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STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

OBJECTIVES

HYPOTHESES

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

RESULTS & DISCUSSION

FINDINGS

RECOMMENDATIONS/SUGGESTIONS

CONCLUSIONS

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RETAILING AND CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR LINKAGES TO BRANDING OF WOMEN APPAREL**SAIJU M JOHN****RESEARCH SCHOLAR, JNTU, HYDERABAD****PROFESSOR & HEAD OF THE DEPARTMENT****MEENAKSHI SUNDARARAJAN SCHOOL OF MANAGEMENT****KODAMBAKKAM****DR. K. MARAN****DIRECTOR****SRI SAI RAM INSTITUTE OF MANAGEMENT STUDIES****WEST TAMBARAM, CHENNAI****ABSTRACT**

There are many inconspicuous tailoring units in Chennai which supply women apparel to top retailers in the city as well as other places in India. After a point they notice a number of women wearing their clothes bought from retailers. They can neither take credit for it, nor rake up profits like the retailers. The desire of this group of entrepreneurs, who now wish to connect directly with the customers, forms the back ground of this study. The study develops and empirically tests the dimensions of branding and retailing of Women Apparel. These dimensions were thought to affect retailing and consumer behavior of women shoppers, which in turn affected the final brand choice made by the women shoppers. The effect that four demographic features of Women shoppers on branding and retailing of women apparel was also examined. The shopping centre intercept survey was conducted to collect respondent data. A total of 282 women shoppers were contacted and 100 valid responses were received. The data collected was subjected to statistical analysis. The results showed that brand recall of a woman apparel brand depended on the hand feel, texture, performance of the fabric and design. Discussions at work place and during parties, recommendations from friends and relatives influenced brand choice. Advertisements induce women shoppers to try out new styles of apparel. Women are now open to shopping at fashion stores for apparel brands and women have become more discerning and educated compared to a few years ago.

KEYWORDS

Branding, Consumer Behaviour, Retailing, Women Apparel, Women Shoppers.

INTRODUCTION

 One has to understand the Semiotics of fashion and the rigours of retail before beginning the fascinating journey of creating a brand and establishing brand values that connect with customers, in the women apparel business. It is completely different from manufacturing and any first-generation entrepreneur has to straddle the boom-bust-boom world of apparel business with the sangfroid of a veteran. Today when you walk into any multi-brand store, you see dozens of brands that have met minimum standards in terms of fabric, cut and stitch. When there is so much similarity, how do you kindle interest in customers for a particular brand? It has to be something more than a product attribute that hooks a customer-the sheer energy with which it is put together and sold and the way it communicates with the customer. Creating that magic is a huge challenge. Sadly, that magic disappears very soon. So you have to constantly innovate. Whoever creates a footprint of desirability, they are sure to succeed. With the right fabric tweaks and fashion updates, there is a lot of potential in this segment. This work considers women shopper choice as an outcome of different dimensions thought to affect branding of women apparel. It also tries to analyse the effect of four demographic features of women shoppers viz; Age, Educational Qualification, Financial independence and Family income per month on branding and retailing of women apparel.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Though fabrics and pricing are pluses that set the brands apart in a cluttered women apparel market, the greatest strength of apparel brand is research and design. Research and design is how everything from yarn development to visualization of the end product happens. Today a product is driven by technology and trends. So the onus is on the research and design teams. Price premium being a proxy for elasticity of demand, this in turn, is a measure of brand's perceived quality. Price premium reflects the brand's ability to command a price higher than its competitors. The price premium construct is consequently important for all types of brands, despite their actual positioning within a category (Chattopadhyay, Shivani and Krishnan, 2008). Prestige brands have a high status symbol because of higher pricing. Volume brands are usually priced near the market average and have relatively high market shares. Finally, economy brands are sold in the low-end segment of the market. These brands are more affordable and hence have the highest share amongst women apparel. From the literature, the author did not find any relationship between price and brand awareness. Distribution is defined as intensive when products are available in a large number of stores in the market. It has been argued that certain types of distribution fit certain types of products. Consumers are expected to be more satisfied, when a product is available in a greater number of stores. Intensive distribution reduces the time the consumers spend searching for the stores and traveling to and from the stores, provides convenience in purchase, and makes it easier to avail services of the product bought. The increased value results mostly from the reduction of sacrifices the consumers must make to acquire the product (Yoo, Donthu and Lee, 2000). Accordingly increased distribution is likely to develop a positive perceived quality of the consumer towards the product. Distribution intensity helps develop brand awareness and recognition (Smith, 1992). A wide variety of possible distribution channels can improve the awareness of women apparel brands amongst potential women consumers. Store image encompasses characteristics such as physical environment, service levels, and merchandise quality (Baker, Grewal, Parasuraman, 1994, Zimmer and Golden, 1988). The influence of today's channels on brand image is beyond the "availability" factor in the marketing share equation, and retailers' brand image has been found to enhance the image of the brand they carry based on the value the retailers provide to their customers (Srivastava and Shocker, 1991). Grewal, Krishnan and Borin (1998) found that store image provided a tremendous amount of information to consumers about store environment. Customer service, and product quality; and the perceived quality of the brand were found to have a positive relationship with store image. A positive store image can increase a brand's level of exposure in the market place, which can improve brand recognition and awareness. The distribution channel can directly affect the equity of the brands it sells by its supporting actions. However, when Ahmed and Astous (2004) investigated Indian Consumers' judgements of apparel products made in highly and newly industrialized states; they found that store type did not have a significant impact on judgements of perceived quality. They explained that the channels of distribution in emerging economics like India were establishing themselves as product promotional tools; so, the negligible effect of store type was understandable. On the basis of the literature reviewed, we assume that there is a positive relationship between store image and perceived quality and brand awareness in the Indian Women apparel market. One of the major contributors to brand equity is advertising (Aaker and Biel, 1993). Lindsay (1990) argued that the greatest source of added value is consumer perceptions of the product or brand, which came from advertising that built a brand image. Maxwell (1989) further suggested that advertising is vital for creating a consistent flow of sales for brands, rather than relying on the artificial peaks and valleys of price promotion. Advertising can influence brand equity in a number of ways, across both service and product category research, Cobb-Walgren, et al (1995) found that

