



**UNDERSTANDING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN  
DEMOGRAPHIC VARIABLES AND CUSTOMERS'  
SATISFACTION TOWARDS ONLINE APPAREL SHOPPING  
SITES: A STUDY IN WEST BENGAL**

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**Abstract:**

The recent times have observed a gigantic yet overwhelming shift in Indian lifestyles, owing to the intervention of modern routines in upbringing, the impact of globalization, rising income levels, increase in purchasing power, which in turn have an implicit influence on turning people's ideologies, inclination, and intentions towards purchasing of apparels. The advent of numerous technologies into the daily lives, has contributed largely to the shift reflecting the Indian panache alive. During this transformation process, the intentions of people are gradually moving to online shopping, due to several conveniences. In this context, the present paper aims to establish the relationship between demographic variables and customers' satisfaction towards online apparel shopping sites. With a sample size of 495, an extensive survey was conducted, in the state of West Bengal. The results of the study, are expected to capture the attention of academicians and corporates.

**Key Words:** Customers' Satisfaction, Demographic Variables, Lifestyles, Online Apparel Shopping Sites

**Introduction:**

The online fashion retail assumed considerable importance, since early 20<sup>th</sup> century, when several global brands like H&M, Zara started to sell products via online. Although, a substantial part of this growth was observed in developed countries, but several developing nations started to accelerate on online retailing, due to the influx of e-commerce platforms. Approximately, two-third of European population buys apparel online, and the revenue being generated, amounts to 17 billion European dollars per year. Overall, sales with regard to the apparel industry is estimated at \$ 680 billion globally, which clearly reflects an upsurge in online fashion retail. The Indian apparel industry is the second largest contributor to the retail industry, just after food and grocery items. It adds to country's gross domestic product (GDP), by a huge extent. The Indian fashion retail market which stood at worth \$46 billion in 2016, will continue to expand at a favourable compound annual growth of 9.7% to achieve \$115 billion by 2026. Due to widespread penetration of internet, owing to advancements in technology and cheap data rates, there has been a rise in online purchase of apparels. People tend to spend much more time over internet, which is directly proportional to their online purchase intention. In the global e-commerce market, India occupies the fourth position after USA, China and Japan. According to e-commerce Foundation, 2016, India is ranked first, with a gigantic e-commerce sales growth rate of 129.5%. According to Indian Institute of e-commerce, India will generate \$100 billion by the year 2020, out of which \$35 billion will be through online fashion retailing.

India has a highly competitive environment, in the context of apparel retailing. The leading e-shops in India are Jabong, Myntra and Limeroad. In the recent past, several other online fashion retailers jumped on the bandwagon, which include voonik.com, ajio.com, koovs.com, reliancetrends.com, zivame.com and cilory.com. As per EY white paper report on usage of internet amongst Indians in 2015, it has been revealed that, 75% of the population using internet are below 35 years of age. Since majority of its population belong to the young demography, it poses tremendous potential, with regard to e-shopping in India. However, researchers have enumerated several challenges in online fashion retailing, which include inventory management and virtual trial. Other aspects include poor quality of apparels, service failure, return issues, logistics / supply chain issues.

**Literature Review:**

**Different Aspects of Online Shopping Experience:**

Cai and Jun (2003) have identified 1) Website design and content, 2) trustworthiness, 3) prompt/reliable service, and (4) communication important for E-Retail services. However, Ojasalo (2010) proposed

eight dimensions namely 1) ease of use, 2) website design, 3) personalization, 4) information, 5) responsiveness, 6) communication, 7) security and 8) reliability.

#### **Determinants of Customer Satisfaction towards E-Retailing Services:**

Liu et al. (2008) revealed that the following eight dimensions should be included in E-retailing services to gain customer satisfaction namely 1) information quality, 2) website design, 3) merchandise attributes, 4) transaction capability, 5) security/privacy, 6) payment, 7) delivery, and 8) customer service. However, Schaupp and Belanger (2005) have stated that following three important attributes namely 1) privacy (technology factor), 2) merchandising (product factor), and 3) convenience (shopping factor) should be added. These attributes should be followed by trust, delivery, usability, product customization, product quality, and security. In continuation, 1) Order fulfilment and 2) On-time delivery were suggested by Dholakia and Zhao (2010).

