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Gender Influences in Garment Purchase: An Empirical Analysis

Neena Sondhi
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The ever-evolving fashion industry is a clear reflection of the changing patterns in the social, political, technological and economic environment of a society. The past few decades have seen significant and diverse changes in consumer habits and lifestyles. At long last, garment purchase has come of age, with both male and female consumers becoming increasingly brand and fashion conscious. With the emergence of a contemporary social structure, garment purchase is no longer the forte of women alone. Research, national and international, expounds on the purchase decisions of the New Man who is becoming more fashion conscious and trend savvy when it comes to apparel. This article is an attempt to identify certain gender-based antecedents of garment purchase involvement. An attempt has also been made to identify the key drivers that influence the decision making process for garment purchase, separately for male and female customers. The findings demonstrate a paradigm shift in attitudes and purchase patterns, which can have important implications for the marketer.

Introduction

With revolutionary changes happening in products across various categories and lifestyle trends demonstrating a complete failure of stereotypes, the consumer can no longer be slotted in heterogeneous compartments. Today's consumers defy classification, but universally demonstrate a significant increase in their spending pattern. As they increase

the share of their spending on education, leisure and lifestyle products, there is a proportional decrease in the traditional categories like grocery, clothes, and shoes. Thus, the rules of marketing are changing, and changing fast. Only the discerning and customer-focused businesses will survive this consumer holocaust. One of the industry which would be most impacted by this change is the fashion industry.

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The business of fashion in the 'new economy' is a global industry. The mix of design-artistic and design-technical makes fashion a mystic industry. Although the term fashion has many connotations, the fashion industry tends to be focused on those businesses involved in the design, production and sales of clothing, accessories and footwear. In fact, the most commonly used and universally accepted vehicle for expressing trends is garments.

The International Wool Textile Organization (IWTO), in a global study (Images 2004), has mentioned certain evolving trends in clothes consumption. The consumers are more price-conscious, individualistic and demanding (value, fashion, quality/price). They are pressed for time and becoming increasingly brand disloyal. Increasing importance of casual wear and garment functionality has created a demand of 'design for the masses'. New age groups of 55 and over are expressing their clothing needs and hence, lifestyles will be as diverse as their formative experiences. Developed countries are creating a mixture of races and cultures, which do not want to 'blend into' the existing consumer groups, but rather demand that brands and retailers talk to them in their own words and from their unique perspective. The low level of brand loyalty has led to increased cross shopping where the same consumer shops for various products across a range of price levels in different types of outlets. This phenomenon is leading to the development of a variety of private labels and channels by a single company hoping to attract customers at all price points.

Thus, the garment industry is extremely multifaceted in character. Situations here are paradoxical, as on one hand there is a

proliferation of unique brands and on the other the casual wear segment seems to be operating on a 'mass' approach. The fashion conscious consumer can be seen as transcending the age barrier and, at the same time, contemporary marketing techniques (e-marketing, viral and buzz marketing) are adding new dimensions to the purchase process. In addition, the level of garment involvement, which was once gender dependent, seems to be becoming more uniform and universal.

Research studies in the area of apparels have covered many antecedents and consequents of garment purchase in attempting to identify certain essential dimensions. This article is an attempt at identifying some antecedents and studying their impact on garment involvement and purchase decisions. Primarily, the antecedents can be divided into consumer demographics and psychographics. The authors have singled out an important demographic characteristic that has significant implications for the garment industry, namely, gender. Although confined to a mini-metro, the study has revealed some interesting and thought provoking findings that can have significant implications for the retailer.

Review of Literature

Marketers have long been aware of the fact that consumers vary in the amount of effort they expend in shopping. The relevance for marketers and retailers is that the amount and kind search process exercised by the consumer segment can be a vital clue in devising an appropriate marketing strategy for that segment (Slama and Tashchian 1985). A large

number of personal and situational factors affecting consumer purchase process have been researched to provide differentiating and focused strategies.

One variable extensively studied in this light is the demographic variable, gender.

Gender Influences

This demographic variable is one that retailers consistently use as a means of classifying customer behavior (Marks 2002; Otnes and Mc Grath 2001). Researchers have demonstrated gender differences in terms of shopping preference and behavior for many years and despite the millennium marketer's attempt to downplay gender differences, researches show that men's and women's shopping behavior differs on many levels. Men and women have been found to process information differently (Peter & Olson 1999), relate to and value material possessions differently, purchase different items for different reasons (Dittmar et al. 1995, 1996).

Several studies found women to be more involved in fashion and clothing products than men (Browne and Kaldenberg 1997; Tigert et al. 1976). Beaudry (1999) in his study demonstrated a similar trend in online shopping and found that more women than men shopped on the Internet. Cox (2002) also find that America Online women members are heavy shoppers for women and teens apparel. Chiger (2001) and Flynn et al. (2000) also found evidence that women are more interested in shopping and shop more often for clothing in general than men.

However, changing sex roles have a marked bearing on the new attitude towards fashion. It is suggested that the life style of

the modern woman has made her more interested in her physical appearance and grooming. The modern woman has become more independent and wishes to portray an appearance which is quintessentially her. Moss (1979) described the change in the role of women (at least as perceived by a woman) as less oriented to marriage and motherhood as the major objective, thus creating a more independent and cohesive environment for women.