the brand with the higher advertising budget had substantially higher levels of awareness. In other words, advertising creates awareness and increases the probability of the brand being included in the consumer's choice set. According to Rice and Bennett (1998), effective advertising increases the level of brand awareness and improve attitudes toward the brand. Studies have demonstrated that heavy advertising improves perceived quality (Nelson 1974) and higher level of advertising signal higher brand quality (Milgrom and Roberts, 1986). Kirmani and Wright (1989) suggested that the perceived expense of a brand's advertising campaign could influence consumer's expectations of product quality. Klein and Leffler (1981) found that advertising levels were positively related to quality. Works by Philip P Abey (2007), revealed a strong bi-directional relationship between advertising and consumption pattern in emerging markets like India. The characterization of equilibrium probability distribution over a range of prices has been defined as price promotion. The same can be implemented over a large number of periods where the demands over subsequent periods are independent of each other (Lal and Villas Boas, 1996). Past research, has studied the effect of such factors as inventory carrying costs, usage rates, number of loyal consumers on the price promotional strategies used by competitive brands. Blattberg, Briesch and Fox (1995) showed that retailers used price promotional strategies to reduce their inventory carrying costs. Works by Raju, Srinivasan and Lal (1990) showed that if some consumers had a lower inventory carrying costs than the retailers, then the optimal strategy for the retailer would be to offer periodic price discounts. Price discounts are likely to have a negative influence on perceptions of quality (Blattberg and Neslin, 1990), because a consumer who purchases a discounted product often "attributes" the fact of discounting to it being a poorer quality product (Dodson, Tybout and Sternthal, 1978) WOM is a form of communication that conveys information about the product and service in a verbal format, mainly through communication (Brown and Reingen, 1987; Herr, et al, 1991). At its core, WOM is a process of personal influence, in which interpersonal communications between a sender and a receiver can alter the receiver's behaviour or attitudes (Merton, 1968). Researches have suggested that the effectiveness of WOM information could be explained by the fact that the information is received in a face-to-face manner and this information is more accessible to the memory, rather than information received from a less vivid format, like mass media (Herr, et al, 1991). Other researches have attributed the effectiveness of WOM to the confidence and perceived credibility the receiver has in the information received. Often the information is sought out from people in whose opinions the receiver has extreme confidence (Kapferer, 1990). Whether the consumer behavior for retail brands as explained by earlier researchers can be applied to women apparels need to be explored. This is the gap in the review of literature which the author tries to explore.

