

# Fashion clothing interest and purchase intention of young women consumers of India

## Interesse em roupas de moda e intenção de compra de jovens consumidoras da Índia

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### ABSTRACT

The study of consumer purchase behavior is important to understand the consumer purchase pattern, quantity and motivations of purchase. This research therefore tries to understand the role of socio-psychological factors and gender schema in determining the fashion clothing interest, and purchase motivation of emerging adult women consumers of India. Responses tabulated through a self-administered questionnaire from 200 women consumers aged 18-24 across India, was analyzed using **structural equation modeling and Hayes's (2017) process macro to establish clothing uniqueness, self-concept, brand image, word of mouth and perceived quality as antecedents of women's fashion clothing interest** resulting in positive purchase motivation with price consciousness acting as a moderator between both. The resulting model depicts a significant positive relationship between clothing uniqueness, self-concept and brand image on emerging women consumers clothing interest, while the interaction of word of mouth and perceived quality was not significant on clothing interest. **Hayes's analysis depicted a significant moderating role played** by price consciousness on young women clothing interest and purchase intention with price consciousness dampening consumers purchase intention despite having a clothing interest. The output of the study highlights the predictor of clothing interest for young women consumers in an area not well defined till now an will enable brands to establish business strategies to gain patronage and brand loyalty of young emerging generation Z consumers in emerging economies accordingly.

Keywords: Consumer behavior. Gender. Price consciousness. Fashion clothing. Generation Z.

### RESUMO

O estudo do comportamento de compra do consumidor é importante para compreender o padrão, a quantidade e as motivações de compra. Esta pesquisa busca compreender o papel dos fatores sócio-psicológicos e do esquema de gênero na determinação do interesse em roupas de moda e na motivação de compra das consumidoras adultas emergentes da Índia. As respostas tabuladas por meio de um questionário autoaplicável de 200 mulheres consumidoras com idades entre 18 e 24 anos em toda a Índia foram analisadas usando modelagem de equações estruturais e o macro de processo de Hayes (2017) para estabelecer a exclusividade das roupas, o autoconceito, a imagem da marca, o boca a boca e a qualidade percebida. Esses fatores se constituem como antecedentes do interesse por roupas de moda feminina, resultando em motivação de compra positiva, com a consciência de preço atuando

como moderadora entre ambos. O modelo resultante retrata uma relação positiva significativa entre a singularidade do vestuário, o autoconceito e a imagem da marca no interesse emergente por roupas das consumidoras femininas, enquanto a interação do boca a boca e a qualidade percebida não foi significativa no interesse por roupas. A análise de Hayes descreveu um papel moderador significativo desempenhado pela consciência do preço no interesse e na intenção de compra de roupas das mulheres jovens, com a consciência do preço diminuindo a intenção de compra dos consumidores, apesar de terem interesse em roupas. O resultado do estudo destaca o preditor de interesse por roupas para jovens consumidoras em uma área não bem definida até agora e permitirá que as marcas estabeleçam estratégias de negócios para ganhar patrocínio e fidelidade dos jovens consumidores emergentes da geração Z nas economias emergentes.

Palavras-chave: Comportamento do consumidor. Gênero. Consciência de preço. Vestuário da moda. Geração Z.

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## 1 INTRODUCTION

India is the most populated country across the globe, with a population of 1.42 Billion, overtaking China in 2023 (Nations, 2023). With increasing globalization, changing consumer consumption patterns, rising generation Z consumers, and an increasing number of working women in the workforce, India is slated to become one of the largest consumer economies across the globe. With growth slated at 5-7%, **India's consumer class totals 473 million, with the average consumer aged below 30 years totaling 357 million, making India the youngest consumer market across the globe** (Caballero Juan and Marco, 2023). India, due to its changing FDI reform, is a global fashion market home to multiple Indian and international fashion brands sized at US\$59.3 Billion (Amed Imran et al., 2019; Finneman et al., 2020), ranked sixth in the global fashion market projected to be a sizable \$2 trillion industry by the year 2026 (Smith, 2022). Nearly one out of three Indians falls into the growing middle class category, with incomes between US\$ 6000-US\$ 36000 slated to double in the next 25 years (Gupta Surojit, 2022; Gupta Surojit and Sidhartha, 2022). The Indian emerging-adult consumers, popularly known as generation Z, born 1996 - 2010, aged 18-24, propelled by the growing Indian middle class, prefer to spend more than six hours online, spending 55% of their non-grocery budget on fashion purchases (Intelligence Bloomberg, 2022; Tibergien and Dellarocca, 2016). The revenues of the Indian Apparel will amount to US\$96.47 in 2023 growing at an **annual rate of 3.34%. This women's apparel market volume contribution will be US\$43.65 Bln in 2023** (Statista, 2022a).

