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Understanding consumer behavior in an organized retail sector: Indian apparel industry

Abstract

Following the global trend, Indian retailing is viewing a paradigm shift from traditional structure to a modern organized retailing sector. In spite of tardy entry into the organized retailing, it is forecasted that India will lead the industry and will be on the second position shortly. There are many key drivers which have driven the dynamic Indian organized landscape, of which some prime drivers are increasing number of working women, increase in disposable income, cheap availability of credit, price differentiation, increase in similar quality of products, increase in use of media to position the product and increase the sales. To reap all the benefits from this exponentially growing market there is a need to study the behavior of consumers, but Indian literature briefs are deficient in this regard. Retail offerings feed the changing lifestyles, fashion and ever changing consumer behavior especially in the apparel industry. The present study is a modest attempt to identify the factors affecting consumer buying behavior that is influenced by the apparel segment of Indian retail sector and to gauge the importance of each of them to consumers in selecting apparel from organized retail outlets.

Keywords: organized retail trade, branded apparel, retailing, exponential growth.

Introduction

Indian retail is on an expansion spree and many companies are joining the retail landscape. After food and groceries segment apparel is the next large retail segment and the consumption of apparel is also very large in volume. India has become the sought after destination for global brands and retailers owing to up surging consumerism, information revolution, changes in lifestyle, technology upgradation and youth centric customer base. The apparel retail sector in India has really emerged as a successful venture owing to its more than 35% share in the overall retail sector in India. Indian retail business values at around US\$550 billion as of now and about four per cent of it accounts for the organized sector. A report by Boston Consulting Group (BCG) has revealed that the country's organized retail is estimated at US\$28 billion with around 7 per cent penetration. It is projected to become US\$260 billion business over the next decade with around 21 per cent penetration.

Retailing in India is as old as Indus Valley Civilization. With a retail density of 5.5 outlets for every 1000 people and a per capita retail space of 2 square feet per person, India is truly a nation of shopkeepers. However, organized retailing which provides the consumers with a whole new shopping experience is a phenomenon of 1990's. Though it began much earlier in the developed nations, the retail revolution gained momentum in India in 90's owing to exposure to global lifestyles, families getting nuclearised and entry of corporate in retailing. Retailing in India is undergoing an exponential growth and the road ahead is full of challenges. Many new scal-

able and profitable retail models are observed across different retail formats in this present transition phase of retail sector. These new models and indigenized formats like departmental stores, hypermarkets, speciality and convenient stores, fun stores and multiplexes are changing the landscape of modern retail sector.

1. Apparel retail in India: industry profile

The organized retail share has been gaining potency owing to the robust economy that has given more disposable income in the hand of the consumer. This has led to increased demand of products/services and a better shopping environment. The organized retail segment in India is expected to be 9 per cent of total retail market by 2015 and 20 per cent by 2020. Also, India is witnessing growth of luxury brands in India which has led to introduction of new retailing stores called as Luxury stores and this is showing a great growth momentum. Without wasting any time to react on the Indian Government's decision of allowing 100 per cent foreign direct investment (FDI) in single-brand retail, luxury brand retailers have announced their expansion plans in Indian markets. A report by CII-AT Kearney revealed that Luxury brands market in India grew at a healthy 20 per cent during 2010 reaching a size of US\$5.8 billion. It further stated that the Indian luxury market stood at a value of US\$4.76 billion in 2009 and is anticipated to be worth US\$14.7 billion by 2015. The Indian retail market, the fifth largest retail destination globally, has been ranked as the second most attractive emerging market for investment in the retail sector by AT Kearney's latest annual Global Retail Development Index (GRDI) in 2008. According to a study conducted by the Indian Council for Research on International Economic

Relations (ICRIER), the retail sector is expected to contribute to 22 per cent of India's GDP by 2012. India has emerged as the fourth most attractive market destination for apparel retailers, according to a new study by global management consulting firm A.T. Kearney. India comes after Brazil, Uruguay and Chile in the A.T. Kearney Retail Apparel Index (2011). A.T. Kearney also pointed out that the time to enter the Indian market is now, for the country's retail market seems secure with strong growth fundamentals such as 9 percent real GDP growth in 2010 and forecasted annual growth of 8.7 percent through 2016.