This change is evident in the male population as well, which is becoming more self-directed. A number of researchers have pointed towards a change in the sex role prescriptions. There seemed to be an emergence of the 'New man' who was more concerned with individualism and self-expression, and more involved in garment purchase for himself rather than relying on women buying them as gifts. Dholakia et al. (1995) also argued that the apparel market had expanded and became a men's market too. Their study revealed that 56 per cent of married males claim responsibility for their clothing purchase. Also, given a choice of in-store, catalogue and online shopping, men found shopping in-store to be more satisfying and rewarding.

Thus, what emerged through researches are two diverse schools of thought: one, that the new age consumer is changing and the shopping behavior of the two gender segments is evolving and might not be so markedly different as to warrant a difference in approach. On the other hand, there are others who state that consumption, especially fashion, seems to be gendercentric. From the early marketing ages to the 'masses' targeted by the advertisers in the current

times, the ideal consumer is still the female (Bocock 1993; Firat & Venkatesh 1993). To sum up this perspective is a quote from a 1929 *Printer's ink* advertisement which declared that 'the proper study of mankind is *man* ... but the proper study of markets is *woman*' (Marchand 1985, p. 66).

The present study was an attempt to test the logic behind these diverse opinions. The process involved in apparel buying behavior was studied from a gender based perspective. Two aspects of purchase used to assess the relative importance of the category amongst the genders were frequency of purchase and basket of purchase, i.e. men's, women's and children's garments and accessories. In this context, the broad hypotheses generated were:

- H₁ Men and women differ in terms of their frequency of clothes purchase.
 H₂ Men and women differ in terms of their basket of purchase.

Product Involvement and Information Processing

Garments, as a product category, are regarded as a complex consumer product (Mitchell 1986). Clothing, or the more generic category of garments, induces a high level of involvement with the purchase behavior (Bloch 1986; Kapferer and Laurent 1985/1986). According to Kapferer & Laurent, the fear of negative consequences and probability of mispurchase was 121 and 112 (average product score = 100). The batch or group value (181) superceded self or pleasure value (147), indicating that the normative influence on garments is more important than self-involvement. Garments and outer accessories, because of their symbolic nature, are a

reflection of the wearer's identity, as a result of which, involvement in apparel is likely to be high for most consumers (Uptal 1998). A number of behavioral researchers prefer to use the term 'fashion involvement' to indicate involvement with garments in general. Rhie (1985) and Fairhurst et al. (1989) found that the individuals who score high in fashion involvement, were more likely to purchase more clothes, than those who scored low. Thus, clothing involvement goes much beyond mere fashion and is essentially multi dimensional.

Broad facets of role identity may serve as antecedents to apparel involvement. Findings of previous research conducted pointed towards the importance of gender in clothing involvement. Also, compared to men, women were more likely to engage in clothing purchase behaviors such as seeking fashion information (Kaiser and Chandler 1984) and purchasing clothing as gifts (Rucker et al. 1986). Zeithaml (1985) found that even for the same products, men and women often shop differently (in terms of the amount of pre-search activity and time spent in stores). Gender socialization may encourage involvement in certain dimensions of apparel involvement or may result in gender and situation interactive effects on involvement (Holloman 1989; Kaiser et al. 1993). Holloman (1989) found that men's involvement with clothing varied with self-esteem. Among women in the study, self-esteem was unrelated to these involvement dimensions. Kaiser et al. (1993) reported that men's accounts of personal meanings of clothing (i.e., reflections of involvement) focused on accomplishments, significant events in which clothing items played a part, and self-expression. Women's accounts about

meanings of clothing were more varied in categories. It has been suggested that as compared to men, women are more likely to conform (Sistruck and Mc David 1971) and are easier to influence (Aronson 1972). As men and women occupy different social roles, the pressures that act on them are also different. (Darley and Smith 1995).

Males and females have been postulated to employ significantly different information processing strategies. Studies have shown that men and women differ in a whole range of areas, from the products they buy to their response to advertising and product positioning (Buttle 1992; Fisher & Arnold 1990). Krugman (1966) found that women elaborated on advertisements more than men, even when the products were meant only for men. Similarly, Meyers-Levy and Sternthal (1991) reported that, in comparison to men, women appeared to have a lower threshold for elaborating on message cues, and thus made greater use of such cues when judging products. In the context of advertising exposure, compared to females, males are posited to elaborate ad claims less extensively (Meyers-Levy and Maheswaran 1991).

Various biological, sociological, and trait based explanations have been put forward for these gender differences (Fisher and Arnold 1994). One partial explanation offered by Moschis (1985) is that females generally receive more purposive consumer training from parents than males. Meyers-Levy's (1994), based upon gender differences in cortical organization, suggest how hemispheric activity may contribute to gender differences. She theorizes that males rely on right hemisphere processing, and thus tend to rely on 'global rules or categorical concepts' when processing information, whereas

females analyze 'the specificities and intricacies represented or implied' in the presence of stimulus information.