Fashion apparel forms a big part of young consumer's self-esteem, self-concept and social status (Rajput et al., 2012; Smith Colvin Arved, 2021) which is why fashion brands address the psychological needs of the young consumers through their branding and marketing strategies (Chakraborty and Sadachar, 2021; Liu and Rodriguez, 2021). Apparel is considered a high-engagement category by researchers because it influences the customer's self-concept through the degree of symbolism attached to it, which is why young consumers seek to adopt all the latest fashion and technological trends by financing themselves through side jobs, credit cards, and installment payment offers (S Vidya, 2022; Sawa Abhineet, 2023). Customers with high involvement automatically become strategic customers, as not only are they early fashion adopters, but they eventually become brand ambassadors (Michaela and Orna, 2015; Sproles, 1979). Gender schema plays an important part in fashion consciousness (Gould and Stern, 1989), with knowledge and identification with a gender profoundly affecting behaviors, peer relationships and attitudes (Martin and Dinella, 2001; Martinez et al., 2020; Talaat, 2022; Zosuls et al., 2008). When assessing differences within sex, differences such as public self-consciousness for females as opposed to private gender consciousness for males become a new marketing variable of interest (Workman, 2010). Thus, high public self-consciousness for females results in high interest in their appearance. Thus, within gender categories, female consumers are more fashion conscious than men, indicating a higher level of involvement as far as fashion apparel is concerned (Kim et al., 2018). The Indian women are increasingly becoming financially independent and conscious about their self-identity, due to which psychological factors play a huge role in determining the fashion involvement of women consumers in India (Handa and Khare, 2013). High fashion-conscious women consumers consider fashion clothing an expression of identity, and show high clothing interest, purchase motivation, becoming brand advocates and spreading positive word of mouth about their chosen brand. (Kaur and Anand, 2018; Kim et al., 2018). Current research, however, is pointing towards clothing interest not always culminating in purchase, with price consciousness moderating purchase motivation for consumers who are price conscious (Cham et al., 2018). Current research on fashion clothing involvement is limited to undertaking fashion consciousness using demographic variables (Büttner and Strehlau, 2022; Hasnah Hassan and Harun, 2016; Nam et al., 2007; **O'Connor, 1997; Viranga Rathnayake, 2011; Weiran, 2021**) ignoring the role of gender schema and socio-psychological needs of the consumer towards fashion adoption. This research therefore develops a model understanding the gender role and sociocultural factors influencing, the fashion clothing interest and subsequent purchase motivation of young generation Z women consumers in India. The research also addresses the role of price consciousness in moderating young women's clothing interest and purchase intention accordingly (Khan and Khan, 2017). The theoretical contribution provided by

this research would provide managerial understanding to fashion brands, enabling them to get better consumer insights and build the same through their business practices.

## 2 GENERATION Z WOMEN CONSUMERS

Researchers have attributed fashion adoption theory as an antecedent to fashion apparel purchase behavior (Sproles, 1979). Fashion Clothing is considered a high involvement product, with consumers' purchases motivated by its symbolic meaning, reinforcement of self-concept, psychological satisfaction, and social affiliations (Hourigan and Bougoure, 2012; Solomon, 1983). The young generation z consumers of India have grown up in an era of urbanization, increased disposable incomes and high digital proliferation, giving them high access to news and information online (Black et al., 2017). This consumer has access to International news, global culture and trends that fuel their interest in fashion clothing and love for western apparel brands, which have been widely present in India since liberalization and changes in retail policies in 2014 (Khare, 2014; Vashishth and Tripathi, 2016). The young consumer's clothing interest is determined by their various aspects of self-concept, such as identity, self-esteem, **value attitude and mood (Kodžoman, 2019; McNeill, 2018). Women as compared to men affiliate more with fashion, depicting high involvement predominantly because women are found to be highly conscious of their physical appearance and self-identity as compared to men (O' Cass, 2004; Tiggemann and Lacey, 2009). Also, as compared to western culture, where the interdependent view of self is emphasized (Markus and Kitayama, 1991), Asian women define their sense of self through relationships with others or social interaction (Handa and Khare, 2013) and their purchase decisions are motivated by social interaction and social self-belief. (Lam and Yee, 2014; Workman and Cho, 2012a). Women also consider themselves fashion-innovative Vis a Vis men which extends into high involvement. This can also be a result of more fashion brands, magazines and media targeting women as fashion consumers as compared to men (Belleau et al., 2008; Goldsmith et al., 1996).**

Research states that women purchase fashion more due to desire than utility as compared to men, with their fashion consciousness influenced by their social interactions and peer reviews (Workman and Studak, 2006). The young fashion conscious women consumers are therefore depicting significant changes in their fashion clothing choices, using them to enhance their self-image and social identity (Dhiman et al., 2018a; Handa and Khare, 2013). Thus, women use fashion clothing as a means of enhancing physical appearance, while for men, the need for social expression is reflected through educational qualification, financial status, and material possessions (Sarkar and Sarkar, 2017, 2022). **Clothing interest for women consumers can therefore be defined as "attitude and beliefs about clothing, the knowledge of and attention paid to their clothing, and the concern and curiosity a person has about his/her clothing and that of others" (Gurel .M Lois, 1974, p. 12). With increasing globalization, Indian women consumers are affiliating more and more with western media, magazines, culture and clothing, with their fashion clothing interests depicting strong affinity towards western fashion brands (Reddy, 2017). Striving for positive social evaluation, Indian women are using fashion clothing as appearance management products (Sarkar and Sarkar, 2022) with clothing uniqueness, self-concept, brand image and word of mouth influencing their clothing interest and expression of appearance to society.**