Thus, organized sector growing at a blistering pace is overshadowing the unorganized sector and alongside, Indian cities are witnessing a paradigm shift of retailing to the vibrant organized sector. Clothing and fashion accessories stand to be the largest category followed by food and grocery, footwear, and consumer durables in organized retailing holding 38.1% market share presently, which is translated at Rs. 29,800 cr. Indian retailers and consumer durables companies are joining the web bandwagon with India's online shopping industry registering phenomenal growth of almost 100 per cent annually. India has more than 100 million Internet users, out of which around half of them are up for online purchases and the statistics is growing every year, says Google. Furthermore, the Indian online retail industry would register annual growth rate of 35 per cent to increase from current size of Rs. 2,000 crore (US\$385 million) to Rs. 7,000 crore (US\$1.35 billion) by 2015, according to a leading industry body. The US\$10 billion Indian e-commerce market is expanding exponentially (it grew 47 per cent in 2011 to reach the present size) as rising Internet penetration is making customers buy more and more stuff online. Investors are also betting high in the industry; they poured around US\$200 million into Indian e-commerce start-ups in last couple of years. Retail brands are expected to bring a great transformation in online space. Women's apparel retail brand Biba and tyre brand Bridgestone have become available online recently. Internet and Mobile Association of India (IAMAI) expects online advertising to increase by 30-40 per cent in 2011-12 on back of increased Internet usage by retailers. The BMI India Retail Report for the first quarter of 2012 released forecasts that the total

retail sales will grow from US\$422.09 billion in 2011 to US\$825.46 billion by 2015. The report highlights strong underlying economic growth, population expansion, increasing disposable income and rapid emergence of organized retail infrastructure as major factors behind the forecast growth. In India organized retail share is increasing exponentially at unbelievable limits with no looking backward, making existence of many brands (local and global) in reality in the arena of organized retailing. In apparel retailing Spencer, Raymond's Park Avenue, Shoppers' Stop Pantaloons, Big Bazaar, Westside, Pyramid, Globus are few examples of leading brands. There is a pleasant change in the private brand stores, the way they are keeping clothes, changing the grungy looks by flashy and willowy outlook with added features of customer friendly ambience, garnishing the way the clothes are kept, high degree of price differentiation, quality assurances, wide variety in colors, sizes (including the over/plus sizes) which makes shopping a delightful experience for customers.

As a result, retail brands are offsetting the brands which are made by manufacturer owned brands by providing certain added advantages to the customers. A trusted retail name provides delightful and comfort of shopping to the consumer. So, it cannot be denied that the organized retail sector is going to play a major role in shaping the competitive scenario of Indian consumer goods and service markets in near future. As consumers play the pivotal role to bring the success of any business and fortune of many retailers, there is a need to study the consumers' buying behavior in organized retail.

The changing landscape of Indian retail sector is shown below showing evolution of retail trade in India from initiation stage starting before 1990, to conceptualization stage starting from 1990-2005, to expansion stage starting from 2005-2010 and finally to consolidation stage starting from 2010. There is a revolutionary change in the structure of retail trade in India because of many factors playing across the globe mainly globalization, rise in consumer disposable income, online shopping patterns, price range, products available, high degree of market research and surveys etc. are responsible for this changing landscape and have driven the organized retail market of India as is evident from the following figures.

