Consumer Attitude and Purchase Decision towards Textiles and Apparel Products

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Abstract: This paper aims to make a comprehensive review of factors affecting purchaser decision towards apparel and textile products. Research studies concerned with factors having impact on marketing of textile products including apparel and fashion products were reviewed. These factors include different cultural, social, personal, psychological and environmental aspects. Features related to market; namely product characteristics, purchase channel, price and promotion were reported.

Keywords: Cultural, Fashion, Market, Meaning, Mass customization, Physical, Purchase channel, Price, Promotion, Personal, Psychological, Social, Visual.

1. INTRODUCTION

Textile market is one of the most important markets in the world. Understanding factors influencing consumer behaviour is one of the techniques used in contemporary marketing of textile products. This technique could be employed to create a textile company strategy attracting and advertising for target consumer.

Consumer orientation marketing is a contemporary marketing technique based on consumer needs and wants. This technique aims at producing items and goods that people willing to buy. In other words, consumer demand is the focus of this marketing technique. One of the approaches applied in this technique is called consumer-driven approach. In which consumer needs are the driving force of all marketing decisions. Consumer needs include the nature, specification and characteristics of the product itself. Manufacturers and sellers of textile products might lose consumers as they are not aware of their needs and not ultimately understanding their wants and preferences. The continued viability of textile industry is based on the ability of manufacturers, advertisers, and retailers to predict, develop, and communicate styles of apparel and other textile products that conform with the desires of the consuming public.

Researchers have been long studying consumer behaviour and response for textile products. It was found important for researchers to carry out a comprehensive review for these research studies in order to identify and determine the key factors affecting consumer behaviour and especially factors affecting purchase decision. This study will focus on target customers' evaluative criteria for various textile and garment items. This would be useful for researchers in the textile and apparel area in order to focus their forthcoming studies and investigations on the factors might affect purchasers' decision and not studied yet. Practically, this will be an informative research for textile, apparel and fashion designers, manufacturers and advertisers in order to put into consideration features could affect their product characteristics. In this research two main areas will be discussed, namely; market and consumer dominated variables.

2. MARKET DOMINATED VARIABLES

In this section variables related to product, place (or purchase channel), promotional merchandise (including branding and advertisement) and price are pointed out. Consumer purchase decision towards fashion apparel products is discussed. One of marketing and manufacturing techniques namely "Mass customization" allowing personalization of apparel products at low cost is reviewed.

2.1. Product

Product specifications have a great impact on marketing textile design products. This includes visual and physical characteristics; meaning carried by textile products and country of origin.

2.1.1. Visual Properties

In textile and apparel design studies, the term "Preference" has been used to express consumer response for textile product design and appearance. Generally,
textile product attributes have been investigated by researchers in terms of subjects’ preference rather than consumer behaviour and purchase decision. Few research studies were found concerned with the relationship between consumer preference and behaviour and purchase decision.

Research studies indicated that colour has a great impact on product marketing. Colour was found influencing consumer behaviour in different fields of design products. This has been studied by researchers in terms of psychophysical reaction between colour and purchaser behaviour. Singh, S. in 2006 reviewed the literature relating to colour psychology in the context of marketing. He suggested that managers can use colours as an effective marketing tool to impact customers’ appetite, mood, and perception of waiting time, among others [1].

Kilinç, N. in 2011 found that clothing colour preference of boys and girls attending public or private schools in Konya, Turkey aged between six and nine is dependent on their age and sex but not on clothing type. The most preferred colours by girls were magenta, red-violet, red, and red-orange; however the boys preferred black, blue, cyan, and yellow. Warm colours (i.e. magenta, yellow, and red) were preferred by young children and colour preferences moved towards colder and neutral colours as children became older [2]. Islam et al. in 2014 ranked factors affecting buying decision for Bangladeshi fashion brands. Product quality (i.e. design, style, raw materials) was ranked the first factor followed by price [3].

2.1.2. Physical Attributes

2.1.2.1. Textile Physical and Mechanical Properties

Physical and mechanical properties of fabric used in making a textile product affecting apparel and clothing product appearance, fit, comfort and performance. Fabric care is highly affected by fabric physical and mechanical properties, which contribute to consumer purchase decision. Yan et al. in 2008 compared the effect of apparel care labels’ information presentation format (i.e. text only, symbols only and combination) on consumers’ confidence in making better decisions in terms of purchase and care of apparel. Participants employed were undergraduate students attending South-eastern University, USA. Text only and combination formats were more preferred than symbols only. These were found increasing consumers’ confidence in taking purchase decision and post-purchase care. However, the first was the most preferred format. This is because the participants had limited knowledge of care labels’ symbols. So, it was found important to promote the understanding of these symbols [4].

2.1.2.2. Clothing Fit

Clothing fit has been long considered as the most important element to costumers in clothing appearance [5]. Early-adolescents of age 13 are persons at the beginning of adolescence and it is an age group that overlaps with the so-called “Tween” consumer market in the USA. Klerk and Tselepis in 2007 suggested that early-adolescent female consumers do not have the expertise, knowledge and cognitive skills enabling them to realistically evaluate fit of clothes during purchase decision. Subjects employed were all 13-year old Caucasian early-adolescents, living in an urban environment, which was considered a very viable market with regard to the purchasing of clothes. They suggested that early-adolescent female consumers’ fit expectations, evaluation and satisfaction are affected not only by functionality (i.e. contribute to comfortability or sensory beauty) but also about emotional pleasure and cognitive meanings. As they like to feel good about themselves and fit in with peer group and the norms set by fashion. Emotional needs are the most important quality dimension impacting consumers’ satisfaction during wearing. These findings would contribute to companies’ better understanding young female consumers with regard to fit recognition and reference [6].