### 2.1 Clothing Uniqueness influencing Clothing Interest of young women consumers

Previous research suggests that women conform to social acceptance norms more as compared to their male counterparts, who need to be assertive, controlling and depict mastery over others (Doherty and Eagly, 1989; Eagly and Chryala, 1986). While the Indian women are required to dress as **per traditional and social values, there has been a major change in the postmodern Indian women's clothing orientation in the last few decades as they have become financially and psychologically independent. The term "postmodern" fashion consumption refers to an innovative "style of aesthetic expression" in contrast to "traditional modes of clothing" (Morgado, 1996, p. 41). Hence, postmodern women consumers are experimental and seek self-differentiating clothing, which is a form of symbolic**

self-expression breaking away from the traditional dressing format (Guy et al., 2001; Mehta and Dixit, 2016). Young consumers, especially women, seek to differentiate themselves from their peers and augur their personal identities by engaging in counter conformity through their fashion clothing and consumption (Armstrong et al., 2015; Hasnah Hassan and Harun, 2016), enabling them to make a strong statement on the role of uniqueness in clothing interest as follows: H1 Clothing uniqueness influences the clothing interests of generation Z women consumers positively

## 2.2 Self -Concept influencing Clothing Interest of young women consumers

Young adults perceptions of themselves are a huge determinant of their clothing consumption (Grace and Seemiller, 2019). Self-concept is a determinant of a consumer's self-presentation and the specific aspects of their personality that they wish to control and portray (McNeill, 2018). Fashion clothing for women holds great materialistic significance as it enables them to project their idealistic **elves, or "possession of identity-relevant characteristics" (Leary and Kowalski, 1990, p. 37), socially. Women's self-concept and their need for uniqueness align with each other. Thus, the notion of "self" or** the need to be different through clothing is an active need of women consumers, especially when they feel that they are too similar to others and need to take action to regain their individuality. Thus, individuals with high self-concept do not seek to be dissimilar to others as compared to women with low self-concept who seek uniqueness to express themselves in order to achieve positive evaluations from peers and society (Kumar et al., 2009; Workman and Cho, 2012b). Fashion clothing therefore acts as a symbolic tool for women consumers to express their self-identity through consumption and gain precedence in social and peer settings (Gil et al., 2012; Hwang and Kandampully, 2012). According to the planned behavior theory approach, clothing for the young woman consumer is therefore a socially acceptable way of expressing identity through both differentiation and acceptance at a social level, which is why the following hypothesis is proposed (Handa and Khare, 2013; Khare et al., 2012). H2 Self-concept influences the clothing interest of generation Z women consumers positively.

## 2.3 Brand Image influencing clothing interest of young women consumers

Brand image is a consumer's belief, ideas, and impressions of a person as a brand (Aaker, 1991; Kotler and Keller, 2013). Brand image consists of brand associations stored in customer memory, enabling consumers to differentiate their brand from others (Anggraeni and Rachmanita, 2015). Consumers create brand image using cognitive, sensory, and affective associations, as brands have a symbolic and emotional connect with consumers (Cho et al., 2015). The uniqueness of brand image enables brand recognition, recall, reduction of purchase risks, positive evaluation of quality, and increased purchase motivation and brand satisfaction in return (Khan et al., 2014). The brand image of a fashion brand is especially important to female consumers, who use its rich symbolic meaning to convey self-identity (Cho and Fiore, 2015). Women consumers therefore engage in fashion brands that enable them to create an idealistic image in society (Khare and Rakesh, 2010; Pouromid and Iranzadeh, 2012). The positive brand image of fashion clothing results in brand loyalty, positive word of mouth, positive clothing interest and increased purchase intentions among young women consumers. H3 Brand image influences the clothing interest of generation Z women consumers.

## 2.4 Word of Mouth as a predictor of clothing interest of young women consumers

Word of Mouth is a result of positive brand-consumer interaction, resulting in positive referral of the brand by the consumer to others, influencing other consumers purchase intentions (Ngo et al., 2016; de Oliveira Santini et al., 2018). Evolving technology and young consumers digital affinity lead to high brand awareness among consumers, which they share through word of mouth with their peers and reference groups (Cruz et al., 2017). According to the theory of motivation, high involvement and commitment towards fashion clothing motivate women consumers to talk about it with peers and reference groups (Wolny and Mueller, 2013). Brand personality enables brands to create a personality akin to the consumer's and project a positive brand image in the consumer's mind. The new-age fashion

brands targeting young consumers project a young, vibrant, and outgoing personality, which enables the young women consumers to connect with them emotionally, creating a positive brand image and subsequently resulting in brand love. Consumer brand love results in spreading positive word of mouth about their fashion clothing in a social setting among peers and a reference group (Anggraeni and Rachmanita, 2015; Ismail and Spinelli, n.d.). Word of Mouth plays an important role in young women's purchase decisions, as their self-concept is determined through peer evaluation in a social setting (Wiedmann et al., 2010). The young women's brand love in turn results in spreading positive word of mouth about their fashion clothing in a social setting among peers and **reference groups (Doğrul and Tekeli, 2022; Ismail and Spinelli, n.d.)**. Existing research depicts a strong correlation between young consumers fashion clothing interest and peer group referrals, social media influencers, the media, and the internet, leading us to project the following hypothesis:

H4 Word of Mouth influences the clothing interest of generation Z women consumers positively.