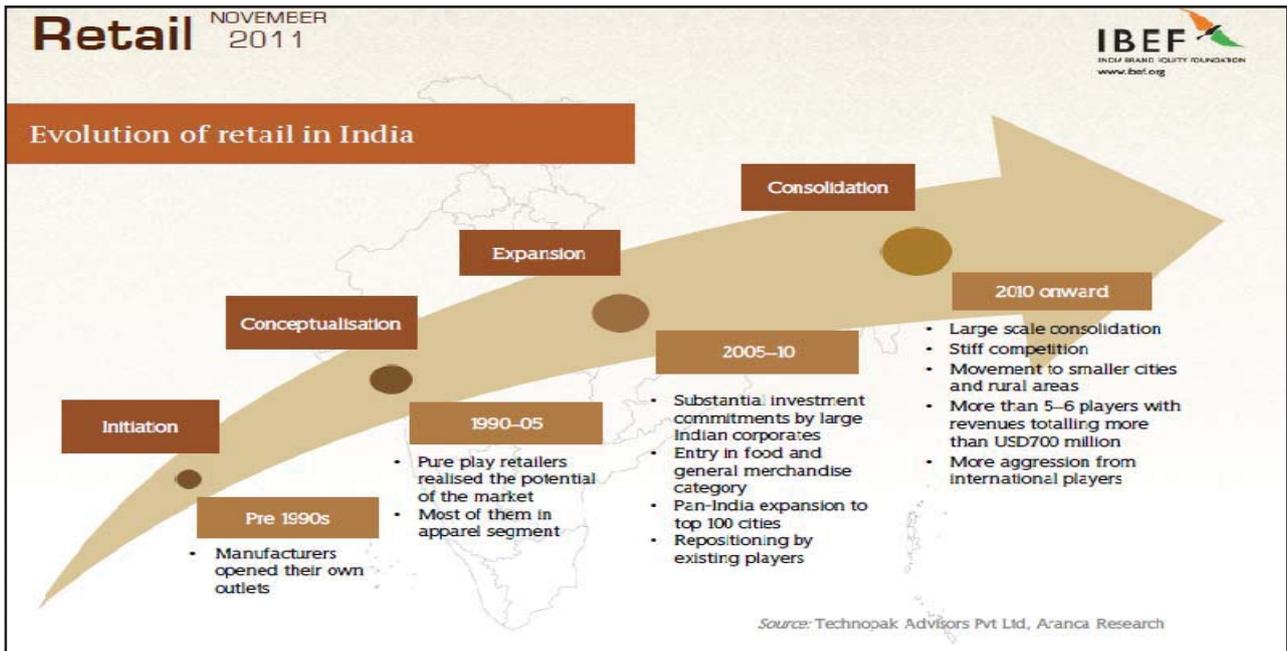


Fig. 1 Evolution of retail in India

As mentioned above there is revolutionary change in organized retail market in India. Because of the changes there is a significant change in the global position of the India in retail sector, as per

(IBEF) Indian position in global retail development index is the fourth (4th) and in the apparel market India ranks 6th the (sixth) in Global Apparel Index.