NEED/IMPORTANCE OF THE STUDY

Compared to the previous studies, the authors explore more detailed dimensions of branding and retailing of women apparel, and not just the broad marketing activities (the 4 p's) to enhance the explanatory power of the brand choice phenomenon for women apparel among women shoppers. None of the earlier studies took into account the Indian business model of fashion. In the Indian business model of fashion, a designer designs and produces the clothes himself; he incurs the expense of running a factory, and opens his own shop to sell. This is a flop model, because a designer doesn't have the marketing and financial expertise to run a business. A designer should be left free to focus on creating. Branding and retailing should be left to others. Although considerable research has investigated how to employ branding for apparels, almost all the previous studies have focused mainly on the American and the other Western countries consumers. Since consumers, especially women shoppers in different parts of the world vary in their attitudes and opinions concerning marketing activities (Dawar and Parker, 1994), results from those studies might not be suited for consumers in other countries having different culture and consumer behavior, such as the consumers in emerging markets. Ability of the brand to charge a price premium (Srinivasan, Park and Chang, 2005), and incremental cash flow (Simon and Sullivan, 1993), a major advantage of building a brand lies in influencing the consumer choice decisions (Erdem, et al, 1999). This relationship of branding of women apparel in the Indian business model of fashion seems to be poorly researched. This study would address these gaps in the existing literature. Findings of this research should interest both the practitioners as well as the academics.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

A study on Retailing and Consumer Behaviour Linkages to Branding of Women Apparel.

OBJECTIVES

(i) To study the shopper behaviour and preferences among women shoppers for branded women apparel. (ii) Do branded women apparels have psychological implications on women shoppers. (iii) What does it take to build a women apparel brand.

HYPOTHESES

- H1: The perceived quality of a women apparel brand is related positively to the fabric and design trends
- H2: The perceived quality of a women apparel brand is related positively to the extent to which the price of the brand is perceived to be high
- H3: Perceived quality of a women apparel brand is related positively to the extent to which the brand is available in branded retail outlets selling women apparels.
- H4: Perceived quality of women apparel is related positively to the extent to which the brand is distributed through stores with a good image.
- H5: Brand awareness of a women apparel brand is related positively to the extent to which the brand is distributed through stores with a good image.
- H6: Perceived quality of a women apparel brand is related positively to the advertising frequency of the brand.
- H7: Brand awareness of a women apparel brand is related positively to the advertising frequency of the brand.
- H8: Perceived quality of a women apparel brand is related negatively to the price promotions used for the brand
- H9: Word-of-Mouth (WOM) perceived quality is positively influenced by positive WOM.
- H10: Brand awareness is positively influenced by positive (WOM)

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

On the basis of definitions in the literature, we identified the dimensions that can affect branding and retailing of women apparel and generated a pool of sample measures. Items were measured on a 5 – point Likert scale, with anchors of 1 (strongly disagree) and 5 (strongly agree) Random sampling was done. The pre-test method was used to assess the clarity of the questions and the reliability of the measures of the variables with respect to the questionnaire. In January 2012, a total of 50 pre-test surveys were collected from a non-probability sample of women shoppers. The questionnaire was sent by e-mail to the respondents, who then returned the completed questionnaire to the researcher by e-mail. The respondents were asked to indicate if they had any difficulty understanding and answering the questions besides providing other related suggestions that could be used to improve the questionnaire. Based on their feedback, adjustments to the questionnaire items were made. Cronbach's alpha and test for convergent validity (using the formula of Bagozzi and Baumgartner (1994) were analysed for all the factors, and items found to be unreliable were dropped. Details provided in the tables, T - 1 & T - 2. In summary, the questionnaire was improved on the basis of the findings of the pre-test.

The final research employed shopping centre intercept surveys to collect consumer information. Shopping centres were selected based on a marketing investigation. The criteria to select the shopping centre were that it must have a foot fall of over 1000 per day and a parking capacity of 200 cars at any time. Respondents were selected from women visitors in the shopping centre who were willing to complete the questionnaire while shopping.

To randomize our samples in each shopping mall, every third women shopper who had parked her car or two wheeler between 3 pm and 9 pm on Friday, Saturday and Sunday were contacted for interview.

