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# CONTENTS

Sr. No.	TITLE & NAME OF THE AUTHOR (S)	Page No.
1.	HRM PRACTICES AND EMPLOYEE ATTRITION: A GENDER CENTRIC ANALYSIS OF INDIAN BPO INDUSTRY <i>AMIT MALHOTRA &amp; ADITYA GAUTAM</i>	1
2.	CONSUMER BRAND PREFERENCE TOWARDS PASTEURIZED PACKAGED MILK IN GUDALUR TOWN <i>DR. L. RAMESH &amp; POORNIMA.S</i>	6
3.	ASSESSING THE POTENTIALITY OF RAINWATER HARVESTING SYSTEMS IN PUNE CITY <i>RAJESHWARI SHINDE &amp; DR. VIJAYA S. NAWALE</i>	14
4.	PROFITABILITY ANALYSIS OF SELECTED AUTOMOBILE COMPANIES IN INDIA <i>ANAND R. &amp; MARIA D'SOUZA</i>	20
5.	THE COMPARATIVE ADVANTAGE OF NORTH CYPRUS IN THE GREEN LINE TRADE: EMPIRICAL ANALYSIS DURING PERIODS OF 2005- 2013 <i>ZEHRA SENHAZ, FEHIMAN EMINER &amp; OKAN VELI ŞAFAKLI</i>	23
6.	ANALYSIS THE INFLUENCE OF MACROECONOMIC VARIABLES ON JAKARTA COMPOSITE INDEX AND SECTORAL INDEX STOCK RETURN <i>LIANITHA KURNIAWATI, DR. NOER AZAM ACHSANI &amp; DR. LUKYTAWATI ANGGRAENI</i>	31
7.	INDUCEMENT OF WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS ON BEAUTY PARLOUR BUSINESS IN SIVAGANGA DISTRICT <i>THANGAM ALAGARSAMY &amp; DR. S. GANAPATHY</i>	38
8.	A STUDY OF MARKETING MIX STRATEGIES ON THE INDIAN UPVC WINDOW MARKET <i>K. SATYA SUBRAM, DR. MOHAMMED NAVED KHAN &amp; DR. CHETAN SRIVASTAVA</i>	41
9.	CONSUMER PERCEPTION TOWARDS MARKETING OF TANTEA PRODUCTS <i>S. DEEPA &amp; M. JAYALAKSHMI</i>	47
10.	ANALYSIS OF EDUCATIONAL FINANCIAL SCHEMES FOR SCHEDULED CASTES AND SCHEDULED TRIBES IN INDIA <i>SUSHMA NANDKUMAR BANSODE &amp; DR. CA SUBHASH PRALHAD DESAI</i>	51
11.	PEER COACHING: A TOOL FOR CAREER DEVELOPMENT <i>CHANDRASHEKHAR CHOLLI, SREERAJ P S &amp; DR. RAVINDER KAUR</i>	54
12.	FACTORS AFFECTING CONSUMER PERCEPTION TOWARDS BRANDED CLOTHES IN RURAL AREAS <i>AMANDEEP KAUR SANDHU &amp; GAGANDEEP KAUR</i>	57
13.	COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF PRE AND POST-MERGER FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE WITH REFERENCE TO IT SECTOR IN INDIA <i>ZOHRA BI</i>	61
14.	THE ART OF GIVING FEEDBACK IN COACHING: SIGNIFICANCE AND PERSPECTIVE <i>MANALI DAREKAR, MILKA SEBASTIAN &amp; DR. RAVINDER KAUR</i>	70
15.	INVENTORY MANAGEMENT IN PAPER INDUSTRY: A COMPARATIVE STUDY IN SPML AND INTERNATIONAL PAPER APPML <i>DR. YELLASWAMY AMBATI</i>	74
16.	CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITIES OF COMMERCIAL BANKS IN INDIA WITH SPECIAL EMPHASIS TO SBI <i>AMALKUMAR.P</i>	79
17.	AUDIT PROCESS UNDER MGNREGA <i>KHEM RAJ</i>	82
18.	COMPETITIVE CHALLENGE OF CASHEW INDUSTRY IN ANDHRA PRADESH (WITH REFERENCE TO PRAKASAM, EAST & WEST GODAVARI DISTRICTS) <i>P.V.V. KUMAR, T. SUSMITHA, P. YAMUNA &amp; B. YAMINI</i>	85
19.	REGULATION OF E-COMMERCE IN INDIA <i>MAITRI TANDON</i>	88
20.	STRATEGY IMPLEMENTATION AS INTERVENING FOR COMPANY'S RESOURCES AND REGULATIONS IN ORDER TO FORM BUSINESS PERFORMANCE [STUDIES IN UNIT BUSINESSES OF PT PERTAMINA (PERSERO)] <i>ELFIEN GOENTORO</i>	93
	<b>REQUEST FOR FEEDBACK &amp; DISCLAIMER</b>	<b>97</b>