#### **Online Shopping Behaviour towards Apparels:**

In the opinion of Cowart and Goldsmith (2007), quality consciousness, brand consciousness, fashion consciousness, hedonistic shopping, impulsiveness and brand loyalty are the most dominating factors, in online apparel shopping. Price Sensitivity is negatively correlated with online spending. However, factors like Retail Brand Trust, Offline Patronage, Clothing Involvement and two factors of website quality (namely, usability and information quality, visual appeal and image) significantly affect online apparel shopping intention. Moreover, Offline patronage was found to be the strongest predictor of online shopping intention (Jones and Kim, 2010). A more complex issue has been addressed by Srinivasan (2015), who tried to establish the relationship between subjective norms, technology anxiety, and other technology acceptance model variables to understand Indian consumers' attitudes and intention to shop for apparel, through the internet. Goswami and Khan (2015) aimed to examine the influence of consumer decision-making styles on the possibility to engage in online shopping of apparels. The authors have sought to clarify the relationship between each decision style category and online shopping consumption. Online Apparel Retailers in India have to continue realigning and restructuring their models, to cater to the evolving needs of this dynamic market (Mathew, 2015).

#### **Research Gap:**

After reviewing all the research papers, it has been found that, though commendable works have been done with regard to online shopping behaviour in general, but very few studies were conducted in the apparel vertical. Moreover, studies concerning the relationship between demographic variables and customers' satisfaction towards online apparel shopping sites, are scanty. Furthermore, this domain has not received much attention in the Indian context, and more specifically in the state of West Bengal. Thus, the current research aims to investigate into these issues, thus contributing further to the existing body of knowledge.

#### **Objective of the Study:**

The present paper seeks to understand the relationship between demographic variables and customers' satisfaction towards online apparel shopping sites, in the state of West Bengal.

#### **Research Methodology:**

##### **Hypothesis Formulation:**

In the present research, the following hypothesis have been formulated:

- Ho: There is no relationship between Demographic variables (age, income, profession etc.) and customers' satisfaction towards online apparel shopping sites.
- Ha: There is a relationship between Demographic variables (age, income, profession etc.) and customers' satisfaction towards online apparel shopping sites.

In the above hypothesis, the independent variables consist of demographic variables, and the dependent variable is customers' satisfaction towards online apparel shopping sites.

##### **Research Technique:**

The type of research technique used in this case is that of survey. The information gathered from the secondary sources / literature review has helped in the formation of the questionnaire. The sample size for the survey was 495. Random sampling technique was followed during the research. The researcher tried to target both male and female respondents across different age groups, who are mostly involved in buying apparels from online sources.

##### **Data Analysis:**

The variables were examined by Pearson Chi-Square Test and if the p-value for any attribute against the purchase behaviour is found to be lower than 0.05; we will reject the null hypothesis, and accept the alternative hypothesis. Therefore, there is a significant association between demographic variables and customers' satisfaction towards online apparel shopping sites. Whereas, if the p-value is found to be greater than 0.05, we will accept the null hypothesis, and reject the alternative hypothesis. In other words, there lies no significant association between demographic variables and customers' satisfaction towards online apparel shopping sites.

**Outcomes of the Study:**

The variables were analyzed by Pearson Chi-Square Test and if the p-value for any attribute against the purchase behaviour is lower than 0.05; there lies a significant association between demographic variables and customers' satisfaction towards online apparel shopping sites.

| Statement / Question   | Variables                                  | Pearson Chi-Square Value | p Value | Significant / Not Significant |
|--|--|--------------------------|---------|-------------------------------|
| I intend to purchase apparels, through online shopping sites | Age  | 38.348                   | 0.008   | Significant                   |
|  | Highest Qualification                      | 68.184                   | 0.000   | Significant                   |
|  | Number of dependents you have              | 34.524                   | 0.023   | Significant                   |
|  | How frequently do you buy apparels online? | 107.766                  | 0.000   | Significant                   |

Table 1

From Table 1, the intention to purchase apparels through online shopping sites, has been found to showcase a significant relationship with age, highest qualification, number of dependents, and frequency of buying apparels online. Respondents in the age bracket of 18-23 years intend to do online apparel shopping the most, followed by the respondents aged 24-30 years. It has also been observed that, graduates and postgraduates are mostly involved in online apparel shopping. Furthermore, respondents who have no dependents, are inclined to buy apparels from online shopping sites. These respondents tend to buy apparels online, once in a month.