Apparel industry needs to be able to go beyond just body measurements to incorporate fit preferences based on categorical profiles of consumer groups. Pisut and Connell in 2007 investigated fit preferences of female consumers in the USA. It was found that fit preference is dependent on garment style. Moreover, there was a vital need for better understanding of the impact of body shape and cathexis on personal fit preference in order to fit target consumers and improve product sell-through. So, manufacturers should be up to date with target consumer fit preference [7].

2.1.2.3. Clothing Comfort

Comfort has been identified by major fibre marketers as one of the key attributes for consumer’s desirability on apparel products in all markets [5]. Hes, L. in 2008 developed an alternative method for evaluation of fabrics and garments comfort properties. The new instrument used can be used in shops to enable the testing of basic comfort characteristics in front of the costumer. This could be used in advanced marketing based on quantitative garment characteristics [8].
2.1.3. Symbolic Meaning

Textile products are not only recognized by their visual and physical properties but also by their symbolic and affective connotations they represent. Littrell, M. in 1990 indicated the importance of understanding the meaning held by textile crafts for tourists. She developed profiles of international tourists based on the meaning associated with special textile crafts. The most common meanings were: that textile crafts owned enable the tourist to feel unique; the acquiring process presents a different activity from the daily ones done at home, and an experience providing a sample of local life different from that at home. In this study, frequent international travellers, regularly purchasing textile crafts when traveling, and speaking English as their first language were used. So, it was concluded that some tourists seek unusual and authentic shopping experience and others did not need to do culturally authentic shopping they are rather pleased by having unusual trip [9].

In 1997, Park, M. studied the relationship between usage behaviour (use frequency, use variety and use satisfaction) and fashion product type (fashionability and classification). Data were obtained from a survey of college students attending a major university in South Korea. This relationship would be a function of complex interactions of an individual's personal and social characteristics, lifestyle, and product interest, past experience, product-specific variables and situational variables. For fashion products, symbolic meaning was highly important [10]. Solomon and Englis in 1998 indicated in their study in USA that the meaning carried by expressive products including clothing would make them desired or avoided by consumers [11].

2.1.4. Country of Origin

Country of origin COO is the country of manufacture and production. The effect of COO on consumer perception and behaviour has been long studied because it is part of overall product image.

Country of origin and brand were found insignificant factors affecting female Chinese college students buying pyjamas by Rahman et al. in 2008 [48]. In 2010, Ogunnaïke, O. was concerned with the closure of many textile companies in Nigeria due to costumer inclination for buying foreign products rather than local ones. It was implied that consumers perceive foreign-made textile fabrics as being better than locally made fabrics. This was influenced by some perceptual variables (i.e. colour, quality and availability of the textile fabrics) in their buying behaviour. Perception towards locally made products was influenced by marketing variables. So, it was suggested that companies should regularly consider market research to identify the most important psychological factors affecting consumer taste and preference of their products in order to set their market strategies [12].

2.2. Purchase Channel

Sight and touch are essential senses responsible for purchase decision of textile and apparel products. Purchaser always likes to feel the handle of and see closely the purchased textile product. Traditionally, consumers purchase textile and apparel products from a physical actual store. Nowadays, Online or electronic shopping has several advantages for many customers such as convenience and easy comparing different items. However, selling textile products online is a great challenge for textile companies as a purchaser could not feel and touch available products. Researchers have studied purchase decision of textile products online and from actual physical stores.

2.2.1. Physical Actual Store

Research studies were carried out investigating consumer behaviour and purchase decision in actual stores. These studies were concerned with retail outlets showroom, store attributes, senses used in product recognition, window display and landscaping and shopping mall environment for shops placed in shopping centres.

Paulins et al. in 2003 chose adult women over 18 from telephone directory in USA to carry out a survey investigating store features influencing consumer preference to store. They showed that there are several store attributes affecting consumer preference to store, namely, type of clothing desired in stock, outside store appearance, shopping hours and advertising. Besides age and education had an impact on costumer's perception of store attributes. These findings would be an effective guide for merchandisers to set attractive store attributes for targeted costumers [13].

Riddle and Köksal in 2007 pointed out that Turkish purchaser from Izmir city prefer buying children's clothing from independent shops [14]. Nelson-Hodges and Tullar reported that Russian consumers prefer purchasing apparel products from stores rather than street markets as it was believed that the latter has low quality. Consumers in Russia would recognize foreign brand names, however, the use of brand name concept is underdeveloped in Russia. Clothing attributes con-
sidered by consumers were quality, company and brand name, retail channel, and country of origin [15].

Michon et al. in 2008 explored how the shopping mall environment influences the shopping experience and approach behavior of female fashion shoppers including fashion-oriented, middle-of-the-road consumers, and followers. The field of the study was a regional shopping mall located in Northeast Canada and the subjects used were female mall shoppers. Mall atmospherics positively influenced hedonic shopping value and approach behavior among all female shopper fashion clusters. However, it only impacted the shopping goals of the middle-of-the-road fashion. So, this group is highly targeted by mall developers. Mall operators could use these findings to work on attracting shoppers, increase the number of visits; extend shoppers trips and increase the purchase per trip [16].