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**FACTORS AFFECTING CONSUMER PERCEPTION TOWARDS BRANDED CLOTHES IN RURAL AREAS**

**AMANDEEP KAUR SANDHU**  
**ASST. PROFESSOR**  
**PUNJABI UNIVERSITY**  
**PATIALA**

**GAGANDEEP KAUR**  
**ASST. PROFESSOR**  
**PUNJABI UNIVERSITY**  
**PATIALA**

**ABSTRACT**

*Clothing and textile have been enormously important throughout human history to have their materials, production tools and techniques, cultural influences, and social significance. Clothing is considered to be second skin of the body; hence interest in clothing is higher during the whole life. Clothing items are now bought according to the psychological elements that they symbolize and not only for their physical characteristics and need-satisfying properties. This necessitates the manufacturers in the clothing industry to become familiar with the perceptions of the consumer. This study is an attempt to have insights about consumer perception towards branded clothes in rural areas and to explore series of factors affecting it. Primary as well as secondary study is undertaken to attain the predetermined objectives. Study revealed that 74% of the respondents prefer to buy branded clothes in rural areas and there are 3 core factors which influence consumer perception in rural areas about branded clothes. It came to limelight from study, that lion's share of consumers is becoming aware of branded clothes in rural areas.*

**KEYWORDS**

branded clothes, consumer perception, clothing habits.

**INTRODUCTION**

The wearing of clothing is exclusively a human characteristic and is a feature of most human societies. Clothing is considered to be second skin of the body; hence interest in clothing is higher during the whole life. Clothing items are now bought according to the psychological elements that they symbolize and not only for their physical characteristics and need-satisfying properties. This necessitates the manufacturers in the clothing industry to become familiar with the perceptions of the consumer.

**ANCIENT INDIA**

Traditional clothes are still worn in most of rural India; but urban India is changing rapidly, with international fashion trends. Fashion in India is a vibrant scene, a nascent industry and a colourful and glamorous world where designers and models start new trends every day. Previously a master weaver was recognized for his skill; but today a fashion designer is celebrated for his or her creativity. As Indian fashion designers are inspired by both Indian and western styles, young urban Indians can choose from the best of East and West. Fashion in India is also beginning to make its mark on the international scene as accessories such as bindis (red dots worn on the forehead), mehndi (designs made by applying henna to the palms of the hands and other parts of the body) and bangles, have gained international popularity, after being worn by fashion icons like pop singers Madonna and Gwen Stephani.

**INDIAN ETHNIC WEAR****DHOTI**

Dhoti kurta is the traditional Indian clothing of men. Unlike other dresses, it is an unstitched piece of cloth usually 5 yards long that is tied around the waist and legs. The knot is tied at the waist.

**KURTA**

Kurta is a term used to refer to a long loose shirt, the length of which falls below or may be just above the knees of the wearer.

**INDIAN SALWAR KAMEEZ**

Salwar Kameez is the traditional Indian clothing for women. Due to its high popularity in the region of Punjab, shalwar kameez is commonly referred to as Punjabi suit.

