ASSESSING ONLINE SHOPPER SATISFACTION IN THE APPAREL SECTOR

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ABSTRACT

The fashion online market in India, currently valued at approximately $8-10 billion, is projected to grow at a rate of 35%, reaching nearly $30 billion within the next five years (Retail.com, 2022). Among various categories in fashion e-commerce, apparel holds the leading position. However, the industry faces significant challenges, such as the inability to physically examine products, concerns over privacy, and payment security, which affect customer retention. Despite these obstacles, the sector continues to expand steadily. This growth has dispelled earlier beliefs that Indian consumers would be hesitant to purchase apparel online, encouraging many traditional retailers to establish their own online platforms. Customer satisfaction plays a crucial role in motivating online sellers. Therefore, this study aims to evaluate the satisfaction levels of customers with online apparel shopping. The findings will assist online apparel retailers in better understanding their customers and addressing areas where satisfaction is lacking.

***Keywords:** Customer Satisfaction, Online Shopping, Apparel, E-Commerce*

INTRODUCTION

The rapid advancement of technology and the widespread availability of the internet have transformed the way consumers shop, particularly in the apparel sector. Online shopping has grown exponentially over the last decade, reshaping traditional retail landscapes and offering consumers unparalleled convenience, variety, and accessibility. The apparel sector, being one of the largest and most dynamic segments of the retail industry, has witnessed significant shifts toward e-commerce platforms. This shift has been accelerated by factors such as increasing smartphone penetration, improved internet connectivity, and changing consumer lifestyles.

Online apparel shopping presents unique opportunities and challenges both for consumers and retailers. From the consumer perspective, the ease of browsing diverse collections, comparing prices, reading reviews, and making purchases from the comfort of their homes has enhanced shopping experiences. However, the absence of physical interaction with the product, issues related to size, fit, quality perception, return policies, and delivery timelines can affect overall satisfaction. Therefore, understanding the determinants of online shopper satisfaction in the apparel sector is critical for retailers to tailor their strategies, enhance customer experiences, and build long-term loyalty.

Consumer satisfaction in online apparel shopping is influenced by multiple factors, including website usability, product variety, pricing, payment options, security concerns, and after-sales services. The role of visual presentation, detailed product descriptions, and virtual fitting rooms has also gained importance in reducing uncertainty associated with purchasing apparel online. Additionally, logistics and supply chain efficiency, timely delivery, and hassle-free return policies contribute significantly to customer satisfaction levels. With increasing competition among online apparel retailers, businesses need to focus on these elements to differentiate themselves and retain customers in a highly volatile market.

Moreover, recent trends such as the rise of social media marketing, influencer endorsements, personalized recommendations, and mobile shopping apps have further shaped consumer expectations. The COVID-19 pandemic has also accelerated the shift toward online shopping, making the understanding of online shopper satisfaction more relevant than ever. Retailers now face the challenge of meeting heightened expectations while addressing concerns related to product authenticity, data privacy, and customer service responsiveness.

Assessing online shopper satisfaction in the apparel sector is not only important for identifying gaps and improving service quality but also for predicting future buying behaviors. High levels of satisfaction are associated with increased repeat purchases, positive word-of-mouth, and brand advocacy, which are crucial for sustaining competitive advantage. Conversely, dissatisfaction can lead to negative reviews, high return rates, and loss of customer trust, adversely impacting business performance.

This study aims to explore the key factors influencing online shopper satisfaction in the apparel sector, analyze consumer perceptions, and provide insights for e-retailers to enhance their value proposition. By understanding customer expectations and satisfaction drivers, apparel retailers can optimize their online platforms, streamline operations, and foster stronger customer relationships in an evolving digital marketplace.

LITERATURE REVIEW

➢ **Garai and Sen (2022)** investigated the online purchasing behavior of consumers in tier III cities of West Bengal. Their findings indicated that demographic variables such as gender, age, education, and occupation influence consumer attitudes towards online shopping, whereas household income did not have any significant effect.