## 2.5 Perceived Quality of Fashion Clothing

Perceived quality enables consumers to judge a brand's strength using extrinsic cues (price, brands, and advertising) along with product-related information and the establishment of a cognitive relationship between the product and consumer through image congruence (Kwak and Kang, 2009). In the context of apparel quality, women have higher expectations from clothing as compared to men, as women are more invested in enhancing their appearance as compared to men (Goworek et al., 2012; **Yip et al., 2011**). **“Objective quality” therefore indicates measurable parameters of quality vs. “Perceived Quality” which is the consumer's subjective judgment of a product, very similar to an attitude (Brucks et al., 2000)**. Assessment of quality by the consumer is done using intrinsic and extrinsic cues. The process of evaluating product characteristics like style, fit, quality, technical details, performance, etc. before consumption using the senses is intrinsic. Extrinsic cues refer to external aspects of the product such as brand name, brand image, advertising, country of origin, price and marketing that create perceptions of the perceived quality of a product in the consumer's mind (Armstrong et al., 2015; Janace, 2015; Salerno-Kochan and Turek, 2021; Zeithaml, 1988). The perceived quality of clothing for women consumers is hence a result of the country of origin, the level of involvement, and the brand equity of the products (Parkvithee and Miranda, 2012). The young women consumers of India consider the perceived quality of branded clothing better than the unbranded ones, as the brand name bestows a sense of trust, enables identification of products, and provides a psychological assurance to the consumers (Rajput et al., 2012). As compared to men, women value the perceived quality of clothing more, especially so in emerging economies like India, where it bestows prestige and symbolic status upon them (Rajput et al., 2012; Sarto Freire Castelo and de Oliveira Cabral, 2018). Hence, the following hypothesis is proposed.

H5 Perceived quality influences the Clothing Interest of generation Z women consumers positively.

## 2.6 Clothing interest and purchase intention

The purpose of this research, therefore, is to understand the determinants of fashion clothing involvement among young female consumers in India. Current research depicts the high involvement of young Indian consumers in branded fashion clothing (Khare and Rakesh, 2010). The revenues of the Indian women's apparel segment will amount to US\$ 43.65 billion in 2023, growing annually by 3.48% (CAGR 2023–2027). **The average volume per person in the women's apparel segment was 7.97 pieces in 2023 and is expected to total 13.15 billion pieces by 2027 (Statista, 2022b)**. Based on current research, young fashion-buying women consumers identify uniqueness, self-concept, brand image, word of mouth (WOM) and perceived quality as antecedents of clothing interest (Talaat, 2022). The identified factors are also very central from an Indian perspective, where the women consumers are newly finding economic and cultural freedom and expressing their identities through clothing (Kumar et al., 2009). The young Indian women consumers are therefore in quest of developing their self-concept and are identifying with brands that would enhance their self-esteem, social status and prestige in a social setting (Handa and Khare, 2013). However, current literature does not give us gender-based insights

on determinants of clothing interest and whether the same result in purchase motivation, resulting in the following hypothesis (Handa and Khare, 2013; Kumar et al., 2009)

H6 Clothing interest influences the purchase motivation of generation Z women consumers positively.

## 2.7 Moderating effect of Price Consciousness between Clothing Interest and Purchase Intention

The Generation Z consumers of India are part of the growing Indian middle class (66 Mln people) with household incomes between \$6700 and \$40,000, supporting their expenditure through second jobs, loans and credits (Keelery Sandhya, 2021; S Vidya, 2022; Upasani Siddharth, 2023). The young generation Z Indian consumers are digitally conscious, hence developing high brand awareness in comparison to other products and brands. They often compare prices of products and discounts for bargains online, sharing this information with peers and friends (Cham et al., 2018; Jayasingh and Eze, 2012; Sasmita and Mohd Suki, 2015). Thus, while fashion sensitivity, shopping frequency, and quality consciousness have been positively related to women shoppers, price consciousness has been found to have a negative effect on their clothing purchase intention (Lang et al., 2013). Female consumers are more influenced by price, bargains and promotional techniques as compared to men when purchasing their apparel (Islam and Chandrasekaran, 2020; Sarto Freire Castelo and de Oliveira Cabral, 2018). Price consciousness emerges as a key decision-maker in young consumers fashion clothing purchase behavior despite a good brand image, style and comfort and acts as a moderator between young women's clothing interest and purchase intention (Dhiman et al., 2018a; Silva et al., 2020).