A total of 282 women shoppers were contacted. While contacting the respondents, there was no discrimination by age. A total of 121 women shoppers agreed to be a respondent. Of the 121 respondents 21 of the respondents were above the age of 30 years and were not aware of women apparel brands. Therefore only questionnaires answered by 100 respondents were considered for tabulation of data

TABLE: T-1: CRONBACH ALPHA OF DIMENSIONS

Dimension	Number of Items	Cronbach's Alpha
Fabric and Design trends	3	0.91
Price	2	0.76
Availability in Branded retail outlets	2	0.79
Perceived quality and store image	2	0.72
Brand awareness and store image	2	0.75
Advertising frequency and perceived quality	2	0.78
Advertising frequency and Brand awareness	2	0.92
Perceived quality and price promotions	2	0.77
Perceived quality and Word-of-Mouth (WOM)	2	0.80
Brand awareness and WOM	1	0.89

TABLE: T-2: CONVERGENT VALIDITY OF DIMENSIONS

Dimensions	Composite Reliability
Fabric and Design trends	0.82
Price	0.6
Availability in Branded retail outlets	0.51
Perceived quality and store image	0.5
Brand awareness and store image	0.55
Advertising frequency and perceived quality	0.7
Advertising frequency and Brand awareness	0.58
Perceived quality and price promotions	0.59
Perceived quality and Word-of-Mouth (WOM)	0.56
Brand awareness and WOM	0.51

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

FRIEDMAN TWO-WAY ANOVA

The data was subjected to Milton Friedman's two-way ANOVA, popularly known as Friedman ANOVA in order to find out whether there is any significant difference among the ranking of factors influencing branding and its linkage to retailing and consumer behavior for women apparels.

The hypotheses for the test were formulated as follows:

H₀ = There is no significant difference among the factors influencing branding and its linkage to retailing and consumer behavior for women apparel.

H_a = There is a significant difference among the factors influencing branding and its linkage to retailing and consumer behavior for women apparel.

TABLE: T-3: FRIEDMAN TWO- WAY ANOVA

RANKS

Factor	Mean Rank	Chi-Square	P Value
Q 1	8.21	167.648	0.000
Q 2	12.96		
Q 3	13.19		
Q 4	9.49		
Q 5	8.33		
Q 6	9.94		
Q 7	11.18		
Q 8	11.18		
Q 9	10.33		
Q 10	10.41		
Q 11	9.40		
Q 12	9.70		
Q 13	9.95		
Q 14	11.20		
Q 15	11.58		
Q 16	7.09		
Q 17	11.00		
Q 18	12.14		
Q 19	12.82		
Q 20	9.91		

Since the P value is less than 0.010 it is proved that there is a significant difference among the factors influencing branding and its linkage to retailing and consumer behavior for women apparels at 1% level of significance. Therefore we reject the Null Hypotheses H₀ and accept the alternate Hypotheses H_a.

From the above analysis, it is proved that there is a significant difference among factors influencing branding and its linkage to retailing and consumer behavior for women apparel in terms of their levels of influence.

Their levels of influence can be analysed using the weighted average method which also enables us to rank the 20 factors considered for the study in terms of their levels of influence on branding and its linkages to retailing.

TABLE: T-4: USING WEIGHTED AVERAGES FREQUENCY TABLE

SD – Strongly Disagree; D – Disagree ; N – Neutral; A – Agree; SA – Strongly Agree

S.No.	Factor	SD	D	N	A	SA	TOTAL	Weighted Average	Rank
Q 1	Trust	5	27	24	37	7	100	3.14	19
Q 2	Quality fabric and latest fashion trends		4	22	47	27	100	3.97	3
Q 3	Instant recall value		3	17	48	32	100	4.09	1
Q 4	High price represents sup.quality	5	22	24	32	17	100	3.34	17
Q 5	High price brands plays up your pluses	7	18	35	30	10	100	3.18	18
Q 6	Availability in branded retail outlets	2	18	23	46	11	100	3.46	13
Q 7	Occupy shelf space		9	29	43	19	100	3.72	7
Q 8	Reputed stores -quality brands	2	12	24	42	20	100	3.66	9
Q 9	Image of store	8	14	20	36	22	100	3.50	12
Q 10	New brands Reputed stores	2	13	26	41	18	100	3.60	10
Q 11	Shop to enhance knowledge	4	20	26	34	16	100	3.38	16
Q 12	Advt.	3	24	18	38	17	100	3.42	15
Q 13	Advt. Social recognition	6	19	19	36	20	100	3.45	14
Q 14	Knowledge product off from Advts		8	23	56	13	100	3.74	6
Q 15	Advts. Induce		13	18	48	21	100	3.77	5
Q 16	Price discounts do not attract	14	31	20	27	8	100	2.84	20
Q 17	Price discounts out of fashion	1	7	34	36	22	100	3.71	8
Q 18	Recommendation of friends and relatives	2	7	18	47	26	100	3.88	4
Q 19	Discussions at work place and parties	1	6	15	49	29	100	3.99	2
Q 20	Influence of friends	2	13	35	31	19	100	3.52	11