➢ **Daroch et al. (2021)** explored factors that impact consumers' online shopping behaviour and identified six major barriers that discourage online purchases. These included concerns over online banking security, preference for traditional shopping due to convenience, trust issues related to sellers' reputation and service quality, lack of sufficient product information, negative past experiences, and feelings of insecurity.

➢ **Jain and Sharma (2020)** examined nine key factors affecting customer satisfaction in online shopping using 45 survey items. Their results highlighted that security, quality of information, payment methods, customer support, and product quality and variety significantly contribute to customer satisfaction.

➢ **Gomathi (2019)** found that consumer personal characteristics are closely linked to their awareness, attitudes, and satisfaction levels in online shopping. The study also categorized shoppers into three clusters—Great Shoppers, Mediocre Shoppers, and Disgusted Shoppers—and noted a relationship between gender and these shopper groups.

➢ **Rita, Oliveria, and Farisa (2019)** concluded that, except for customer service, the other dimensions of e-service quality positively correlate with overall customer satisfaction and trust. Their study supported the hypothesis that high e-service quality enhances both customer satisfaction and trust in the online shopping context.

➢ **Anand, Ramachandran, Sambasivan, and Batra (2019)** identified hedonic motivation as a key factor driving customer satisfaction, even when mediated by perception and attitude. They also found that although risk negatively affects satisfaction, this effect can be reduced by improving security measures and enhancing the product and seller image. Interestingly, their research did not find a positive relationship between utilitarian motivation and satisfaction.

➢ **Australia Post (2018)** analyzed consumer online shopping trends in Australia and observed a significant increase in online shopping, largely driven by younger consumers and the adoption of new payment options such as "Buy Now, Pay Later." The most frequently purchased product categories included electronics, clothing, and books.

➢ **Mathew (2015)** reported that factors like the availability of rare products, attractive offers, privacy, freedom of choice, wide product variety, and price flexibility contribute to customer delight during online shopping. The study emphasized that high service quality is essential for achieving elevated customer satisfaction, which in turn fosters positive customer behaviours (Brandy & Robertson, 2001).

➢ **Masinova and Svandova (2014)** conducted research with 167 participants and found that elements such as clear product descriptions, efficient claim handling, quality product images, diverse payment options, and fast response times play a crucial role in influencing customer satisfaction, especially when purchasing clothing online.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVE

The present study aims to achieve the following key objectives:

1. To examine the satisfaction levels of consumers purchasing apparels through online platforms.

2. To evaluate the impact of demographic factors on the satisfaction levels of online apparel shoppers.

3. To identify the most preferred websites among customers for purchasing apparels online.

4. To explore the primary sources of information consumers rely on when shopping for apparels online.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

➢ **Sampling Method**: The sample was taken through convenience sampling.

➢ **Sample Size**: 200 respondents were selected from state of Haryana to consist of the sample of the present study.

➢ **Measuring Instrument**: A survey was conducted through structured questionnaire. The questionnaire consists of two sections. First section collected demographic data of respondents and second section used 14 statements related to different criteria that measure satisfaction level of online shoppers of apparels. The

dependent variable for the study is customers' satisfaction level. Different demographic variables i.e. Gender, Age, Education level, Area of Residence, Income level is taken as independent variables. The responses were measured on Likert Scale ranging from highly satisfied to highly dissatisfy. Mean score of satisfaction parameters was calculated to derive dependent variable i.e. Customers' satisfaction level.

➢ **Data Analysis Technique:** Independent sample t-test and One-way ANOVA is used through SPSS to test the significance of difference. Cronbach's alpha test is used to check the reliability and internal consistency of measuring instrument. Mean score and standard deviation were calculated in excel.

➢ **Research hypothesis**: Following hypotheses were developed to achieve our objective.

• $H_{01:}$ There is no relation between Gender and Satisfaction level of customer towards online shopping of apparel.