| Statement / Question  | Variables                                  | Pearson Chi-Square Value | p Value | Significant / Not Significant |
|---|--|--------------------------|---------|-------------------------------|
| My willingness to buy apparels through online shopping sites, is high | Age  | 34.896                   | 0.021   | Significant                   |
|   | How frequently do you buy apparels online? | 95.129                   | 0.000   | Significant                   |

Table 2

From Table 2, willingness of purchasing apparels online, has been observed to have a significant relationship with age and frequency of buying apparels online. Respondents in the age brackets of 18-23 years and 24-30 years, have greater willingness of online apparel shopping, vis-a-vis other age groups. These respondents show willingness to purchase apparels online, once in a month.

| Statement / Question   | Variables                                  | Pearson Chi-Square Value | p Value | Significant / Not Significant |
|--|--|--------------------------|---------|-------------------------------|
| I would be willing to recommend online shopping sites, to my friends | Gender                                     | 11.645                   | 0.020   | Significant                   |
|  | Age  | 37.920                   | 0.009   | Significant                   |
|  | Are you financially independent?           | 12.858                   | 0.012   | Significant                   |
|  | Number of dependents you have              | 32.758                   | 0.036   | Significant                   |
|  | How frequently do you buy apparels online? | 77.526                   | 0.000   | Significant                   |

Table 3

From Table 3, majority of the male respondents have been found to recommend online shopping sites to their friends, in contrast to their female counterparts. Furthermore, it has been observed that, respondents aged 18-23 years and 24-30 years recommend their friends, to shop apparels online. Moreover, willingness to recommend online shopping sites, has been found to show a significant relationship with financial independence of the respondents. It has been revealed that, respondents who have no dependents, are willing to recommend online shopping sites to their friends. These respondents mostly buy apparels online, once in a month.

| Statement / Question                      | Variables                     | Pearson Chi-Square Value | p Value | Significant / Not Significant |
|---|-------------------------------|--------------------------|---------|-------------------------------|
| The website labels are easy to understand | Number of dependents you have | 37.936                   | 0.009   | Significant                   |

Table 4

From Table 4, the ease of understanding website labels, showcases a significant relationship with number of dependents. It has been observed that, respondents who have no dependents, find the website labels easier to understand, in comparison to others.

| Statement / Question                      | Variables             | Pearson Chi-Square Value | p Value | Significant / Not Significant |
|---|-----------------------|--------------------------|---------|-------------------------------|
| The display pages within the websites are | Age                   | 43.076                   | 0.002   | Significant                   |
|   | How frequently do you | 77.526                   | 0.000   | Significant                   |

|              |                      |  |  |  |
|--------------|----------------------|--|--|--|
| easy to read | buy apparels online? |  |  |  |
|--------------|----------------------|--|--|--|

Table 5

From Table 5, the ease of reading display pages within the websites, has been observed to show a significant relationship with age and frequency of online apparel shopping. Respondents aged 18-23 years and 24-30 years, find the display pages easy to understand. Moreover, respondents who understand display pages easily, mostly do online apparel shopping, once in a month.

| Statement / Question                          | Variables                                  | Pearson Chi-Square Value | p Value | Significant / Not Significant |
|---|--|--------------------------|---------|-------------------------------|
| The information on the websites are effective | How frequently do you buy apparels online? | 34.421                   | 0.023   | Significant                   |

Table 6

From Table 6, the effectiveness of website information, has been found to show a significant relationship with frequency of online apparel shopping. Respondents who find website information to be effective, buy apparels online, once in a month.

| Statement / Question                           | Variables                                  | Pearson Chi-Square Value | p Value | Significant / Not Significant |
|--|--|--------------------------|---------|-------------------------------|
| I find it convenient to do online transactions | Age  | 32.556                   | 0.038   | Significant                   |
|  | Are you financially independent?           | 10.843                   | 0.028   | Significant                   |
|  | How frequently do you buy apparels online? | 51.549                   | 0.000   | Significant                   |

Table 7

From Table 7, it has been observed that, respondents who find online transactions to be convenient, mostly belong to the age groups of 18-23 years and 24-30 years. Furthermore, convenience to do online transactions, showcases a significant relationship with financial independence of the respondents. Respondents who perform online transactions with convenience, do online apparel shopping, once in a month.