**INDIAN SARI**

Sari is one of the most wonderful dresses worn by Indian women. Infact, when one thinks of a typical Indian woman, the first thing that strikes the mind is a women clad in sari, who is wearing the solah shringar including bindi, chudi, kajal etc.

**SHERWANI FOR MEN**

Sherwani is a long coat resembling achkan in styling. It is buttoned upto the collar and lengthwise it is usually below the knee. Indian men spend lavishly on buying the sherwani suit for the special occasion of their wedding.

**TURBAN**

In India, one can spot many men wearing turban. Well, turban is tied not for the sake of fashion, but because it has a lot of significance in the lives of Indians. The hair turban is a headdress that basically consists of a long piece of unstitched cloth, which is wrapped around the head.

**INDIAN RURAL MARKET SCENARIO**

Rural markets are defined as those segments of overall market of any economy, which are distinct from the other types of markets like stock market, commodity markets or labour economics.

In recent years, rural market had undergone a considerable change. This is the result of new employment opportunities and new source of income made available through various rural development programmes. Indian rural market is vast in size, encompassing 834 million consumers and it is wide spread over 6.40 lakh villages. On account of the green revolution in India, the rural areas are consuming a large quantity of industrial and urban manufactured products.

Trends in rural expenditure are changing from livelihood expense to lifestyle expenses, with families buying products for their peripherals rather than functional value. According to a survey conducted by MART Rural, a rural marketing consulting agency, more consumers are buying products for the experience they provide not just their utility. Fast moving consumer goods like soaps, shampoos, toothpastes, washing powder, tea and biscuits have witnessed increased sale in the top-end segments because of the prestige factor associated with them. Now-a-days rural people are becoming more demanding, reason being growing awareness and affluence in villages closer to towns.



**REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

**Thakur and lamba (2013)** conducted a study to examine the customer satisfaction level and factors influencing readymade apparel purchase and also to determine the most popular brands among customers in branded clothes market of Jalandhar city. Sample size of 250 respondents was taken. It was found that quality and price are most important factors and Tommy Hilfiger and Peter England are the most preferred brands.

**Pandian and Varathani (2012)** determined the men’s perception towards branded shirts. Primary data was collected with the help of structured questionnaire administered to 215 male respondents in trichy city. The study revealed that Raymond, Peter England and John Player remains the top three brands preferred by respondents and shoppers of men’s branded shirts were highly influenced by the factors such as durability, reference groups, wider choice of colour and design, attractiveness, price range and celebrity endorsement.

**Mittal and Aggarwal (2012)** held that clothing is likely to form an integral part in the enactment of social encounters and it is also seen as a very important channel of non-verbal communication. The objective of the study was to determine whether the branding of garments influence the perception of consumer. Sample size was 120 respondents and questionnaire was handed out at different malls in jaipur. Survey depicts that there is a relationship between consumer’s income and the satisfaction derived from a purchased product. People are price sensitive and final selection of goods depends on price or budget of buyer.

**OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

1. To examine consumer perception about branded clothes in the rural market.
2. To determine factors which influence perception of rural people towards branded clothes.

**RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

Research Methodology is a way to systematically solve the research problem. It includes various methods and techniques for conducting a research. For this study a structured questionnaire was prepared which contained both open ended and close ended questions. The questionnaire contained multiple choice questions and questions on a Likert scale.

**SAMPLE SIZE:** 100 respondents

**TYPE:** Convenience sampling

**SAMPLE UNIT:** Rural masses from villages of Ajaibwali, Verka, Kathunangal, Malluwal, Jethuwal, Fatehgarh and Balluana.

**FACTOR ANALYSIS:** This test has been applied on the statements to check the customer perception regarding branded clothes in rural market. The main purpose of this test is to study the behavioural factors of respondents.

**RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

**1. PREFERENCE FOR BRANDED CLOTHES**

**TABLE 1: PREFERENCE FOR BRANDED CLOTHES**

Prefer to buy branded clothes	No. Of Respondents	Percentage
Yes	74	74
No	26	26

Source: Compiled by authors and analysis done through SPSS

The above figure shows that 74% of the Respondents prefer to buy branded clothes and 26% do not prefer.

