing choices and also the respondents with high social orientation score were more conscious in their clothing choices than
respondents of low social orientation score. Extraordinarily it was also found that males were also becoming more conscious for their clothing choices with trends and times. Comfort and durability were the clothing features which were preferred by most of the youth, over and above the style and fashion. This reveals that the youth not only considers the latest fashion and well-known brands while purchasing their clothing but also takes the other parameters into consideration while choosing the right clothing for themselves.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Davette Angelo, B. S. (2010): You are what you wear: the examination of fashion leadership and general leadership among African American and Caucasian American college students, University of north Texas