Clarke et al. in 2012 explored women sensory experiences while shopping in small fashion boutique in the North West of England. They revealed that tangible and intangible (i.e. smell, lighting and presence of owner-manager) features of small fashion boutiques affect buyer experience. The most important sense was the sight followed by sound, smell and touch [17].

Mower et al. in 2012 conducted an online survey using convenience sample of college students from a large American university studying about external variables influencing consumer response to store. They found two external variables i.e. window display and landscaping had positive impact on consumer responses in terms of liking, mood, and patronage intentions however did not have an impact on pleasure or arousal [18].

In 2014, Maheswari et al. studied the consumer preference of the textile retail outlets in Coimbatore city in India. They showed that costumers give more preference to the variety of collections in the showroom rather than being affected by celebrities presenting advertisement on TV and radio. They advised retailers to increase public awareness of their collections. This would be by making innovative and attractive advertisements that may influence customers visiting their showroom. Moreover, hospitality and promotional activities like offers, discounts and compliments to attract consumers would be an effective marketing tool [19].

2.2.2. Online Purchase

Online or electronic shopping is a purchase process conducted via internet using web browser or mobile app. A buyer must have an internet access to shop. Researchers investigated electronic shopping in terms of choosing identical garments while buying online and offline, display of product, available data and information, visual merchandising, website and mobile apps’ ease of use and consumer having internet access.

Data collection is an essential process in studying consumer behaviour towards design products. Therefore, Englis and Solomon in 2000 designed a web-based data collection technique by which consumer could provide rapid and visual response to researched products. This could give researchers and companies a detailed and rapid image of consumer behaviour [20].

Visual merchandising (VMD) is a strategic tool in fashion marketing attracting consumers and communicate brand image. Ha et al. in 2007 were concerned with online visual merchandising VMD. They analysed VMD features of 100 websites selling apparel products. A total of 50 US and 50 Korean web sites were content analysed in terms of environment, manner of presentation, and path finding. 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 favoured by College-student consumers which could be used by companies to benchmark their websites [21].

Saiki in 2008 observed and analysed the display of digital images found on 57 costume and textile collection websites. A guideline for websites of clothing and textile museums was recommended. Proper display of collection artefacts would be achieved using dress forms or mannequins and enlargement features as the close up visuals are important information for the audience [22].

For e-retailers, Yang and Young in 2009 focused on the need of e retailers to effectively interact with consumers in aiding consumers’ purchasing decision using easy-to-use web interfaces. Employing participants took place with e-mail messages being sent to members of the database of the opt-in-e-mail marketing company, United States. They suggested three key customized site features affecting consumer attitude toward internet apparel shopping and could encourage a consumer to purchase. These were interactivity, customized alter-
native information availability and virtual experiences. Interactivity between individual consumer and sales people could enable a customer to choose the most suitable item from a variety of apparel items. This establishes a positive link between them. The availability of customized alternative information would make buyers more confident during the process of decision making. Virtual experiences enable consumers to understand a product before purchasing it [23].

Laohapensang, O. in 2009 evidently showed that the most influential obstacle for Thai consumers to shop online was using the internet rather than customers attitude which affect online shopping elsewhere [24].

McCormick and Livett in 2012 analysed the influence of fashion garments presentation online on consumer behaviour. Consumers recruited to participate in this study were females aged 18-24 of high fashion interest in UK, as the most common set of e-shoppers tend to be young; the 18-24s can in fact be placed as the highest demographic group of internet users at 79 per cent. They focused on two key elements aiding the interaction between the consumer and fashion products. These were functional product viewing and aesthetic fashion information. It was found that allowing the consumer to customize the viewing process would make the shopping easier which increase intention to buy online. They suggested three main factors affecting the viewing process of fashion garments online (i.e. usefulness, ease of use and enjoyment). Providing customers with style advice would be an important enjoying factor for e-shoppers. As apparel could be a social tool in the lives of young people social media could be used as a highly useful marketing design tool for apparel companies as it provokes entertainment. All these aspects would enhance fashion garments’ sales and build brand loyalty [25].

Magrath and McCormick in 2013 investigated marketing and visual design of a fashion retailer’s mobile app in UK. They identified four framework categories of fashion marketing elements, namely, multimedia product viewing, informative content, product promotions and consumer-led interaction. Five design elements were suggested for informing consumers regarding products and services. These were practical product information, practical services information, trend information, style advice and social media content. All these findings indicate that mobile apps would be an essential tool for determining the importance of fashion products assisting retailers to implement, enhance or dismiss the stimuli from their app. This would justify the requirement for immediate analysis of the consumer’s perceptions. Moreover, marketing design elements of mobile fashion retail apps could be able to visually portray their brand, personality and identity [26].

Uzan, M. in 2014 explored whether Swedish consumers choose identical garments online and offline using intrinsic and extrinsic product. Intrinsic product attributes were; print, colour, material, natural fibres and fit. Extrinsic product attributes were: spring/summer, simple, match with specific garment, and wear on specific moment, something to have in wardrobe and the picture with the model. This was found highly dependent on the person and the product [27].