• $H_{02:}$ There is no relation between Age group and Satisfaction level of customer towards online shopping of apparel.

• $H_{03:}$ There is no relation between Education and Satisfaction level of customer towards online shopping of apparel.

• $H_{04:}$ There is no relation between Income level and Satisfaction level of customer towards online shopping of apparel.

• $H_{05:}$ There is no relation between area of residence and satisfaction level of customer towards online shopping of apparel.

DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

This section provides the Analysis and finding of the study.

Table 1: Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N
0.921	14

To check the reliability of measuring instrument Cronbach alpha test was used. Table 1 shows the value of Cronbach'salpha, which is .921, alpha value higher than 0.7 is considered acceptable. Thus, internal consistency of the items used in instrument is assured.

Table 2: Mean score and standard deviation of Satisfaction level of Online Shoppers of Apparels

Satisfaction Parameters	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. deviation
Are you satisfied with the appearance, quality, style and fit of apparels purchased online?	200	1	5	3.85	.800
Are you satisfied with the apparel price purchased through online stores	200	1	5	3.80	.802
Did you get the same product as displayed in image	200	1	5	3.70	.845
Are you satisfied with display of product image	200	1	5	3.78	.865
Are you satisfied the number of apparel brands available in online stores	200	1	5	3.91	.837
Are you satisfied with the packaging of the product	200	1	5	4.02	.830
Are you satisfied with the delivery time of your order	200	2	5	3.95	.778
Are you satisfied with the total cost for your order	200	1	5	3.91	.778
Are you satisfied with the amount of information available regarding apparels on websites	200	2	5	3.93	.754
Are you satisfied with the promotional deals offered by online sellers for purchasing	200	2	5	3.90	.754

apparels online					
Are you satisfied with the modes of payment available for payment of apparels	200	1	5	4.04	.788
Are you satisfied with security in payment process	200	2	5	3.94	.787
Are you satisfied with product reviews available on websites	200	1	5	3.91	.784
Are you satisfied with the customer services provided by online apparel stores	200	2	5	3.89	.760
Valid N (listwise)	**200**				

Table 2 shows mean score of satisfaction level of online shoppers of apparels. The values of different parameters of satisfaction level are above 3.70 which show higher satisfaction level of consumers towards online shopping of apparels. "Are you satisfied with the modes of payment available for payment of apparels" scored the highest value of 4.04 followed by "Are you satisfied with the packaging of the product", "Are you satisfied with the delivery time of your order" and "Are you satisfied with security in payment process". The results shows that maximum consumers are satisfied with regard to significant aspects like mode of payment, packaging, delivery time, security, availability of information, product review, number of brands, total cost of order, promotional deals, customer services, fit & style, apparel price, and display of product.

Table 3: Descriptive Statistics

Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error of Mean
Male	59	3.86	.676	.08801
Female	141	3.90	.505	.04258

Table 3 shows that female have higher mean score than male therefore it can be stated that female derive more satisfaction from online shopping of apparels. It shows the predisposition that females are more fashion and looks conscious.

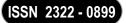**Table 4: T- test results for Gender and Satisfaction Level**

	F	Sig.	t	df	One-Sided P	Two-Sided P	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence interval (lower)	(Upper)
Equal variance assumed	4.74	0.03	-0.53	198	0.295	0.591	-0.046	0.086	-0.218	0.124
Equal variance not assumed			-0.47	86.3	0.317	0.633	-0.046	0.097	-0.241	0.147

Table 4 shows the results of t-test regarding difference of satisfaction level towards online shopping of apparel on the basis of gender. Value of p is greater than 0.05 thus it can be concluded that there is no significant difference between male and female with regard to satisfaction level in case of online shopping of apparels. We accept our H_{01} that there is no relationship between Gender and Satisfaction level of customer towards online shopping of apparels.

