

## A Review on change in Indian Consumer attitude amidst COVID-19 pandemic

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### ABSTRACT

This paper aims to make a comprehensive review of factors affecting a purchaser decision towards apparel and textile products during the times of COVID-19 pandemic era. Research studies concerned with factors having impact on marketing of textile products including apparel and fashion products have been reviewed. Factors such as different cultural, social, personal, psychological and environmental aspects seem to play an important role.

**Keywords:** Consumer purchasing behavior, apparel buying decisions, textile products, COVID-19 pandemic, cultural factors, social factors, personal factors, psychological factors, environmental influences, fashion marketing, consumer decision-making, online shopping behavior.

### INTRODUCTION:

Indian textile industry comprehensively integrates a whole range from raw materials to finished product including fibre manufacturing, which is totally independent, without sourcing external sources.<sup>i</sup> This has led to India's stance as shortly but steadily emerging the most preferred destination for sourcing readymade garments for the international market. Various garment export companies are coming up with clothes of required design; fashion and quality to match the international trend which makes many international brands import readymade garments from Indian market. According to N9 Group, it is seen that buying behaviors towards type of brand by the consumers in Indian market has mainly depended upon their awareness, perceived quality and brand loyalty. The following article tries to provide a sketch of the impact that COVID-19 pandemic has left on the growth of the textile industry of India.

### BACKGROUND

Indian Textiles and Apparels (T&A) industry represents around 4% of the worldwide T&A market. The T&A business is one of the biggest and the main areas for the Indian economy as far as yield, unfamiliar trade profit and work. The business contributes around 7% to mechanical yield in esteem terms, 2% to the GDP and 15% to the nation's fare income.<sup>ii</sup> The fast paced changes in the retail scenario gave the necessary impetus to the branded wear textile sector for a speedy growth. The evolving preference of the consumer whose awareness level of fashion trends, disposable income and consumerism are all high. Textile Industry is also the largest contributors of India's exports having 11.4% share among total export earnings for the fiscal period ended 2018-19 valuing to INR 2,596 billion and growing at a CAGR of 7% since 2004-05.<sup>iii</sup> A significant positive shift is taking place in Indian consumer's buying behavior and expectations that no longer follow traditional retail practices mainly because of change in

lifestyle, entry of leading international brands, greater awareness and exposure to international media and foreign travel. At present, the Indian consumer wants different new merchandise at shorter intervals concentrated by a great shopping ambience, service with speed and above all convenience of shopping. Above all there is an increasing urge to create a positive image of oneself given the overall environment of professionalism and competition. Chetan Bajaj defines consumer behavior as a way to understand how a consumer makes decision to buy a goods by using the available resources such as time, money, and effort for buying, using, and disposing goods and services. Marketers have identified this trait and worked to increase the variety and quality of products offered, along with meaningful lifestyle led advertising. New retail formats prove more consumers friendly by offering a significantly enhanced ambience and overall shopping experience has also contributed greatly. Today the retail structure in India, as it moves from disparate and unorganized sector to a 6 more concentrated system, has many players getting inspired and drawn to the retail market. These tremendous changes increase the competition day by day. In these stimuli, branding and customer's purchase behavior plays a major role in determining the product's ultimate success or failure.<sup>iv</sup> The apparel fashion plays a paramount role in shaping apparel consumerism. As lifestyles change, fashion in India is becoming more diversified, as in the Western countries. Technology, ideas and lifestyles are moving concurrently and quickly. Companies and brands that offered monotonous and mundane products for years, have now multiplied their product ranges and new appealing styles, shapes and forms are being launched each season by them.<sup>v</sup> Visual merchandising (VMD) is an upcoming strategic tool in fashion marketing attracting consumers and communicate brand image. Ha et al. in 2007 were concerned with online visual merchandising VMD who analyzed around 100 websites selling apparel products. Their analysis revealed that

many visual merchandising features and elements employed in offline stores were taken up online with some modifications. Moreover, they offered a frame research (including classification of path-finding factors, environmental factors, product presentation factors, and their sub-categories) could be used in investigating online apparel VMD. They provided a comprehensive list of online VMD elements from apparel web sites favored by College-student consumers which could be used by companies to benchmark their websites.<sup>vi</sup>

The impact of COVID-19 pandemic has been largely disruptive on India's economic activity as well as human lives. Even though the Indian fashion industry employs over 45 million people directly to 60 million people indirectly. As consumers tighten their purse strings and double down on non-essentials, apparel and fashion is one of the first categories to take a hit. Their reasons for not buying apparel regularly includes unprecedented lockdown, distance, high price, giving more importance to essential items for buying and non-availability of range of apparels.