2.3. Price

The economic climate has an important role in consumer behavior towards apparel products. It has been a factor in the success of value brands. Value brands offer a low priced version of current catwalk style. It has been increasingly playing an important role in the fashion market. It is suggested that the current market growth will be continued into the future. Smith, E. in her thesis (2004) used the most frequently tested variables in studies related to consumer purchase behavior towards apparel products to explore American consumer preferences for home textile products, namely, Price, colour, style, brand name/designer, fibre content, availability of packaged sets, fabric type, thread count and retail channel. The most important purchase criteria were price followed by colour and style for bedding; and price and colour for bath products [28].

Nelson-Hodges and Tullar in 2007 explored Russian consumers’ adaptation from a socialist to a capitalist society (post-socialist markets). They showed that Russian consumers consider quality as critical factor when purchasing apparel in terms of social benefits (e.g. look good to others). However, clothing plays an important role in the overall appearance, the emerging Russian market constructing new identities more than other products in their new roles and identities within a transitioning socio-economic context. So, this could be used by marketers in developing promotional strategies [15].

Ross and Harradine in 2010 studied the attitude of young consumers towards supermarket clothing specially jeans using non-wearer trial sample and wearer trial group. Panel of judges consists of twenty four marketing students studying a specific branding and fashion module having a long purchasing life and have
an interest in fashion products. They generally expressed negative perceptions to style, quality and fit. This might be because the recognition of supermarket brand image is based on their core activities such as food. Besides, young consumers have already a well-established perception related to fashion products. However, the wearer trial group tended to be more positive. So, this group could be expected to be a potential consumer in later stages of the family life cycle. Therefore, supermarkets have a challenge in targeting a broad demographic. The study pointed out to the need for enhancing store environment to simulate high street fashion stores to attract this segment of purchasers [29]. Supermarket diversification and consumer resistance in children's apparel purchases against other traditional brands in UK were discussed by Kervenoael et al. in 2011. Purchase decision was found based on functional and intuitive factors and parental boundary setting. Consumers were found positively resist buying from traditional label providers and voluntarily choose supermarket clothing ranges [30].

Chang, L. in 2011 found that price and brand related to purchase intention [31]. Jegethesan et al. in 2012 pointed out to denim jeans price as the most important attribute affect purchase decision of Young Australian consumers' followed by brand, country of origin and then style [32]. Price was found the most important factor when buying children's clothes in Izmir, Turkey [14].

2.4. Promotion

This is one of the marketing elements used to communicate a product to a costumer. This is to raise consumer awareness of the product. Brand awareness is one of the most common uses of promotional items establishing product image for consumer.

2.4.1. Branding

Branding aims at creating significant image and name of product leading to consumers' loyalty. Saunders and Watt in 1979 indicated that increasing number of textile companies producing man-made fibres in UK use branding to make their products more valuable in the market. This approach was not enough but controlling of product end use should be adopted. As there are large number of manmade fibres available in the textile market, consumers would become confused with the significant attributes of each type. Therefore manmade fibre producers should work on advertising their products characteristics rather than brands [33].

Developing a product image is an important marketing tool employed by retailers. Chen-Yu and Kincaid in 2001 reported that there was significant positive relationship (in the alternative evaluation stage) between product image and perceived quality, performance expectation and price participants were willing to pay for a product. However, there was no direct relationship between participant's satisfaction with the product and product image. Subjects were limited to 120 university students, USA. Sweatshirts were used as the sample product category [34].

2.4.2. Advertisement

This is a form of marketing communication employed to promote a product or service. Hsu and Mo in 2009 examined Taiwanese consumers' response to incomplete information in print apparel advertisements in magazines. Consumers were found acting positively for missing information and tend to look for it in other sources. The design of print apparel advertising seems to be more important than detailed information included in advertisements [35]. Chang, L. in 2011 found that most teenagers in Changsha city in China would consider purchasing celebrity-endorsed apparels. Therefore, it is necessary for marketers to put consumer-celebrities relationship into consideration in terms of internal motivation and product attributes [31].

2.5. Fashion Apparel (Slow /Fast/ Luxury)

Fashion apparel is the unique popular style and trend in which a person dresses. Workers in the fashion industry aim at making profit while satisfying consumer needs and demands. Evans, M. in 1989 studied consumer behaviour towards fashion in UK. She suggested that consumers became more independent and seeking self-expression more than newness [36].

Hlavaty et al. in 1997 classified South Korean female apparel shoppers into four unique fashion opinion leadership groups that could be incorporated into marketing and retail strategies. These groups were tradition-oriented/culture, economic-oriented/price, convenience-oriented/time and appearance/oriented/fashion conscious consumers. The best determinants differentiated between groups in terms of predicting group membership were lifestyle characteristics (including time consciousness, self-confidence, and venturesomeness), store selection attribute (including fashion appeal), clothing purchase decision making (including first impression) and employment status and educational level [37].
Slow and fast fashion industries are two contradictory processes applied in producing fashion products have been studied by researchers. Watson and Yan in 2013 investigated slow and fast fashion consumer decision process stages (i.e. purchase/consumption, post-consumption evaluation, and divestment) in western region of the USA, all participants were females above 18 years of age or older. The purchase/consumption aspects studied were buyers’ remorse avoidance, utilitarianism, hedonism, and style/self-image congruence. Fast fashion consumers avoid remorse purchase inexpensive clothing, but slow fashion consumers focus on the concept of quality over quantity. Achieving hedonism was through shopping experience, stores atmosphere, social experiences, buying in large quantities, and “hunting” for goods for fast fashion buyers, and through a love for couture and art however for slow fashion buyers. For both fast fashion and slow fashion consumers the style of the clothing aligned with their self-image was an essential factor affecting of purchase/ consumption. However, fast and slow fashion consumers were different with regard to utilitarianism, the first maximize their utility by buying a higher quantity of clothing at a lower price, however the latter by buying clothes that is versatile, well fitting, consistent with their wardrobe, high quality, and an investment Retailers would use these findings to better understand the targeted consumer [38].