Table 5: Descriptive Statistics

Age group	N	Mean	S.D.	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Mini Mum	Maxi mum
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound		
up to 20	65	3.80	.586	.073	3.65	3.94	2	5
21-30	66	3.98	.560	.069	3.84	4.12	3	5
31-40	55	3.88	.494	.067	3.75	4.02	3	5
41-50	10	4.01	.786	.248	3.45	4.57	2	5
51-60	3	3.98	.041	.024	3.87	4.08	4	4

above 60	1	4.07	.	.	.	.	4	4
Total	**200**	**3.90**	**.560**	**.040**	**3.82**	**3.97**	**2**	**5**

Table 5 shows that mean score of respondents above 60 is highest however as there is only one respondent in that category that does not assume much importance. So, if we see carefully, we will find that majority of the respondents belong to the group up to 20, 21-30 and 31-40 age groups. It is due to the fact that younger generation is more technology friendly and adaptive to new trends of shopping. The above table shows the means scores of satisfaction level of different age group customers.

Table 6: ANOVA Results– Age and Satisfaction level

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.(P value)
Between Groups	1.284	5	.257	.815	.540
Within Groups	61.113	194	.315		
Total	**62.397**	**199**			

The study does not find any significant difference among different age group with regard to satisfaction level towards online shopping of apparels. P value is greater than 0.05 therefore we accept the H_{02}. It can be concluded that age has no relation with satisfaction level in case of online shopping of apparels.

Table 7: Descriptive Statistics

Education level	N	Mean	S.D.	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Mini Mum	Maxi mum
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound		
10th	3	3.79	.189	.109	3.32	4.26	4	4
12th	44	3.85	.605	.091	3.67	4.03	2	5
Graduate	53	3.94	.602	.083	3.77	4.11	2	5
Post Graduate	87	3.87	.547	.059	3.75	3.99	2	5
others	13	4.05	.334	.093	3.85	4.25	4	5
Total	**200**	**3.90**	**.560**	**.040**	**3.82**	**3.97**	**2**	**5**

Table 8: ANOVA Results - Education and Satisfaction level

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.(P value)
Between Groups	.599	4	.150	.473	.756
Within Groups	61.798	195	.317		
Total	**62.397**	**199**			

Table 7 shows customers having qualification in "other" category have highest mean score of satisfaction level however Table 8 results shows that there exists no significant difference among different education level and the satisfaction level of customers with regard to online shopping of apparels. It leads to acceptance of H_{03}. However, Satisfaction level is found to be high among all groups irrespective of education level.

Table 9: Descriptive Statistics

Income Distribution	N	Mean	S.D.	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Mini mum	Maxi mum
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound		
Up to Rs. 15000	104	3.87	.573	.056	3.76	3.98	2	5
Rs. 15001-25000	31	3.93	.413	.074	3.77	4.08	3	5
Rs. 25001-50000	18	3.93	.651	.153	3.61	4.26	3	5
Above Rs. 50000	47	3.92	.592	.086	3.75	4.09	2	5
Total	**200**	**3.90**	**.560**	**.040**	**3.82**	**3.97**	**2**	**5**

Table 10: ANOVA Results- Income and Satisfaction level

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.(P value)
Between Groups	.166	3	.055	.175	.913
Within Groups	62.231	196	.318		
Total	**62.397**	**199**			

Table 10 thrives to show the difference between Income level and Satisfaction level of online shoppers of apparels. The result leads to acceptance of H_{04} thereby concluding that there is no significant difference exists between income level and Satisfaction level of online shoppers of apparel.

Table 11: Descriptive Statistics

Area of Residence	N	Mean	S.D.	Std. Error of Mean
Urban	112	3.88	.582	.055
Rural	88	3.91	.533	.057

Table 11 shows that satisfaction level of customers from rural area is higher than the customers in urban area as mean score is higher in case of rural area. However, to test the significance of difference between the two mean t-test is used. Following table shows the result of t-test.