**2. In the study respondents were asked to rate the various statements, representing the factors which influence the perception of people towards branded clothes, on 5 Point Likert Scale. Factor Analysis was done on the collected data.**

**FACTOR ANALYSIS:** Factor Analysis defines the relationship between factors and relationship building tools and relationship among sets of many interrelated variables are examined and represented in terms of a few underlying factors. Factor Analysis is primarily used for data reduction and summarization. Factor analysis is a set of techniques which, by analyzing correlations between variables, reduces their number into fewer factors which explains much of the original data, more economically.

**TABLE 2: SHOWING DIFFERENT VARIABLES ASSIGNED TO VARIOUS STATEMENTS**

Sr. no.	Statements	Variables no.
1.	Ambiance of store	ST 1
2.	Brand image affects my purchase decision	ST 2
3.	Branded clothes last longer	ST 3
4.	Branded clothes are value for money	ST 4
5.	Promotional efforts (like discounts, buy one get one free etc.) affect my purchase decision	ST 5
6.	Branded clothes are more expensive	ST 6
7.	Companies sell defective and inferior stuff in discount and promotional schemes	ST 7
8.	Branded clothes provide me distinctiveness	ST 8
9.	Designs and patterns are unique in branded clothes	ST 9
10.	Brands sometimes compromise on quality for gaining profits.	ST 10
11.	Advertisements influence my purchase decision	ST 11
12.	Cultural factors influences my purchase decision	ST 12

Source: Compiled by authors and analysis done through SPSS

**TABLE 3: FACTOR NAMING**

Factor Number	Factor name & Variance explained	Variables Included in the Factor	Factor Loading
F1	Efficacy (32.587%)	Designs and patterns are unique in branded clothes.	0.852
		Branded clothes provide me distinctiveness.	0.836
		Branded clothes are value for money.	0.773
		Branded clothes last longer.	0.760
		Brand image affect my purchase decision.	0.693
		Ambiance of stores affects my purchase decision.	0.625
F2	Value Orientation (19.374%)	Companies sell defective and inferior stuff in discount and promotional schemes.	0.858
		Branded clothes are more expensive.	0.855
		Brands sometimes compromise on quality for gaining profits.	0.654
F3	Promotion Mix (12.134%)	Cultural factors influence my purchase decision.	0.836
		Promotional efforts like discounts, buy one get one free etc. affect my purchase decision.	0.685
		Advertisements influence my purchase decision.	0.435

Source: Compiled by authors and analysis done through SPSS

**Interpretation**

In factor 1 variables identified are designs and patterns are unique in branded clothes (0.852), branded clothes provide me distinctiveness (0.836), branded clothes are value for money (0.773), branded clothes last longer (0.76), brand image affect my purchase decision (0.693), ambiance of stores affects my purchase decision (0.625). According to nature of these variables we can entitle this factor as "Efficacy". It is the most important factor which determines the consumer perception regarding branded clothes in rural market and it explains as high as 32.587% of the variation.

In factor 2 variables identified are companies sell defective and inferior stuff in discount and promotional schemes (0.858), branded clothes are more expensive (0.855), brands sometimes compromise on quality for gaining profits. According to nature of these variables we can entitle this factor as "Value Orientation". It is second factor which determines the consumer perception regarding branded clothes in rural market and it explains 19.374% of variation.

In factor 3 variables identified are cultural factors influence my purchase decision (0.836), promotional efforts like discounts, buy one get one free etc. affect my purchase decision (0.685), advertisements influence my purchase decision (0.435). According to the nature of these variables we can entitle this factor as "Promotion mix". It is the third factor which determines consumer perception regarding branded clothes and it explains 12.134% of variation.

Collectively all the three factors explain as high as 64.095% of the variation. Remaining 35.905% is due to the attributes of other factors that are not included in this study.