Fast fashion implies a personal and social experience and meaning management. Gabrielli et al. in 2013 summed up consumers fast fashion experience using keywords employed by participants. The most commonly used positive terms were freedom, fun, saving, speed and personalisation. The most commonly used negative terms were unnecessary, poor quality, short term, anonymous. In this study, 64 respondents from 500 contacted by a market analysis company in northern Italy representing a broad range of variables of the Italian population considered relevant to the behaviour under examination (age, sex, level of education, job) were used [39].

The market of luxury fashion brands grow rapidly in metropolitan China creating a significant global market. Li et al. in 2013 studied Beijing consumers’ intention to pay extra. It was found that functional values over weighted social and symbolic values to pay more. This finding showed a growing market maturity. Marketers should pay greater attention to enhance the perceived functional and social values of the brands in order to uplift consumer attitude towards the brands which in turn strengthen consumer engagement in purchasing process [40].

Ayman and kaya in 2014 showed that consumer attitude towards branded fashion apparel is affected by gender. 83% of the participants were found significantly buying branded apparel products (60% women/40% men). These results show that females in North Cyprus would like to purchase and wear branded clothing more than men. They indicated that men are highly influenced by social/cultural factors. However females are affected by marketing communication efforts such as television, advertising, magazines, catalogues and celebrities, and by both personal selling and direct marketing [41].

Giovannini et al. in 2015 studied generation Y consumption of luxury fashion in United States. There were found positive relationship between consumers' self-esteem and brand conscious leading to strong motivation towards purchasing strongly connected brands with them. This would build consumer brand loyalty and support purchase intention to luxury fashion products. As they prefer buying brand name supporting their view with their peers. Moreover, they chose brands reflecting their self-image. These findings indicated that it is important to understand generation Y "new comers" to luxury fashion market in the light of their personality and consumption motivations. Luxury fashion brands should build brand consciousness reflecting young generation of consumers [42].

2.6. Mass Customization

Nowadays, consumers are looking for products characteristics beyond these already exist in the market. In textile products area, consumers are interested in personalizing purchased products to satisfy their needs. Mass customization is a marketing and manufacturing technique producing custom-made quantity of an item with low unit cost.

Anderson-Connell et al. in 2002 proposed a consumer- driven model for mass customization in the apparel market. Subjects recruited were women consumers’ sportswear in a college campus located in rural county, Atlanta. The widespread dissatisfaction was with fit and sizing in mass produced apparel and inconsistency of sizing within and between brands, and outlier sizing. So, it was suggested that future work should focus on customer satisfaction with fit and size. One of the barriers found in applying the mass customization was that some customers were not confident
of playing the role of a designer. So, it was suggested to work on offering friendly using software and apps encouraging customers to design their product easily [43].

Bae and May-Plumlee in 2005 indicated that there are changes in textile and apparel industry, including intensive international competition, unpredictable consumer demand, and market trends of variety and short product life cycle. It was suggested to focus increasingly on the consumer to meet these challenges. This would be by building effective textile manufacturing workflow for delivering mass customized product promptly in order to offer consumers convenience and accessibility. Using information technology, networking, and new manufacturing technology was recommended [44].

Na, Y. in 2009 believed that the analysis of customers’ sensibility and preference is important in a market becoming increasingly more customer oriented. They proposed a Fashion Design Recommendation System (FDRAS) as an effective tool for textile and fashion design developing apparel products centred on customers’ sensibility and preference. It is a User-interface tool that can suggest fashion designs according to the user’s preferences. This system would satisfy the consumer’s needs for a computerized design expert system and increase companies’ output efficiency and reduce the developing cost [45].

3. CONSUMER DOMINATED VARIABLES

In this section factors related to consumer are discussed. These factors include consumer involvement, cultural influences, psychological factors, personality, social aspects, environmental considerations and age.

3.1. Consumer Involvement

Consumer involvement is defined as a state of mind identifying the amount of physical and mental effort that a consumer puts into a purchase decision. Seo et al. in 2001 classified male college students in Georgia, USA by involvement level in purchasing casual wear (i.e. amount of time and effort spent by a consumer in clothing selection) into high, medium and low. This can be helpful in setting marketing plan. For high and medium groups, marketers have to work on attracting them by creating and developing new fashionable styles to capture them as they are highly experienced in purchasing. However, sale events (after or before holidays) could be effective for low involvement group [46].

Dewsnap, C. in 2001 explored bra consumer decision process. Focus groups were recruited and conducted in three separate locations within the Midlands and the South-east of England, UK. The sampling criteria were limited to four key variables: age, bust size, socioeconomic group and geographic location. Several factors including functional, physiological, psychological, psychosocial and economic were found affecting highly involved consumer. This would make buying process of bra less pleasurable and risky. Manufacturers and buyers should work on difficulties consumer face in buying bra. This is by achieving size standardization, manufacturing consistency, providing more reliable in store measurements and advice, offer highly trained bra fitters and sales specialists. This would facilitate buying process and make it more pleasurable making consumer shop more frequently. This could significantly aid market growth. The study showed the difference between "every day" and "special occasions" bra. The first is more dependent on function and utility and related to actual self-concept however the latter is more related to fantasy and pleasure so it is highly correlated with ideal self-concept [47].