Table 12: t- test result- Area of residence and Satisfaction level

	F	Sig.	t	df	One-Sided P	Two-Sided P	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference
Equal variance assumed	.925	.337	-.387	198	.349	.699	-.031	.080
Equal variance not assumed			-.391	193.4	.348	.696	-.031	.079

Results of t-test shows that p value is greater than 0.05 therefore the mean difference found in rural and urban area is not significant. We can conclude that there is no significant difference in satisfaction level of customers towards online shopping of apparel on the basis of area of residence. It leads to acceptance of H_{05}.

Table 13: Ranking of Source of Information

Source of information	Frequency	Rank
Company website	98	4
Search engines	121	3
Friends and Family	142	1
Product reviews in the print media	85	6
Promotional e-mails	59	9
Online advertisement	87	5
Social media	127	2
Advertisement (print and broadcast)	65	8
Blogs	72	7
others	45	10

Table 13 shows that Friends and Family is most preferred source of information used by online shoppers of apparels. Apparels is a very special category of goods. Customers feel hesitated while buying of apparels as it does not give them opportunity to touch and feel. To avoid the hesitation and risk (risk of bad quality product), many customers prefer to use those websites and brands referred to them by their friends and family. Social media is assuming great importance now days. People are spending most of their time by being members of different groups on social media. It has become a platform where people let out their opinions, feelings, suggestions etc. In our study too social media is ranked on second position. Search engines, Company website and Online advertisements accord their position in top 5 sources used by online shoppers of apparels.

Table 14: Ranking of Favourite Websites

Website Name	Frequency	Rank
Ajio	68	5
Myntra	74	4
Flipkart	119	1
Amazon	117	2
Jabong	7	9
Meesho	79	3
Tata cliq	16	7
Voonik	6	10
Ebay	12	8
Snapdeal	33	6

Table 14 shows the result regarding most preferred website by customers for online shopping of apparels. There is much competition between Flipkart and Amazon for first position as the difference between the frequencies is marginal. As per the data in the table most preferred site by the customers is Flipkart followed by Amazon, Meesho, Myntra and Ajio. The results are consistent with the study carried out by Dr. D. Sudhakar, R. Swarna, Deva Kumari (2016). In the study it was found that majority respondents preferred to buy products through the Flipkart website followed by Amazon. The big sales announced by these platforms time to time could be the influential factor for preference by the respondents.

LIMITATION AND SUGGESTION
The study used a small sample to study the issue in hand. A larger sample would have given better insight into the subject matter. The effect of demographic variables on satisfaction level of online shoppers has been studied; future researches may include other variables such as website layout, payment modes, customer support etc. to the framework and study the relationship with a larger sample to develop a more consistent model for the study. Furthermore, future researches may be conducted with the same variables in different geographical and environmental settings.

CONCLUSION
The present study aimed to assess online shopper satisfaction in the apparel sector with a specific focus on consumers in Haryana. The findings suggest that while online apparel shopping is gaining popularity across the state, consumer satisfaction is influenced by several key factors including product quality, timely delivery, ease of return policies, and the reliability of online platforms.

It was observed that a significant proportion of respondents in urban and semi-urban areas of Haryana have shifted to online shopping due to convenience, availability of multiple choices, and attractive discounts. However, issues such as size mismatches, delayed deliveries, and concerns over fabric quality continue to affect satisfaction levels, especially in rural regions where internet penetration and digital literacy are still evolving.

Furthermore, the research highlights the growing trust among consumers towards reputed e-commerce platforms like Amazon, Flipkart, and Myntra, while skepticism remains toward lesser-known websites. Return policies and customer service play a vital role in influencing repeat purchases.

In conclusion, while online apparel shopping in Haryana shows promising growth and acceptance, customer satisfaction remains a dynamic parameter that demands continuous attention from e-retailers. To enhance shopper satisfaction, companies must invest in improving product descriptions, size accuracy, delivery logistics, and customer support, especially targeting Tier-2 and Tier-3 towns of Haryana.

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