INFERENCE: From the weighted averages of the responses against the 20 factors if we are to consider the top 5 factors we could infer as follows:

RANK	FACTOR	VARIABLE	INFERENCE
1.	A brand is about instant recall value of the hand feel, texture, performance of the fabric and design	Perceived quality of a women apparel brand	The perceived quality of a women apparel brand is related positively to the fabric and design trends.- Hence H1 is accepted
2.	Discussions at place of work and during parties influences choice of the apparel brand	Word-of-Mouth (WOM)	Perceived quality is positively influenced by positive WOM – Hence H9 is accepted
3.	Renowned women apparel brands offer good quality fabric and latest fashion trends	Perceived quality of a women apparel brand	The quality of a women apparel brand is related positively to the fabric and design trends .- Hence H1 is accepted
4.	Recommendations of friends and relatives influences my choice of the retail outlet as well as the brand of apparel	Word-of-Mouth	Perceived quality is positively influenced by positive WOM.- Hence H9 is accepted
5.	Advertisements induce, to try out new styles of apparels	Advertising frequency of a brand	Brand awareness of a women apparel brand is related positively to the advertising frequency of the brand – Hence H7 is accepted.

The four demographic features whose influence has been analysed are age, family income per month, educational qualification and financial independence. In order to study the influence of the age of the women shopper on branding and retailing of women apparel, t – test was performed on the data. The null hypotheses H0 was framed as that there was no significant difference in the responses between the two age groups

TABLE: T-5: t- TEST: GROUP STATISTICS

Age Group In years	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t-value	P Value
18 – 23	67	70.27	8.359		
24 – 28	33	73.58	7.786	1.902	0.060

Since P Value is greater than 0.05 it can be concluded that there is no significant difference between the responses of the two age groups of women shoppers. Therefore we accept the null hypotheses H0.

To re-confirm the above results the data was subjected to cross tabulation as shown below in table T-6.

The null hypotheses was framed as that, there is no association between age of the woman shopper and branding and retailing of women apparel.

TABLE: T-6: CROSS TABULATION OF AGE OF WOMEN SHOPPERS AND ITS INFLUENCE ON BRANDING AND RETAILING OF WOMEN APPAREL

Age Group in years	Level of influence of age on branding and retailing			Total	Chi-square value	P Value
	Low	Average	High			
18-23	20 (29.9) [80.0]	32 (47.8) [66.7]	15 (22.4) [55.6]	67	3.513	0.173
24-28	5 (15.2) [20.0]	16 (48.5) [33.3]	12 (36.4) [44.4]	33		
Total	25	48	27	100		

- Note : 1. The value within () refers to row percentage
2. The value within [] refers to column percentage

Since P value is greater than 0.05 it can be concluded that the age of the women shopper has no significant association/influence on branding and retailing of women apparel, which means we accept the null hypotheses H0.

After ruling out the chances of age of the woman shopper having any influence on branding and retailing of women apparel, we now considered the next demographic factor i.e, family income per month.

The One way ANOVA test was performed on the data. The null hypotheses was framed as, that there was no significant difference between the population means of the four groups of monthly incomes considered for the study

TABLE: T-7: ONE WAY ANOVA

Family income per month (Rs.)	N	Mean	Std.Deviation	F value	P value
Below 20,000	30	69.77	7.960	2.214	0.091
20,000 - 30,000	14	75.71	6.832		
30,000 - 40,000	23	69.57	7.549		
Above 40,000	33	72.21	9.110		
Total	100	71.36	8.284		

TABLE: T-8: ANOVA

Variation	Sum of Squares	Degrees of freedom	Mean sum of Squares	F Value	P Value
Between Groups	439.649	3	146.550	2.214	0.091
Within Groups	6353.391	96	66.181		
Total	6793.040	99	-		

Since P value is greater than 0.05 we conclude that there is no significant difference between the population means of the four groups of monthly incomes considered for the study thus accepting H₀. Before ruling out the influence of monthly income on branding and retailing of women apparel we subjected the data to cross tabulation to reconfirm the above results.