Rahman et al. in 2008 reported that Chinese female college consumers of pyjamas as a low-involvement product were concerned with functional values rather than symbolic values. Comfort, fabric and quality were significant determinants in the purchase decision process rather than brand and country of origin [48]. Risius et al. in 2012 studied the influential factors of bra purchasing in older UK-based women. Several factors were found impacting their choice of bra including aesthetics (shape, attractiveness of bra, figure, appearance in clothes, lace and colour), comfort (shoulder straps, underwire, fabric, bra fit, generic, comfort), practicalities (importance of good quality, availability and buying, affordability choice of purchasing, options range and choice of bras), and support (to provide uplift, general support, to overcome breast sag). From the focus groups and interviews with participants, it was found that there are some differences between their choices in younger age and their choices in older ages [49].

3.2. Cultural Influences

Consumers’ culture including their beliefs, customs, arts establishing their way of thinking and behaving would affect their purchase decision and behaviour towards textile and apparel products.
Consumer lifestyle was found affecting the symbolic meaning associated with textile and apparel products. Researchers suggested that they are mostly purchased for their meaning rather than their function. Tastemakers in the apparel textile pipeline such as magazine editors and retail buyers play an important role in forming consumer desire for purchase [11]. Chang, L. in 2011 found no relationship between socio-cultural factors and teenagers’ purchase intention towards celebrity-endorsed apparels in Changsha city, China [31].

3.3. Psychological Fields

Psychological factors refer to cognitive characteristics affecting consumer attitude and behaviour. These factors could influence consumer’s way of thinking which could in turn affect his decisions.

Radeloff, D. in 1991 investigated the relationship between the psychological type of clothing, textiles, and design students and their seasonal colour preferences for apparel. All subjects had completed a basic textiles class, an introductory apparel construction class, and a home furnishings class. Eight broad psychological categories of Myers-Briggs were used. These were extroverted and introverted thinking, feeling, sensing, and intuitive types. Summer and winter colours were significantly preferred followed by spring and autumn colours were the least preferred. The eight psychological types showed significant differences in seasonal colours preferences except for introverted thinking types. It was suggested that hue seasonal colour categories, value, and chroma can be used to elicit variations in human response to colour [50].

Yoo, S. in 2003 studied U.S. working females’ preferences of business jacket design (i.e. jacket length, Pattern, Silhouette, Neckline Drop, Collar Style). In this study, visual stimuli was mailed to 1,500 randomly drawn working females across the U.S. Clothing design elements and their interrelationships, personal characteristics (i.e., age and ethnicity), psycho-social motivation (i.e., ability to modify self-presentation and self-monitoring), and physical profile (i.e., figure type) affected consumers’ evaluation and preference of design [51].

Knight and Kim in 2007 investigated generation Y Japanese consumers’ need for uniqueness, brand perceptions, and purchase intention of a US apparel brand. They found that consumers' needs for uniqueness and purchase intention were negatively related to the perceived quality, whereas the creative choice and purchase intention were positively related to the emotional value. So, merchandizers and marketers should consider generation Y consumers need for uniqueness rather than product quality [52].

De Klerk and Lubbe in 2008 were concerned with symbolic-instrumental female consumers (i.e. confidence, strong interest in personal appearance, loyalty towards certain brands and enjoying shopping for clothes). They showed that senses, emotions and mind are involved in females evaluation of apparel products quality during the decision making process. Both functional and aesthetical qualities were found responsible for consumer evaluation of apparel products quality [53].

Hume and Mills in 2013 confirmed the relationship between self-image and intimate fashion products of female consumers. 119 female consumers aged between 18 and 60 were used as the archetypes of female consumers. They showed a strong relationship between inconspicuous products consumed privately to self-esteem and perceived sexy self. This study revealed that consumers purchase luxury intimate fashion products in order to enhance self-perceptions of uniqueness and self-image [54].

3.4. Personality

Consumer research studies showed that personal characteristics i.e. individual behaviour patterns, cognitive and emotion drive status consumption. However, it is hard to measure and use personality concepts in these studies.

Mulyanegara and Tsarenko in 2009 examined the effect of consumers’ personality and values on brand preferences. Subjects in this study were local and international, female and male undergraduate students enrolled in the Business School at one of the leading universities in Australia. It was suggested that values had stronger impact on brand preference than personality. However, the relationship between personality and values could be employed by fashion managers in designing promotional strategies for the target segment [55].

Goldsmith et al. in 2012 examined three relatively high-level personality variables (namely materialism, brand engagement in self-concept BESC, and status consumption). They conducted online survey employing undergraduate marketing students at two US universities, one in the southeast and one in the Midwest. They found these variables important motivators producing an enduring interest in purchasing clothing
products and loyalty to clothing brands. Materialism and status consumption have positive relationships with clothing involvement, and BESC are positively related to brand loyalty for clothing. They concluded that consumers involved with fashion clothing would suspect sales approaches that bundle clothing into collections or outfits. Ads must show ultimate luxury. Brand managers should emphasize status and brand through these outlets [56].