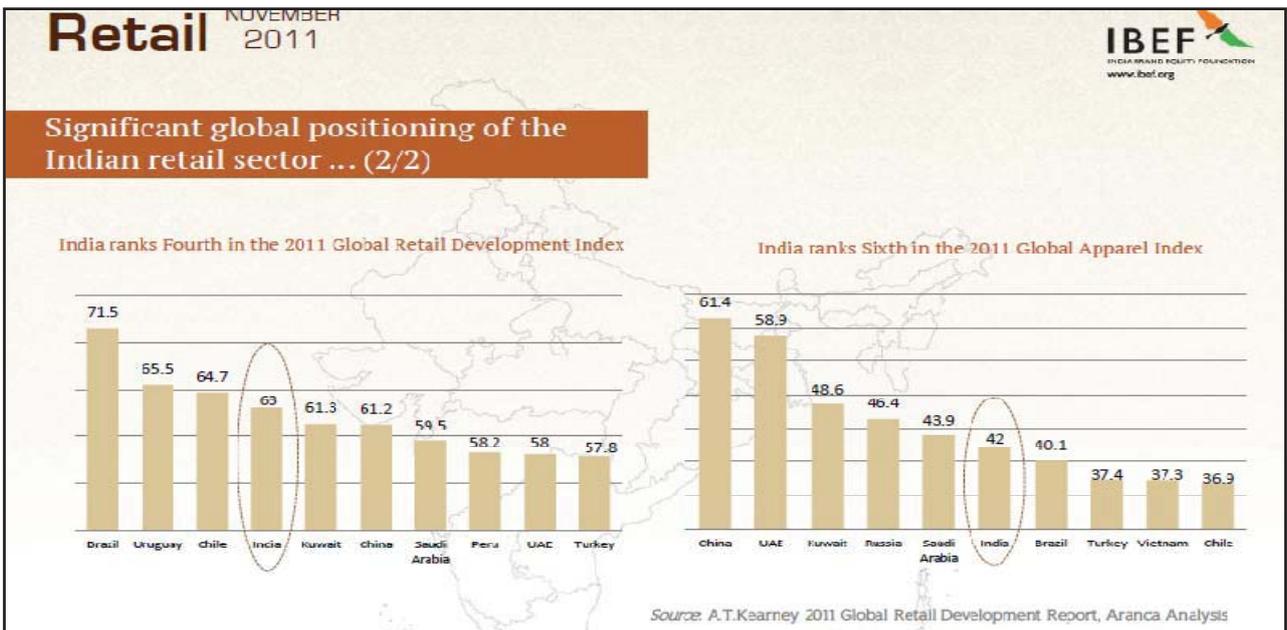


Fig. 2 Significant global positioning of the Indian retail sector

2. Review of literature

Bearden (1982) have concluded that “luxury goods consumed in public were more likely to be conspicuous goods than privately consumed luxury goods and found that the higher the status an individual wants to be, the higher conspicuous consumption they expose. Some studies have focussed their study on the area that if retailers focus on consumer loyalty, this can deliver them real benefits, greater customer loyalty Reichheld

(1996), Verdisco (1999) and Erika (1999) in their study have observed various factors affecting consumer behavior. It becomes imperative for the retailers to avoid the complaints which always lead to customer dissatisfaction when there is a continuous rise in customers’ expectations. Berry (1996), Brookman (1998) and Jackson (1999) have recognized certain circumstances the result of which is consumer dissatisfaction towards different retail brands. Nia and Zaichkowsky (2000) conducted a research, about the ownership of

luxury brands, and have found that fashion brands give them personal satisfaction and helps them to be admired, recognized and accepted by others. When luxury brands and products have ability to attach prestigious values, social referencing and the construction of one's self, people's desire to own and pose their luxury fashion piece in public can frequently indicate a symbolic sign of group membership (Wiedmann, Hennings and Siebels, 2007).

Number of studies in Indian context is very few; there are mainly national reports which gives the statistics relating to market share, growth rate etc. There is no depth in the literature as regards consumer behavior in garment industry. There is a study conducted by Gupta (2004) investigating the factors affecting the choice of private label in Hyderabad departmental store. Memon (2006) conducted a study focussing on impact of private labels on retail dealings in garments, centring on only two brands (Westside and Pantaloons) and revealed that consumers very easily switch brands if they are offered the same types of facilities. Demographic factors also influence consumer buying behavior towards branded articles that is conceptualized by Radha Krishna and Shylajan (2007). But there was a limitation of the study that the factors because of which consumers indulge in organized retail apparels was left unturned. There are many studies conducted which have examined the factors affecting consumer behavior. Different results were revealed by different authors giving relative importance to factors affecting buying behavior of consumer. Wells, Farley, Armstrong (2007) found the factors affecting consumer behavior are quality, price, trust, availability of alternative packaging, frequent advertising, sales promotions, imitations, availability, brand image, prestige, freshness and habits packaging. Perceived risk, consciousness and price-quality association factors were considered as the main factors affecting consumer behavior by Batra & Sinha (2000), Bettman, (1973), Dunn et al. (1986), Richardson Jain, and Dick (1996), Shannon and Mandhachitra (2005). Advertising-pricing was considered important as per study by Karray and Martin-Herran (2008), Ashok Kumar and Gopal (2009) considered price, quality and risk as prime factors affecting consumer behavior. Ailawadi, Pauwels and Steenkamp (2008), gave importance to price and quality as important factors determining consumer behavior. The television and celebrities have a significant impact on consumer behavior in adolescent clothing choice irrespective of gender where as factors were different in case of teens buying behavior which was mainly influenced by visual merchandising i.e mainly hands on experience (La

Ferle et al., 2000; Seock and Bailey, 2009). The study revealed that younger generation in the present context has high purchase frequency, fashion *fanship*, and impulse buying as compared to other groups in the society (Pentecost and Andrews, 2010).