## METHODS

Environmental factors		Buyer's black box		Buyer's response
Marketing Stimuli	Environmental Stimuli	Buyer Characteristics	Decision Process	
<b>Product</b>	Economic	Attitudes	Problem recognition	Product choice
<b>Price</b>	Technological	Motivation	Information search	Brand choice
<b>Place</b>	Political	Perceptions	Alternative evaluation	Dealer choice
<b>Promotion</b>	Cultural	Personality	Purchase decision	Purchase timing
	Demographic	Lifestyle	Post-purchase behaviour	Purchase amount
	Natural	Knowledge		

## OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

**The following are the main objectives of the study:**

- To trace the origin and growth of the Textile and Garments industry in India;
- To examine the socio-economic characteristics of the customers of readymade garments;
- To study the factors influencing the purchase of readymade garments;
- To investigate the factors which determine the preference of customers towards a particular brand and textile shop in the study area;
- To identify the post purchase behavior of customers of readymade garments in the study area and
- To sum up the findings and offer useful suggestions based on major findings.

## DISCUSSION

The widespread impact of the covid-19 which has left no sectors unturned and is expected to decelerate the growth projection of the textile and apparel industry in India, which was once projected to grow at a CAGR of ~12% to reach INR 16,637 billion by 2025-26. Due the outbreak of the pandemic, it is expected that the domestic market is seen shrinking by around 28%-30% to INR 4,163 billion led by the decline in the sales mostly in the first quarter for the current financial year

ending 20-21. The measures taken by the Central Government to combat the impact of the Covid-19 including the INR 3,000 billion collateral free automatic loan for businesses, including the MSME is expected to rejuvenate the critical sectors of the economy and provide the benefit to ~4.5 million small businesses including many small Textile and Apparel units as well. With the extension granted by the Government and RBI, pertaining to 6 months moratorium for interests and for 4 years repayment period including one-year postponement for MSME segments for Covid-19 loans, would provide the much-needed upliftment to the textile industry. Against the backdrop of further impact that the low margin capital-intensive textile industry could face because of the pandemic, the Confederation of Indian Textile Industry (CITI) has approached RBI for one-time loan restructuring, citing a 25-30% drop in the overall demand in FY21. It remains to be seen how RBI would respond to the proposed plea from the CITI for the loan restructuring at a time when the Indian Banking sector is already reeling under the stressed bad loan due to Covid-19 induced stress. According to the experts from industry, the next phase of growth is expected to be contributed by rural markets. Rural India will account for almost half of the domestic retail market, valued over US\$ 300 billion. It is set to witness an economic boom, with per capita income having grown by 50 percent over the last 10 years, on account of rising commodity prices

and improved productivity. According to retail and consumer products division of E&Y India, basic infrastructure, generation of employment guarantee schemes by the government, better information services, improved connectivity and access to funding are also bringing prosperity to rural households. According to Ramesh Srinivas, national industry director (consumer markets), KPMG India, the rural market, product design will need to go beyond ideas like smaller sizes (such as single use small packets) to create genuinely new products.

## CONCLUSION

The government of India has initiated various policies to support textile and apparel sector's growth with long term solution. The allowance of 100% FDI in the sector under the automatic route would attract INR 10,485 billion foreign investments in the coming years. The high investments under Integrated Textile Parks (SITP) and Technology Upgradation Fund Scheme (TUFS) to encourage the flow of more private equity and to train workforce. For further accelerating the growth in the textile industry, the Textile Ministry assigned INR 6,900 Million for the set-up of 21 readymade garment manufacturing units in seven states for the development and modernization of Indian Textile Sector. India has also become the second largest manufacturer of PPE in the world with more than 600 companies in India certified to produce PPE's today whose global market worth is predicted to be over INR 6,927 billion by the end of 2025, as compared to INR 3,971 billion in 2019 which would further enhance the textile products demand in coming years. Being largely a consumer driven industry, textile and apparel sector's growth and performance is majorly dependent on India's growing economy. The growth in the textile and apparel sector is sustained by the strong domestic consumption as well as export demand over the medium term. India has high abundance of raw material, particularly with respect to cotton where it is quite cost competitive, together with healthy infrastructure and skilled labour force as compared to neighboring countries like Bangladesh and Sri Lanka, which is expected to provide support in expanding the country's share in the global textile and apparel market. Though short-term hiccup due to the ongoing Coronavirus pandemic will result into contraction and lower growth and market value for the next couple of quarters as compared to historical average, it is still estimated that India has the potential to reach INR 5,242 billion in exports and achieve much higher share of the global market by 2024.

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