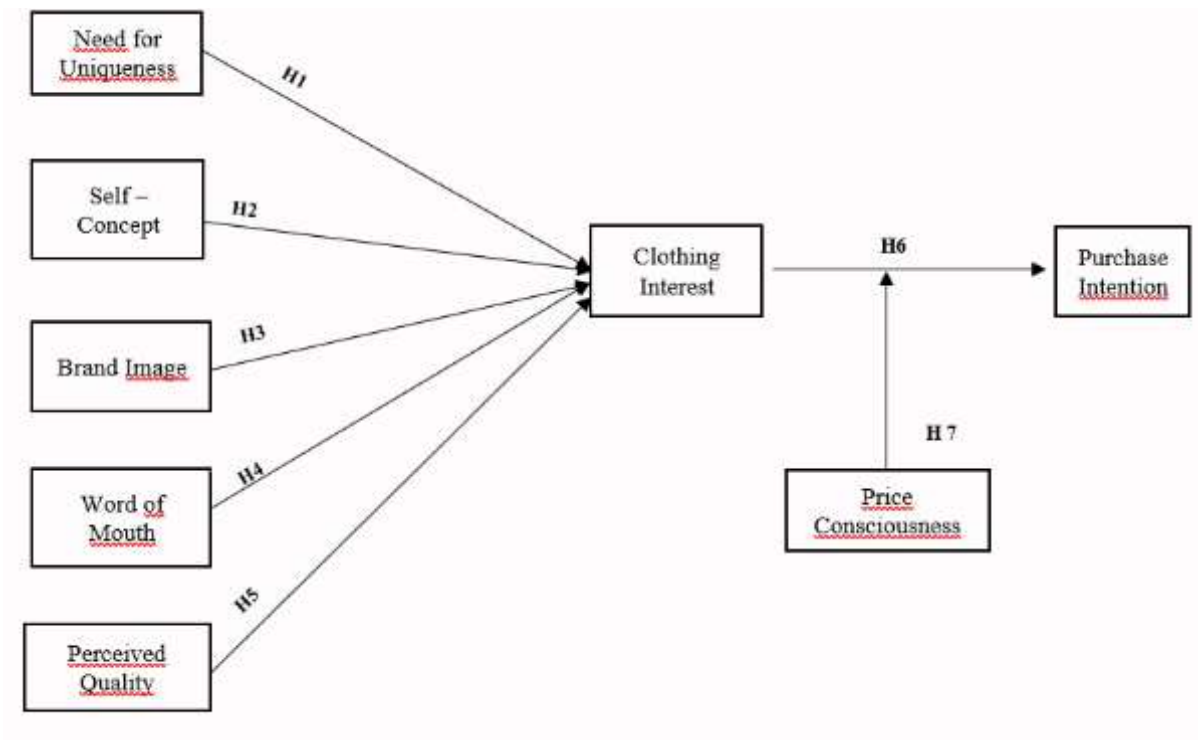
H7 Price consciousness acts as a moderator between the clothing interest and purchase intention young women consumers.

## 3 DATA AND METHODS

Data collected for this research is via a non-probabilistic, convenience-sampling methodology from emerging generation Z women consumers aged 18–24 across India. Women's dates of birth falling between 1996 and 2010 and any fashion clothing purchase made in the last 3 months made them eligible to fill out the questionnaire for this research. A total of 200 completed questionnaires were considered suitable for data analysis, with the sample size meeting the adequacy criterion for structural equation modeling (Hair et al., 2019; Saunders, M.N.K., Lewis, P. & Thornhill, 2012). The questionnaire **determined the women's consumer's antecedents of clothing interest and consumer response collected** through an itemized scale created after an extensive literature review for each factor. Women consumers need for uniqueness was depicted as a uniqueness scale was created using five items from (Tian et al., 2001). Women's self-concept (5 items) has been adopted from (Alfonso et al., 1996), Brand image (3 items) is construed from (Hsieh and Li, 2008), WOM (5 Items) has been taken from (Grace and **O'Cass, 2004**), **perceived quality (5 items) taken from (Dodds et al., 1991) and Clothing Interest (3 items)** has been adopted from (Lumpkin, 2016). Finally Price consciousness (6 items) has been adopted from (Palazón and Delgado, 2009) and purchase intention (3 items) has been quantified (3 items) from (Kumar et al., 2009). The conceptual model of the proposed hypothesis is as following.

Figure 1

*Conceptual model of proposed hypothesis-clothing interest, purchase intention and price consciousness*



#### 4 RESULTS

We first conducted Confirmatory factor analysis on 8 factors and 35 items to establish the reliability of the factors and the convergent and divergent validity of the data. All items loaded suitably, except for three, which had loadings below 0.3, and we discarded them.



Table 1  
*Confirmatory Factor analysis and individual Factor loadings*

Construct	Items	Factor loadings	CR
Need for Uniqueness	UQ1 Fashion Clothing differentiates me from peers	0.67	0.74
	UQ2 Fashion clothing imparts uniqueness through differentiating my clothing style from others	0.72	
	UQ3 I do not wish to purchase fashion clothing already purchased by people around me	0.70	
Self Concept	SC1 I perceive my life condition as ideal	0.73	0.84
	SC2 I perceive my life condition as excellent	0.76	
	SC3 I am highly satisfied with my life	0.81	
	SC4 I feel I have all the important things in life already	0.70	
	SC5 I would not want to change anything if I live my life over	0.60	
Brand Image	BI1 My fashion clothing is functionally beneficial	0.71	0.75
	BI2 My fashion clothing is symbolic	0.70	
	BI3 My fashion clothing provides positive experiences to me	0.72	
Word of Mouth (WOM)	WOM1 My choice of fashion clothing brand is influenced by others opinion	0.72	0.84
	WOM2 I pay close attention to my friends and peers opinion about their choice of clothing brand	0.70	
	WOM3 I strongly rely on my friends and peers opinion to get ideas about my own choice of fashion clothing	0.62	
	WOM4 Others opinions enables me to make a choice about my own fashion clothing	0.75	
	WOM5 Others opinion influences my evaluation of fashion clothing	0.78	
Perceived Quality	PQ1 My fashion clothing brand can be considered good value for money	0.79	0.76
	PQ2 My fashion clothing brand is well priced	0.64	
	PQ3 My fashion clothing brand can be considered a good purchase	0.59	
	PQ4 My fashion clothing amount can be considered acceptable	0.65	
Clothing Interest	CI1 My love for fashion clothing makes me overspend	0.60	0.72
	CI2 I'm willing to spend excessive time, energy and money to purchase the fashion clothing which excites me	0.71	
	CI3 I'm always in synergy with latest fashion trends, styles, new products and fashion clothing styles	0.72	
Purchase Intention	PI1 There is a strong possibility of me purchasing my fashion clothing brand	0.75	0.77
	PI2 I'm extremely likely to purchase my fashion clothing brand	0.72	
	PI3 I have high positive intention of purchasing my fashion clothing brand	0.72	
Price Consciousness	PC1 I am habituated towards comparing several fashion product prices before purchasing one.	0.71	0.83
	PC2 I habitually check the prices of all fashion clothing	0.61	
	PC3 Finding the best price for my fashion clothing brand is important for me	0.68	
	PC4 I purchase my fashion clothing on Sale or discounted price offers	0.71	
	PC5 I put in extra effort to find best price, offers on my Fashion clothing brands	0.70	
	PC6 I am ready to swap my preferred choice of clothing to take advantage of lower price	0.62	