3. Objectives of the study

There are many products which are part of organized retail segment of Indian market, but in this study only apparel industry will be the scope of the study.

In the present paper an effort has been made to attain the following objectives:

1. To identify the factors affecting consumer buying behavior that is influenced by the apparel segment of Indian retail sector.
2. To gauge the importance of each of them to consumers in selecting apparel from organized retail outlets.

4. Resarch methodology

The study is exploratory in nature, which helps in gathering the insights from general nature of the situation. The study has used secondary data gathered from various sources like magazine, journals, reports, studies, market reports, magazines and newspapers, research articles etc. and primary data collected from a structured questionnaire. The sample selected is random and the size is 100 people from diverse work group.

5. Analysis and interpretation of survey results

In order to achieve the objective of the study we formulate the following hypothesis using Chi-square test, which will help in analyzing the dependency of variables using SPSS software.

Hypothesis: Association between monthly budget and shopping frequency of the consumers.

H₀: There is no association between shopping frequency of consumers and monthly budget of consumers.

H₁: There is an association between shopping frequency of consumers and monthly budget of consumers.

After analyzing the responses it was confirmed that there is a strong association between shopping frequency of consumer and the monthly budget. This is an important input which marketers can embed in their strategy formulation that consumers having more money have a different shopping behavior and they spend more compared to consumers with low income, they move as per their budget so marketers can cater to both categories with a different outlook, different

policies and different perspective with a special focus on high income to increase the turnover, as seen in the Table 1 shown below.

Table 1. Chi-square test

	Value	Degrees of freedom	Asymp. sig (2-tailed value)
Pearson-Chi square	15.298	16	0.823

Hypothesis: Association between the product range available in the store and the references given by the friends is independent of each other.

H₀: There is no association between the product range available in the store and the references given by the friends.

H₁: There is an association between the product range available in the store and the references given by the friends.

Analysis of the result: The results reveal that there is no association between the product ranges available in the store and the references given by the friends as the sig. value is coming > 0.05, i.e. 0.671, this is a clear indication that the purchase of consumers in a retail outlet is independent of the references given by the relatives or the friends. It is purely the choice of consumers to buy anything and from anywhere. References have no role to play to buy the product ranges available in the stores. This can give the marketer an important insight relating to factors which are important in analyzing the consumer behavior.

Table 2. Chi-square test

	Value	Degrees of freedom	Asymp. sig (2-tailed value)
Pearson-Chi square	15.298	16	0.823

Hypothesis: Association between the parking facility and the location of the outlet.

H₀: There is no association between parking facility and the location of the outlet.

H₁: There is an association between parking facility and the location of the outlet.

The results reveal that there is a strong association between parking facility and the location of the outlet as the sig. value is < 0.05, i.e. 0.002. This is a very important in sight which the marketers can take while analyzing consumer behavior. That is for going to the outlet and buy goods, customers see the location and parking facility i.e. either the outlet should be near their residence or the parking facility should be good so that he has no hassle for parking. Hence factor is very important for marketers to have the best parking facility so that it becomes convenient

for the customers to come and enjoy the full shopping experience.

Table 3. Chi-square test

	Value	Degrees of freedom	Asymp. sig (2-tailed value)
Pearson-Chi square	25.298	16	0.002

Hypothesis: Association between the delivery facility and the location of the outlet.

H₀: There is no association between delivery facility and the location of the outlet.

H₁: There is an association between delivery facility and the location of the outlet.

The results reveal that there is a strong association between delivery facility and the location of the outlet as the sig. value is < 0.05, i.e. 0.012. This is a very important in sight which the marketers can take while analyzing consumer behavior. This is for going to the outlet and buy goods, customers see the location and delivery facility i.e. either the outlet should be near their residence or the delivery facility should be good so that he has no hassle for parking and they can order from their house and can get goods on just one dial. Hence this factor is very important for marketers to have the best delivery facility so that it becomes convenient for the customers to come and enjoy the full shopping experience else they can order from home which saves time and effort.