The null hypotheses was framed as, that there was no association of monthly income of women shoppers on branding and retailing of women apparel.

TABLE: T-9: CROSS TABULATION OF MONTHLY FAMILY INCOME OF THE WOMEN SHOPPERS AND ITS INFLUENCE ON BRANDING AND RETAILING OF WOMEN APPAREL

Monthly Family Income (in Rs.)	Level of influence of monthly family income on branding and retailing			Total	Chi-square value	P Value
	Low	Average	High			
Below 20,000	9 (30.0) [36.0]	16 (53.3) [33.3]	5 (16.7) [18.5]	30	9.860	0.131
20,000-30,000	1 (7.1) [4.0]	7 (50.0) [14.6]	6 (42.9) [22.2]	14		
30,000-40,000	7 (30.4) [28.0]	13 (56.5) [27.1]	3 (13.0) [11.1]	23		
Above 40,000	8 (24.2) [32.0]	12 (36.4) [25.0]	13 (39.4) [48.1]	33		
Total	25	48	27	100		

Note : 1. The value within () refers to row percentage
2. The value within [] refers to column percentage

Since P value is greater than 0.05 it can be concluded that monthly family income of the women shopper has no significant association/influence on branding and retailing of women apparel which means we accept the null hypotheses.

H₀. Now that we have ruled out the chances of age and monthly family income of the woman shopper having any influence on branding and retailing of women apparel, we then considered the third demographic factor i.e., educational qualification.

The data was subjected to Mann-whitney U test, also known as Wilcoxon Rank-Sum test. The two sample groups were women who were undergraduates and women who were post graduates.

The null hypotheses was framed as, there was no significant difference between the two groups in terms of their qualification having an influence on branding and retailing of women apparel.

TABLE: T-10: MANN-WHITNEY TEST

Educational Qualification	N	Mean Rank	Z value	P Value
U G	48	36.61	4.603	0.000
P G	52	63.32		
Total	100			

Since P value is less than 0.010 it denotes that the two sample groups are significantly different in terms of their influence on branding and retailing. Thus we reject the null hypotheses H₀ and accept the alternate hypotheses H_a.

In order to reaffirm the influence of educational qualification on branding and retailing of women apparel the data was subjected to cross tabulation.

The null hypotheses was framed as, that there is no association between educational qualification of women shoppers and branding and retailing of women apparel.

TABLE: T-11 CROSS TABULATION OF EDUCATIONAL QUALIFICATION OF WOMEN SHOPPERS AND ITS INFLUENCE ON BRANDING AND RETAILING OF WOMEN APPAREL

Educational Qualification	Level of influence of educational qualification on branding and retailing of women apparel			Total	Chi-square value	P Value
	Low	Average	High			
U G	20 (41.7) [80.0]	21 (43.8) [43.8]	7 (14.6) [25.9]	48	15.875	0.000
P G	5 (9.6) [20.0]	27 (51.9) [56.3]	20 (38.5) [74.1]	52		
Total	25	48	27	100		

Note: 1. The value within () refers to row percentage
2. The value within [] refers to column percentage

Since P value is between 0 and 0.010 it can be concluded that educational qualification of the woman shopper had a significant association /influence on branding and retailing of women apparel which means we reject the null hypotheses H₀.

Then we considered the fourth demographic factor i.e., the financial independence of the woman shopper.

The data was subjected to t-test to learn about the influence of financial independence of woman shopper on branding and retailing of women apparel. The null hypotheses was framed as, that there is no significant difference between the two groups in terms of their influence on branding and retailing of women apparel.

TABLE: T-12: T-TEST: GROUP STATISTICS OF THE FINANCIALLY INDEPENDENT AND FINANCIALLY DEPENDANT

Financially independent	N	Mean	Std Deviation	t value	P value
Yes	10	77.10	8.130	2.363	0.020
No	90	70.72	8.095		

Since P value falls between 0.011 and 0.050 it can be concluded that there is a significant difference in the levels of influence between financially dependant women shoppers and financially independent women shoppers.