Items with a \* sign were removed due to factor loading less than 0.3. These were - UQ3 I want to act and behave differently and appearing out of place with my clothing does not bother me FL 0.23, UQ5 Clothing regularly purchased by most people around me does not hold much value to me FL 0.22, PQ5 My clothing brand appears to be a bargain FL 0.29

Discriminant validity has been assessed using (Fornell and Larcker, 1981) with satisfactory alpha values (>0.70) as shown in Table 1 and satisfactory Ave values higher (>0.50) (Cheung et al., 2023; Xia and Yang, 2019). Since the Ave values of the constructs are greater than the squared correlations between the constructs of all pairs, we can safely establish the discriminant validity of the constructs. To understand the proposed relationship between the eight predicting factors and clothing interest, and between clothing interest and the purchase intention of young women consumers across Hypotheses H1-H5 we ran structural equation modeling using SPSS AMOS 22. The structural model describes the relationship between the latent variables and explains the amount of unexplained

variance (Figure 2). The resulting data depicted satisfactory fit indices, especially for a small sample size, and a high correlation between factors ( $CMIN/DF < 3$ ,  $\chi^2/df (1046.8/460)$ ,  $RMSEA = 0.07$  and  $is < 0.1$ ,  $CFI = 0.8$ ,  $TLI 0.8$ ,  $PNFI = 0.6 > 0.5$ ) (Cheung et al., 2023; Hair et al., 2019; Hu and Bentler, 1999). Figure 2 gives us the resultant model and result of path analysis for hypotheses H1-H6

Table 2  
 Discriminant Validity of Factors influencing Clothing Interest and Purchase Intention

	No Of Items	Factor Loadings	CR	AVE	MSV	ASV	PC	UQ	SC	BI	WOM	CI	PI	PQ
PC	6	0.61-0.71	0.83	0.50	0.16	0.08	<b>0.67</b>							
UQ	3	0.67-0.70	0.74	0.50	0.52	0.30	0.25	<b>0.71</b>						
SC	5	0.60-0.81	0.84	0.52	0.38	0.20	0.10	0.20	<b>0.71</b>					
BI	3	0.71-0.72	0.75	0.50	0.39	0.30	0.40	0.63	0.62	<b>0.70</b>				
WOM	5	0.62-0.78	0.84	0.51	0.16	0.02	0.40	0.00	0.04	0.21	<b>0.69</b>			
CI	3	0.60-0.72	0.72	0.50	0.52	0.25	0.23	0.70	0.30	0.70	0.02	<b>0.70</b>		
PI	3	0.72-0.75	0.77	0.53	0.39	0.23	0.22	0.60	0.50	0.70	0.12	0.64	<b>0.73</b>	
PQ	4	0.59-0.79	0.76	0.50	0.35	0.20	0.42	0.40	0.45	0.60	0.17	0.40	0.60	<b>0.67</b>

AVE has been marked in bold in the Table diagonally; The numbers below diagonal depict shared variance between constructs; PC= Price Consciousness, UQ=Uniqueness, SC=Self Concept, BI=Brand Image, WOM=Word of mouth, CI=Clothing Interest, PI=Purchase Intention, PQ=Perceived Quality

The resulting model validates H1, H2 and H3 showing a significant relationship between **uniqueness, the consumer's self-concept** and brand image in young women's clothing interests. However, H4 Word of mouth and H5 perceived quality did not yield a significant positive relationship with clothing interest and were rejected. The relationship between H6 Clothing's interest and the **consumer's purchase motivation is also significant. To test the mediation effect of price consciousness** on clothing interest and purchase intention of generation Z women consumers in India, we used (Hayes et al., 2017) **PROCESS macro running Hayes's template on SPSS statistics 22. The resulting model was significant (p<0.05)**. Results show that Price consciousness significantly negatively moderates the relationship between Clothing interest and Purchase intention (coeff= -.118, t=-3.05, LLCI= -.195, ULCI= -.042, (p.002 < 0.05)). The test of highest-order unconditional interaction was also significant (R-square change = 0.249; F = 22.88; p < 0.01). Thus, higher price consciousness results in lower purchase intention, and lower price consciousness results in a higher fashion clothing purchase intention among young women consumers. The result of Johnson–Neyman analysis, graphically tabulated as follows, represents the effect of Clothing interest on Purchase Intention as shown in Figure 3 thereby validating H7 Price consciousness as a moderator between clothing interest and purchase intention among young women consumers.