Table 4. Chi-square test

	Value	Degrees of freedom	Asymp. sig. (2-tailed value)
Pearson-Chi square	27.29	16	0.003

Hypothesis: Association between age between of the respondent and paying extra for a brand

H₀: There is no association age of the respondent and paying extra for a brand.

H₁: There is an association between age of the respondent and paying extra for a brand.

After analyzing the responses it was revealed that age and paying extra for a brand are significantly associated, taking the responses of young respondents as sig. value is less than < 0.05 i.e. 0.003. With this input the marketers can make a rational price strategy for the apparels especially for this class.

Table 5. Chi-square test

	Value	Degrees of freedom	Asymp. sig (2-tailed value)
Pearson-Chi square	26.298	16	0.001

6. Frequencies and descriptives

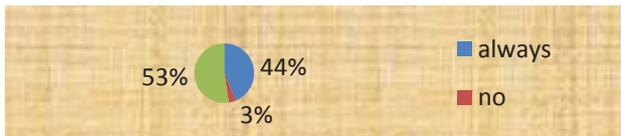
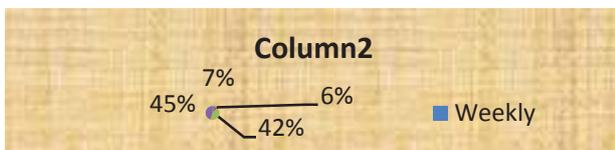


Fig. 3. Do you purchase branded clothing?

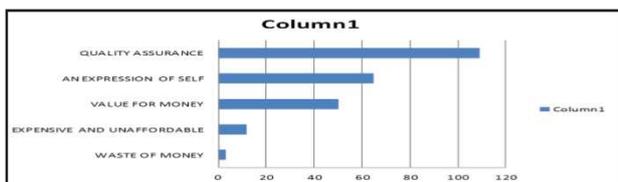
On asking the sample respondents regarding the purchase of branded apparel, it was revealed that 53% of the respondents buy branded clothing occasionally which gives us the insight that majorly Indian consumers are under the middle income group segment and for them living is very tough and they only want to save, rather than spending on lifestyle and good living because of income constraint.



Notes: Weekly 7%; Fortnightly 6%; Monthly 42%; Occasionally 45%.

Fig. 4. How frequently do you shop for branded apparel?

On asking the question about how frequently do you buy branded clothes 45% of the respondents responded that they buy occasionally where as 42% said that they buy monthly. This reveals the buying behaviour of consumers which is very important tool for the marketer and policy makers that in order to boost the sales of branded apparels they should come out with good. Schemes and deals so that major segments are attracted towards buying the deals.



Notes: Status symbol 27%; Quality assurance 71%; An expression of self 38%; Value for money 27%; Expensive and unaffordable 9%; Waste of money 0%.

Fig. 5. What does branded apparel mean to you?

On the above mentioned questioned, relating to what branded apparel mean to them, 71% responded that quality assurance is very important consideration for them in buying branded apparels, followed by an expression of self, status symbol and value for money.

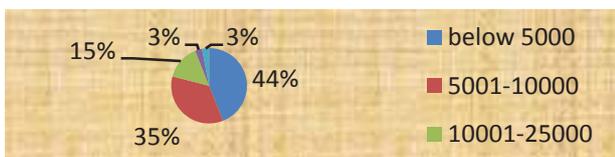
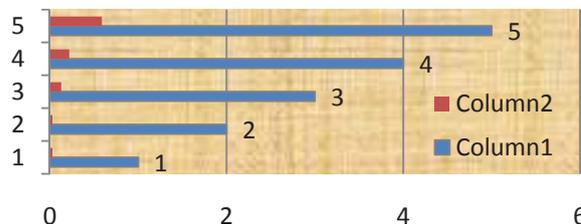


Fig. 6. On an average, how much do you spend on branded apparels each time you go for shopping (in rupees)?