3.5. Social Aspects

The social aspects, namely, facts and experiences affecting our attitudes, opinions, interests and lifestyle would impact our purchase decision and consumption behaviour. Dickson and Littrell in 1996 studied factors affecting socially responsible consumer behaviour to purchase apparel products from Alternative trade organizations (ATO). Data were collected with a nationwide mail survey (n =344) randomly drawn from the stratified mailing list of a North American ATO. Both attitudes towards the behaviour of purchasing apparel from the ATO and the apparel itself were found good predictors of purchase behaviour. However the first had higher effect than the latter [57].

Dickson, M. in 1997 discussed US consumers' knowledge of and concern with apparel sweatshops. There were found slightly higher level of concern for US workers versus foreign workers. Nevertheless, US consumers showed interest of supporting apparel industry problems including sweatshop by using labels to guide purchaser to boycott stores selling products made in sweatshops. It was shown that consumer activists are aware of products providing social values but this is unclear for non-activist apparel consumers. Research studies revealed that apparel consumers when taking purchase decision prioritize evaluative and aesthetic criteria to social ones even when buying from alternative trading organization. This study provided an understanding of consumer attitude to this issue rather than being predictive to the impact of this attitude in decision making [58].

Littrell et al. in 1999 studied marketing of ethnic apparel. Participants were females on the mailing list of an ethnic apparel catalogue "Marketplace Handwork of India". Data were collected via a nationwide survey mailed to 477 consumers. Respondents were randomly selected from a stratified mailing list of 90,000 individuals receiving the MHI catalogue. Two clusters emerged in their study namely 'Creative, Culturally Focused, Hedonic Consumer' and 'Classic, Pancultural Consumer'. However, wearing ethnic apparel holds different meaning for each cluster; consumers in both clusters had common characteristics to the emerging population group of 'Cultural Creatives'. The emerging of this group suggests a large potential market interested in ethnic apparel could be a potential successful market [59].

Research studies showed the importance of informative and normative factors for adult consumers of apparel products. Pre-adolescent (8 – 12 years old) consumer behaviour were investigated by Anderson and Meyer in 2000. The sample was obtained using a mall-intercept method at a mall in the Pacific Northwest of the USA. Their study revealed that children in this age were influenced by normative conformity as they were concerned with others liking their purchased clothes and often purchased clothing to look similar to friends and peers. Moreover, they like to conform to both social and organised groups. For informative factors, both male and female children were affected by music, television and movie stars, the first were influenced by athletes and the latter were more affected by clothing adverts. This study indicated the importance of social factors for pre-adolescence. This would help manufacturers and sellers to better understand this category of consumer [60].

Mumel and Prodnik in 2005 tested the statement "All older people are the same" in the apparel business. Professional (employee or retired) and social (active or inactive) impact on apparel shopping were investigated for Slovene citizens, aged from 45 to 85 years. This study revealed that generally older consumers prefer buying comfortable clothes from small shops, need sales people advice, looking for cheap apparel, are not loyal to brands and not affected by fashion. They concluded that the tested statement is untrue and there are significant differences between the four segments in all study aspects except "willingness to shop apparel". Differences were more related to employment status than social activity. The differences become significantly clearer as the age of the consumer and their shopping enjoyment decline. Celebrities, friends and fashion magazines have minimal impact on socially inactive retirees in getting clothing ideas. In retired segment, it is important for marketers to focus on the socially active subgroup as they showed higher attitudinal brand loyalty, less price sensitivity, purchase apparel more frequently and spend more on clothing [61].

Gerasimos et al. in 2006 analysed young Greece consumer behaviour towards textile products. There
were found two categories of young consumers. These were the traditional consumers who buy textile products to cover their needs and others come from a safety socio-economic environment that entertain the buying process and could afford buying expensive brand-name products for reasons such as prestige and social projection. This category of consumers is a result of a particular social growth. Companies must consider each category in their marketing plan [62].

Gupta and Hodges in 2012 suggested that Indian consumers would be able to purchase products made by corporate social responsibility companies but they should be informed of its importance. They reported that retailers and marketers before connecting Indian consumers via corporate social responsibility must first gain consumer trust employing product's price and quality [63].

Ethical fashion is defined as fashion clothing that is produced under fair trade principles in sweatshop-free labor conditions, with efforts made to reduce the environmental harmfulness of the process [64]. Jegethesan in 2012 pointed out that ethical attributes were not important factors for young Australian consumers when purchasing denim jeans [32].

Shen et al. in 2012 revealed that few participants in their study in Hong Kong were aware of fashion brands selling socially or environmentally responsible apparel. However, respondents expressed their willingness to support ethical fashion business. They indicated that ethical fashion apparel has not been well promoted. Awareness level of this issue could be raised using consumer education. They suggested that consumer concern, knowledge and beliefs influence consumers support for ethical fashion purchase behaviour. This shows that retailers need to work on promoting sustainable and ethical fashion products [65]. Phau et al. in 2015 found that Australian consumers' are aware of negative impacts of sweatshops. They tend not to buy luxury products made in sweat shops and pay more for luxury fashion apparel not made in sweatshops [66].

3.6. Environment

Environmental marketing or green marketing is concerned with marketing of products preferred for environmental reasons. Hustvedt and Dickson in 2009 reported that American consumers' interest in purchasing organic cotton apparel was based on the benefits of organic agriculture to the environment rather than it is a fashion trend [67].