Figure 2

Structural Equation Model results on Hypothesis 1-6

SE Standardized Estimate,

CR Critical Ratio. \*\*\* $p < 0.001$ , at 99% confidence interval \*\* $p < 0.05$  at 95% confidence interval

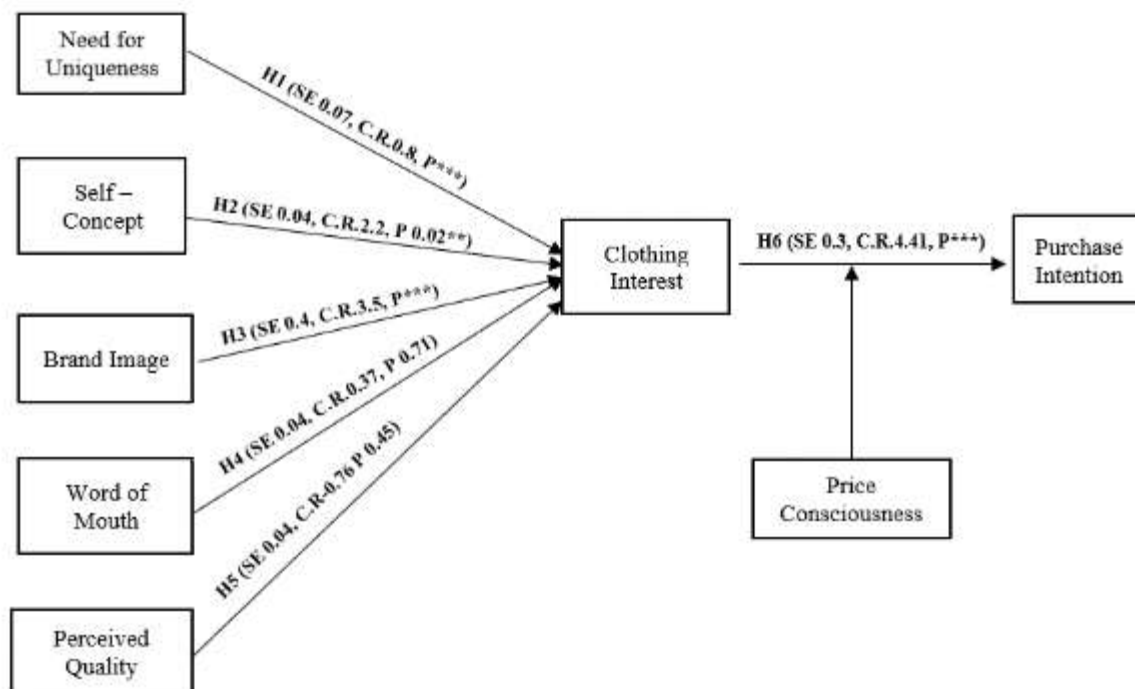
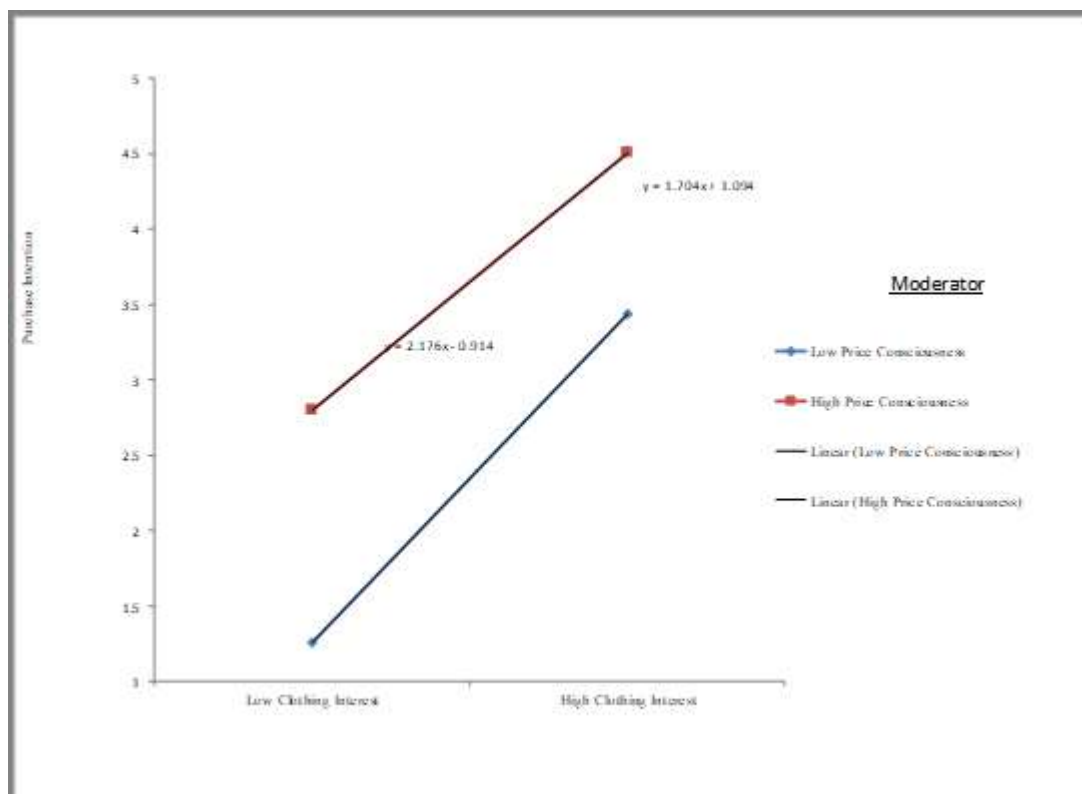