**FINDINGS**

The entire study conducted regarding the consumer perception regarding branded clothes in rural market reveals following findings:

- Study revealed that about 74% of respondents prefer to buy branded clothes and rest doesn't prefer to buy branded clothes.
- Factor analysis findings tell us that there are three important factors which influence customer perception towards branded clothes in rural market. The value of cumulative percentage is 64.095 and factor 1 that is efficacy accounts for 32.587 percent of total variance, factor 2 accounts for 19.374 percent and factor 3 accounts for 12.134 percent of total variance.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

The most important recommendations which we would like to give while preparing this research paper are that:

- Marketer should take appropriate steps to tap this market which has huge growth potential.
- They should position their products with adequate advertising.
- They should push affordable quality products in the market.
- These companies should bring aviorial differences across region.

**CONCLUSION**

To conclude, we can say that number of consumers preferring branded clothes in rural areas is increasing, as witnessed in the study it is 74%. Furthermore, three factors which influence consumer perception towards branded clothes in rural areas are efficacy, value orientation and promotion mix. From this study it is vigilant that market for branded clothes is comprised of consumers from rural area as well as urban area.

**LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

Any study based on survey has a basic limitation that it can provide conflicting results. There may be difference in reality and what is found out. It is possible that the respondent may not present the true responses and there may be communication problems. So despite personally interviewing the respondents and taking every possible precaution in conducting the survey, the possibility of an error is not discarded. Some other limitations are as follows:

1. On account of limitation of time and accessibility, the coverage of the survey is limited to 100 respondents. It is small and may not be sufficient to predict the result with 100% accuracy and hence findings cannot be generalized.
2. All variables were incorporated to the best of the knowledge of researcher or investigator yet the chances of some variables not appearing in the study are not ruled out.
3. Possibility of some biased opinion of the respondents in answering the questionnaire could not be ruled out.

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**APPENDIX****QUESTIONNAIRE**

Kindly fill in required information as it would help to fulfil the objectives. All information given by you will be kept confidential and will only be used for academic purpose.

**RESPONDENTS PROFILE**

Name of Respondent

Gender : Male/Female  
 Age Group : 20-25  
 26-30  
 31-35  
 36-40  
 40 and above

Q1 Do you prefer to buy branded clothes?

Yes/No

Q2 Have you ever purchased branded clothes?

Yes/No

Q3 Which of the following brands have you purchased:

Koutons

Charles Outlaw

Cotton County

Madamme

Numero Uno

Spykar

Allen Cooper

Lee solly

Any other, please specify \_\_\_\_\_

Q4 Are branded clothes retail outlets in your vicinity?

Yes/No

Q5 Would you recommend branded clothes to others?

Yes/No

Q6 Who made you aware about branded clothes?

Advertisement on television, newspaper etc.

Friends

Family

Any other, please specify \_\_\_\_\_

Q7 Are branded clothes in rural markets easily available?

Yes/No

Q8 Are you satisfied with the branded clothes retail outlets?

Yes/No

Q9 Rank the following factors which influence you to select branded clothes.

Strongly agree-SA, agree-A, neither agree nor disagree-N, disagree-D, strongly disagree-SD

1. Ambiance of stores affects my purchase decision.	SA	A	N	D	SD
2. Brand image affect my purchase decision.	SA	A	N	D	SD
3. Branded clothes last longer.	SA	A	N	D	SD
4. Branded clothes are value for money.	SA	A	N	D	SD
5. Promotional efforts like discounts, buy one get one free etc. affect my purchase decision.	SA	A	N	D	SD
6. Branded clothes are more expensive.	SA	A	N	D	SD
7. Companies sell defective and inferior stuff in discount and promotional schemes.	SA	A	N	D	SD
8. Branded clothes provide me distinctiveness.	SA	A	N	D	SD
9. Designs and patterns are unique in branded clothes.	SA	A	N	D	SD
10. Brands sometimes compromise on quality for gaining profits.	SA	A	N	D	SD
11. Advertisements influence my purchase decision.	SA	A	N	D	SD
12. Cultural factors influence my purchase decision.	SA	A	N	D	SD

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