Gam, H. in 2011 investigated the importance of three determinants (i.e. fashion orientation; shopping orientation; and environmental concern and eco-friendly behaviour) affecting the purchase decision of eco-friendly clothing EFC of young female consumers in the Midwestern USA. Fashion leaders did not show their intention to purchase EFC because available EFC was not innovatively fashionable. Consumers were found having joy and fun in buying EFC, however high price of these products impeded buying decision. There was positive relationship between consumers' eco-friendly behaviour and environmental consumption. This study found that consumers have limited experience with purchasing EFC because of its low availability. Development of educational materials would positively enhance consumers' awareness of EFC [68].

3.7. Age

A study conducted in 2007 in Izmir, Turky, found parents were the decision takers for choosing children clothes. However, children start choosing their clothes from six years old [14]. Grant and Stephen in 2005 explored the key factors affecting buying behaviour of “tweenage” girls (12-13 year old) attending state and private schools in UK. They were found highly affected by brand name as they tended to pay more for “cool” branded products approved by their peers and parents. Moreover, they inclined to buy clothes reflecting their personality and self-image. It was concluded that marketers should target this segment of consumers by providing a range of branded “cool” fashionable apparel with good quality [69].

Leung and Taylor in 2002 studied fashion buying criteria of x generation consumers in Hong Kong. The participants considered fitting, personal preferences and design to be the three most important factors when buying fashionable clothing. This study suggests that targeting generation x could be employing five factors including store layout, good service, fashion and general magazines for fashion information, exciting ads and high quality. For product qualities, they need fashion product reflecting their personalities through unique design, which was the third most important factor. The brand name was the least important factor [70].

4. CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

This study reviewed research studies concerned with consumer behaviour towards textile and apparel products. However, it is believed that textile products' visual and physical characteristics has a great impact
on consumer buying decision, limited studies were found investigating the relation between textile product attributes and consumer purchase decision. Most of these studies were concerned with preference of product attributes. Therefore, it is proposed to extend consumer behaviour studies in textile and apparel area with special concern of fit, comfort and performance. The importance of the meaning held by textile and apparel products was pointed out researchers in USA and South Korea. Moreover, the country of origin is reported as an important part of textile product that could motivate or discourage consumer to buy a product.

Purchase channel has been an important concern for researchers as it constitutes the environment of buying process. This environment affects the consumer purchase decision. In USA, factors affecting buyers behaviour form actual store were: type of clothing desired, outside appearance of the shop (such as window display and landscaping), shopping hours and advertisements. In Canada, females and especially middle of the road consumers were reported like buying from shopping malls. Independent shops were preferred by consumers in Izmir city, Turkey. However, Russian consumers (after communism) prefer buying textile products from apparel shops rather than street markets seeking products of good quality. A study carried out in India found that variety of collection available in showroom is essential for buyers and innovative and attractive ads and hospitality and promotional activities could attract purchasers to actual stores. In England, sight was the most important sense used in recognising actual stores followed by hearing and then smell. Touch was the least important sense in buying apparel products from store.

However, in some countries consumers don’t have access to internet impeding online shopping. Electronic shopping has been an effective alternative purchase channel for textiles and apparel products in other countries. Researchers have been concerned with developing data collection techniques to get detailed information related to apparel products. Visual merchandising of textiles and apparel products has been the concern of marketing researchers. It was found that many visual merchandising features and elements employed in offline stores were taken up online with some modifications.

Proper display of collection artefacts including 3D presentation, enabling enlargement features, customize the viewing process was suggested to increase intention to buy online. Interactivity, customized alternative information availability and virtual experiences were three key customized electronic site features proposed by researchers to affect consumer attitude toward internet apparel shopping and could encourage a consumer to purchase. Mobile apps have been increasingly becoming an important tool used in electronic shopping for determining the importance of fashion products assisting retailers to implement, enhance or dismiss the stimuli from their app. Matching of offline and online consumers' selection for textile and apparel products was found highly dependent on the person and the product.

Price of apparel products is a crucial factor affecting consumer purchase decision. Studies carried out in USA, Australia and Turkey showed that price is the most important factor-affecting consumer purchase decision and overweight other product attributes. Value brands of apparel products have been increasingly playing an important role in textile, apparel and fashion market. Supermarket clothing market could be a thriving market for both young and children consumers in the near future.

Creating significant image and name of textile and products were found leading to consumers' loyalty, however not enough for marketing man-made fibres. Advertising of textile and apparel products could be carried out using various media. Printed advert in magazine is one of the promotional tools. A study conducted in Taiwan found consumers highly influenced by the design of print apparel advertising rather than detailed information included. Using celebrities in advertising of textile, apparel and fashion products is effective for teenagers in China.

Consumer purchase decision towards fashion apparel has been studied. However, fashion is always seeking newness and uniqueness, UK consumer were found more self-expressive than following fashion. Fast and slow fashion consumers seek product conform to their self-image, however there were differences in terms of utilitarianism concept. Mass customization is an alternative marketing technique by which manufacturers and buyers could be able to satisfy customer's needs and wants promptly. Females were found buying fashionable apparel more than men. Consumer involvement level should be considered by manufacturers and sellers as it influences purchase decision making.

For variables related to consumer, there were found impact for consumer lifestyle in recognizing the symbol-
meanings of textile products. Consumer was found with a good intention of buying textile and apparel products made in sweatshop-free labor conditions and ecofriendly manufactured products. However, they need to be well guided for these products.

The current study is considered stimulating for future research directions to academia and practitioners. It was found that designers, manufacturers, and sellers of textiles and apparel products should be up to date with market and consumer.

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