Figure 3

Johnson-Neyman analysis for the moderating effect of Price Consciousness on the effect of Clothing Interest on Purchase Intention



## 5 DISCUSSION

This study throws unique insights into the socio - cultural aspects influencing fashion-clothing interest and purchase motivation of young women consumers in India, especially in an emerging country context where the consumers are responding towards increased globalization of fashion, fortified with increased economic and social freedom (Sharma, 2020). This is increasingly true for young women consumers, who depict high involvement in their clothing as compared to men or older consumers and inherently seek exclusivity, dissimilarity and symbolic benefits from their clothing **(Khare and Rakesh, 2010; Kodžoman, 2019; Rajput et al., 2012)**. Thus, fashion-clothing brands need to create new exclusive styles, designs and limited edition collections to entice the young women consumers seeking uniqueness in a market fraught with several brands and unable to secure brand loyalty from an increasingly fickle consumer (Stachowiak-Krzyżan, 2021). **Building a young, vibrant and global brand image** is also important for brands as consumers seek symbolic benefits from their clothing, in turn influencing their self-esteem, ideal self-concept and social interactions accordingly (Kautish et al., 2021; McNeill et al., 2020). Thus, fashion brands targeting young women consumers need to integrate marketing strategies aligning brand image with the young consumer's idealistic self-concept in order to gain their patronage and result in brand loyalty in return (Khan and Khan, 2017). Both word of mouth and Perceived quality did not influence women's clothing interests positively. This can be due to the fact that, being digitally perceptive, the young consumers are already cued in to brand-related information online, which takes precedence over word of mouth (Dhiman et al., 2018b). Perceived quality did not influence women's clothing interests significantly. This can be due to several reasons. Firstly, the brand image for branded apparel brands is really strong in consumers' minds, resulting in brand love and subsequent clothing interest, preceding perceived quality (Hamzaoui Essoussi and Merunka, 2007). Secondly, women consumers are price conscious and correlate perceived quality with high pricing, lowering their clothing interest and purchase intention (Kumar et al., 2009).

Existing research strongly validates a difference in gender price consciousness, with women being strongly influenced by product pricing, bargains and price related promotions (Bakewell and Mitchell, 2006). Corroborating the same, our research finds a negative moderating effect of price consciousness on women's clothing interest and purchase intention. Hence, high price consciousness **dampens the women's purchase intentions despite** their clothing interest (Rajput et al., 2012). This is especially true for the young consumers, who support their purchases through multiple jobs, loans and credits (Keelery Sandhya, 2021; Sawa Abhineet, 2023). Hence, fashion clothing brands looking to establish themselves in India need to use price as a promotional and marketing technique in order to gain the affinity of young women consumers. An example of this can be found in the international fast fashion brand Zara, which slashed its prices by 10% to secure a position in the young Indian market (PTI, 2020). Club memberships, loyalty bonuses, payment through installments, and member credits are some promotional offers that can increase purchase intention and consumer loyalty.

## 6 CONCLUSION

This research provides a rare insight into the sociopsychological factors contributing to the clothing interest and purchase intention of fashion clothing consumers in an emerging economy context, more so in a business where consumer insights are rare and difficult to interpret. It becomes all the more relevant in the current era of globalization, where the young consumers have proximity to multiple brands but develop loyalty towards none, as brands are still trying to move beyond the demographic factors and understand the psychographic factors influencing young consumers purchase motivation. This research becomes all the more relevant as it addresses gender roles in determining clothing interest and subsequent purchase motivation, which is an area not much explored, especially in a fashion clothing context. Thus, an understanding of gender based factors influencing clothing interest can enable both Indian and International brands to build the same into their business practices to attain purchase motivation and brand loyalty in return. The research is useful

in the context of similar studies across genders, cohorts, different ethical setups and consumers across countries.

## 7 RETAIL IMPLICATIONS AND LIMITATIONS

It is important for marketers to identify the frequent purchase pattern of a product or service. The youth market segment is important in India not only because of its significant size but also because of the purchasing power of the consumers (Roy and Goswami, 2007). The conclusion of the present research will notably assist fashion retailers and marketers of fashion apparel in understanding the importance of sociopsychological factors contributing to clothing interest and purchase intention. It provides valuable insights for marketers to develop gender-wise marketing strategies that result in positive behavioral intentions. Especially for clothing brands, it has emerged that women seek uniqueness, a positive brand image, and an auguring of self-concept from their brands while being strongly influenced by price, promotions and bargains. The marketers should therefore frame their clothing marketing strategies accordingly to increase consumer purchase and consumer loyalty (Kautish and Khare, 2022; Khare and Rakesh, 2010). The generational and gender focus of this study from an emerging marketing perspective provides suggestions for competitive marketing strategies for fashion clothing companies operating in emerging markets like India.

The study is limited in its approach as it deals with a limited cohort/gender, segment and consumers of an emerging. It is also limiting as it deals with the consumer's clothing interests alone. However, the proposed framework of this research provides future direction towards researching behavioral intentions, purchase behavior across different generational cohorts, genders, consumer segments and economies using psychosocial analysis, enabling better segmentation and targeting of markets by getting insights about consumer purchase behavior in not only apparel but other industries too.

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