| Statement / Question                            | Variables                                  | Pearson Chi-Square Value | p Value | Significant / Not Significant |
|---|--|--------------------------|---------|-------------------------------|
| The websites display a visually pleasing design | Family Income per month                    | 32.308                   | 0.040   | Significant                   |
|   | How frequently do you buy apparels online? | 38.561                   | 0.008   | Significant                   |

Table 8

From Table 8, the visual appeal of the websites, show a significant relationship with family income per month and frequency of purchasing apparels online. Respondents who find the websites to be visually pleasing, generally have family income of more than Rs. 1,00,000 per month, and do online apparel shopping, once in a month.

| Statement / Question   | Variables                                  | Pearson Chi-Square Value | p Value | Significant / Not Significant |
|--|--|--------------------------|---------|-------------------------------|
| The websites allow me to interact with it, to receive customized information | Age  | 43.232                   | 0.002   | Significant                   |
|  | Your Profession                            | 50.015                   | 0.000   | Significant                   |
|  | How frequently do you buy apparels online? | 40.302                   | 0.005   | Significant                   |

Table 9

From Table 9, the effectiveness of the websites in providing customized information, show a significant relationship with age, profession and frequency of purchasing apparels online. Respondents in the age groups of 18-23 years and 24-30 years find the websites effective with regard to customized information, and they are mostly students and service holders. These respondents buy apparels online, once in a month.

| Statement / Question  | Variables                                  | Pearson Chi-Square Value | p Value | Significant / Not Significant |
|---|--|--------------------------|---------|-------------------------------|
| For seeking variety, I shop from different online sites and choose different brands | Age  | 37.716                   | 0.010   | Significant                   |
|   | Marital Status                             | 10.359                   | 0.035   | Significant                   |
|   | Are you financially independent?           | 12.012                   | 0.017   | Significant                   |
|   | Your Profession                            | 28.350                   | 0.029   | Significant                   |
|   | Number of dependents you have              | 33.629                   | 0.029   | Significant                   |
|   | Residential Area                           | 21.906                   | 0.039   | Significant                   |
|   | How frequently do you buy apparels online? | 50.854                   | 0.000   | Significant                   |

Table 10

From Table 10, it has been observed that, respondents in the age brackets of 18-23 years and 24-30 years, purchase from different online shopping sites and select different brands, for seeking variety. Respondents who are single, have been found to display this behaviour, in comparison to the married ones. Moreover, this behaviour has been found to showcase a significant relationship, with financial independence of the respondents. Generally, students and service holders seek more variety, vis-a-vis others. Respondents who exhibit this behaviour, do not have any dependent. Furthermore, seeking variety during online apparel shopping, show a significant relationship with residential area, where majority of the respondents reside in the metros. These respondents purchase apparels online, once in a month.

#### **Conclusion and Recommendations:**

Providing high quality customer service, is crucial to enhance a company's competitiveness. A dynamic and distributed platform is provided by the internet, in order to pave the way for interactive business applications. However, there is an increasing need, to identify the elements of superior web-based service quality, and measure online customer satisfaction. Organizations, have started to interact / communicate with customers through the websites, and therefore appropriate design of service offerings have assumed a huge importance. Attracting and retaining customers, require deeper understanding of users, and tailoring of solutions. As internet shopping has shifted from novelty to a much more routine way of shopping, the quality of the sites will play a decisive role, during the process of differentiation. Internet shopping sites must be enriched in terms of quality, in order to attract consumers, and influencing their shopping decisions. Delivering quality service through websites, is a key strategy to success, which is possibly much more important than low price and generating a mere web presence. A well-designed website facilitates in forming a good impression, on the prospective customers. It helps in nurturing the leads, and get more conversions. However, most importantly, it provides good user experience and helps the website visitors, in accessing and navigating the website with ease.

#### **Limitations and Future Scope:**

The present study has been conducted in the state of West Bengal. However, future studies may be extended to other geographical regions. Moreover, the present study involved a sample size of 495. Future studies can be conducted by using greater sample size, to identify any variation in outcomes. Time constraint has been another challenge of the study, and future studies can be done in a larger time frame. This expands the existing theoretical framework of online apparel shopping behavior, and paves the way for further research in this area. Lastly, the current study exclusively focuses on apparels. Future studies may be carried out, across other retail verticals like Food & Grocery etc.

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