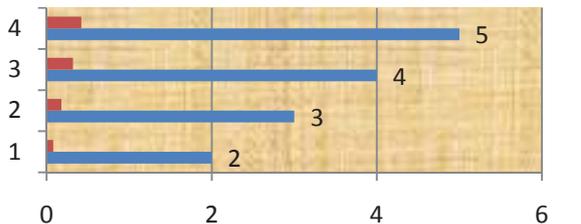
Above mentioned information revealed from the survey that people in India are not able to spend more than 5000, each time they go out for shopping as is evident that 44% respondents answered that they spend below 5000. Marketers have to embed this buying behaviour to come out with a low range of product so as to encourage them to buy and increase their shopping expenditure.



Notes: 1 – 3%; 2 – 3%; – 13%, 4 – 22%; 5 – 59%.

Fig. 7. How important is it for your brand to have quality attribute (rate from lower to higher)

On asking about the quality attribute, 59% respondents answered that they strongly agree that quality is very important attribute in buying behavior of the respondents. Hence this aspect marketer has to carefully embed in their strategy and take care of this fact that people want quality and this aspect cannot be ignored in any case.



Notes: 1 – 1%; 2 – 2%; 3 – 12%; 4 – 24%; 5 – 61%.

Fig. 8. How important is it for your brand to have fitting attribute (rate from lower to higher)?

On asking the respondents about variety attribute, 42% respondents rated the variety attribute to the highest, which is a clear indication that consumers of today are very difficult to manage. To be the leader and become famous, retailers have to offer a wide choice to them. Because of globalization the most benefitted class is consumer as they get the best choice for the products and this aspect has to be kept in mind while dealing with the consumers that they need variety.

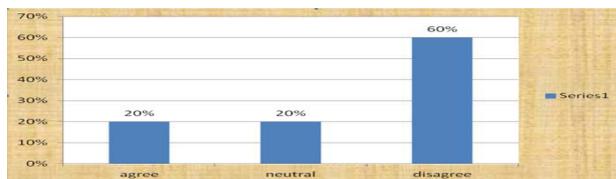


Fig. 9. Should there be play area for children in a shopping outlet or not?

This question was asked mainly from parents' i.e. whether they need some entertainment for their children till the time they are shopping. 60% respondents said that it is not important for them and is not a criterion for them to go to a particular outlet i.e. they look for only the cheap products available in the clothes having some discounts and deals, where as 20 % respondents were neutral in this regard, but for the rest of the respondents it was important.

Conclusion

Indian retail is viewing a paradigm shift with organized retail share increasing exponentially at unbelievable limits with no looking backward. Thus it becomes very important that all the insights from the present survey should be embedded by the marketer while designing the manufacturing of their products and marketing strategies.

Marketers should try to catch the needs of the consumers more effectively by understanding a deeper insight of their behavior in terms of their preference towards parameters such as quality, fitting, variety, customer friendly ambience, all of which make shopping for customers a delightful experience.

The study shows that consumers attach a great deal of importance to parking facility, delivery facility and location of the outlet. Thus marketers should provide the best of these services to provide convenience and comfort to consumers. Since Indian consumers are extremely price sensitive, marketers shouldn't unnecessarily put rising pressure through private label brands. Marketers

should do away with unnecessary increase in overhead expenses and give more products to customers at cheaper price. Marketers must give priority to customer feedback and ensure deeper market penetration by offering maximum discounts, attractive deals and freebies to customers. Indian retail apparel market is a real jigsaw of different markets, full of challenges in which traditional strategies are no more successful in capturing the benefits of the market by increase in turnover and profits. They have to be dynamic and flexible in their approach for a better understanding of consumer behavior which will ensure a reduction in failure rate. Marketers of today are very cautious in introducing brands in the market having reasonable prices and qualities which can cater to the major segment of the consumers. In this paper we have covered many dimensions which cover the consumer behavior and the factors affecting it relating to organized retail trade towards branded apparels. Marketers have to really put in their best efforts to deeply understand the consumer behavior rather than just concentrating on ambience and sheer novelty to increase the sales. They must come up with good business models and have a whole new orientation to meet customer demands. Organized retail business requires high level of planning, careful analysis of consumer behavior, selling strategies, ambience, entertainment etc. mere footfalls will not tantamount to sales. If all the factors are synchronised and implemented properly retail trade is going to stay. Organized retail business will stay and coexist with small retail.

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