To reconfirm the above results the data was subjected to cross tabulation as shown below in table T-13.

The null hypotheses was framed as that, there is no association between financial independence of the woman shopper and branding and retailing of women apparel.

TABLE: T-13: CROSS TABULATION OF FINANCIAL INDEPENDENCE OF WOMEN SHOPPERS AND ITS INFLUENCE ON BRANDING AND RETAILING OF WOMEN APPAREL

Financially independent	Level of influence of financial independence of women shoppers on branding and retailing of women apparel			Total	Chi-square value	P Value
	Low	Average	High			
Yes	1 (10.0) [4.0]	3 (30.0) [6.3]	6 (60.0) [22.2]	10	6.231	0.044
No	24 (26.7) [96.0]	45 (50.0) [93.8]	21 (23.3) [77.8]	90		
Total	25	48	27	100		

Note: 1. The value within () refers to row percentage
2. The value within [] refers to column percentage

Since P value falls between 0.011 and 0.050 it can be concluded that there is a significant difference in the levels of influence between financially dependent women shoppers and financially independent women shoppers.

Thus, from the analysis of the data we can come to a fair conclusion that educational qualification and financial independence of the women shoppers have a significant impact on branding, retailing and consumer behavior for women apparel.

FINDINGS

The analysis shows that for any women apparel brand to have instant recall value, the hand feel, texture, performance of the fabric and design is the most important parameter that a woman shopper looks for. Also, renowned apparel brands are perceived by women shoppers, to offer good quality fabric and latest fashion trends. These two findings of ours are derived from our testing of hypotheses H1 which states that, the perceived quality of a women apparel brand is related positively to the fabric and design trends.

H9 argued that perceived quality is positively influenced by positive WOM (Word of Mouth). The results from this study supported this proposed relationship. Women shoppers have opined that discussions at place of work and during parties influenced their choice of the apparel brand. Similarly recommendations of friends and relatives also influenced their choice of the brand of apparel as well as the choice of the retail outlet.

H7 argued that brand awareness of a women apparel brand is related positively to the advertising frequency of the brand. The results from this study supported this proposed relationship. Women shoppers have suggested that advertisements induce them to try out new styles of apparels.

The analysis also concluded that educational qualification and financial independence of the women shoppers had a significant impact on branding, retailing and consumer behavior for women apparel.

RECOMMENDATIONS/SUGGESTIONS

One of the major findings of this study is that brand choice probability of a women apparel brand could be enhanced if the brand is able to establish instant recall value in the minds of women shoppers. Hand feel, texture, performance of the fabric and design are the factors that should go into the apparel brand to achieve instant recall value.

On achieving the above, brand awareness has to be created by frequent advertising. It is frequent advertising that induce women shoppers to try out new styles and new brands of apparel.

The advertisements should be targeted at financially independent women who are highly educated because it is this segment who form the market for branded women apparel.

Increased publicity also helps because perceived quality is positively influenced by positive WOM. Sponsorship of office parties and events conducted by companies would help in creating a positive feeling about the brand. This positive feeling would result in recommendations to friends and relatives, and would also find a place in discussions at places of work.

This study should serve as a guideline to the brand managers in women apparel companies, to designers and also to the management of companies who are planning to introduce their women apparel brands in the market. Ultimately better choice probability can translate to an increased market share and also an increase in sales.

CONCLUSIONS

The results showed that, of the ten dimensions of branding and retailing of women apparel considered, three dimensions had a very strong impact. However, contrary to what many previous studies reported, educational qualification and financial independence of the women shoppers had a significant impact on branding, retailing and consumer behavior for women apparel. Word-of-mouth is a better determinant of brand awareness for women apparel. Advertising frequency is a builder of brand awareness.

SCOPE FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

Our study is limited by several factors that can be addressed in future research. First, our sample is limited geographically. Our hypotheses should be tested further in other metros and states to get a pan India data.

Secondly the study focuses only on dimensions that would influence branding and retailing of women apparel among women shoppers and does not consider the interaction of marketing mix elements, amongst themselves.

Hence we call on future research to examine the lacunae stated above

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