With respect to the influence of gender on judgement, Meyers-Levy (1988) determined that in general, males are characterized as being relatively self—focused, whereas females are more sensitive to the needs of both self and others. The selectivity model (Meyers-Levy 1989; Meyers-Levy and Maheswaran 1991; Meyers-Levy and Sternthal 1991) offers a partial explanation for gender differences in processing strategies. Darley and Smith (1995) found support for the selectivity model's predictions for the way females process advertising claims; however, the findings for males were somewhat mixed. Additionally, they found that females were adaptive to the task: as risk increased, females shifted from equally responding to objective ad claims, to favoring objective claims.

Thus, research has indicated that product involvement has a direct bearing on the level of information search that an individual would carry out in the purchase of the product. This has been demonstrated and theorized by various investigators. The level of involvement has been found to be more in the case of women. Another finding of relevance was the fact that, as compared to men, women give more weight to normative or 'badge' value and men give more emphasis to self involvement. Women were also more easily led and more likely to conform.

Thus, it was postulated on the basis of these findings that there would be significant differences amongst the two groups in terms of relative importance of the purchase activity, as measured by the amount of time spent shopping. Since women seemed to be

more normative in their selection of garments, the level of self and involvement of others was also investigated. Another postulate tested was whether women indulge in more information processing as compared to men, i.e., the amount and mode of information collection, the mode of choice selection and quality evaluations. Thus, it was hypothesized that:

- H₃ Men and women differ in terms of the relative importance they give to purchase of clothes.
- H₄ Women are more influenced by others opinion (i.e., sales person's and accompanying person's recommendation) than men.
- H₅ Men and women differ in terms of information processing for garment purchase.

Product Attitude

The nodal point of any kind of purchase behavior is the individual's attitude towards the product category and the brand that he patronizes. These serve four basic functions for the consumer: utilitarian, ego-defensive, value-expressive and knowledge (Katz 1960). Consumers purchase and engage in consumption behavior for these reasons. The concept of attitude influencing behavior is especially satisfying when applied to the apparel market, since garments are worn 'physically' for functional reasons (warmth, protection) and are also for worn emotional enhancement. As Stone (1962) has pointed out 'a person's appearance announces his values, expresses his mood, or proposes his attitude'. These attitudes, however, are not inherent to man and are acquired through

the process of learning and advertising and integrated marketing communication by different firms. Modern marketing has deliberately created an image of the masculine man and the feminine woman, each of whom is supposed to value outward appearance differently. This led to a difference in attitude towards product categories which were external in character-apparels being one of them. The present society is, however, not marked by gender based identity but 'personal identity' (Firat & Venkatesh 1993).

'Thus the post modern consumer does not buy clothes, art, or entertainment in order to express an already existing sense of sense. Rather people create a sense of who they are through what they consume' (Seabrook 1999). Thus, gender identity in this phase becomes a malleable construct and an instrument of self-expression.

These contrary perspectives that attitudes are gender specific on one hand and on the other, post modernity speaks about no essential masculine or feminine, makes it imperative to test the differences in attitude towards clothes. (Initially, the attitude towards garments was assessed through Focus Group Discussions and then incorporated in the questionnaire). The hypothesis that was generated was:

- H₆ Men and women differ in terms of their attitude towards garments.

Product Attributes

Product attribute beliefs refer to a consumer's favorable or unfavorable evaluation of the sum of product features. Previous studies have examined how certain product attributes are used to form beliefs about apparel products (Davis 1987; Mc Lean et al. 1986).

In a summary of 21 studies, Eckman et al. (1990) identified a total of 87 product attributes that have been found to influence consumer evaluation of apparel products. Specific product attributes utilized by consumers may be utilitarian-durability, comfort and quality of workmanship or hedonistic-color, fashion, style.

Some studies looked not just at product attributes utilized in the product selection, but also store characteristics that influence the purchase process. Sinha, Banerjee and Uniyal (2002) found that men gave more weightage to proximity while women tend to trade this off with merchandise offered by the store. Frequency of shopping was also found to be more amongst women. Brunback (2001) and Shin & Dickerson (1999) have both found the use of displays to be beneficial when shopping for apparels. Brumback (2001) did a two year study in US conducted by FCB and Shapiro & Associates and found that men were attracted to stores with open space, logical layouts and well marked sectors as they do not like asking for help during shopping.

The present study selected certain products as well as some store characterized in these studies and tested the relative importance of these variables in garment choice by the Indian consumer.

H₇ The key attributes considered by men and women for garment purchase are different.

Methodology

In order to identify key influencers and variables influencing a garment shopper, an exploratory study was carried out initially.

A series of 12 focus groups, each comprising of 10–12 respondents, were conducted. The respondents were both male and female as it was observed that with changing lifestyles, men were also actively shopping for garments (Coates and Buttle 1981). A summary of the composition, information areas and key findings is presented in Appendix-A. Informal discussions were also carried out with small, medium and organized retailers (Globus) to authenticate the findings of the focus groups. The findings were indicative of emerging trends in garment purchase and were duly incorporated in the survey instrument.

During the course of the exploratory study, it was felt that a store intercept or a telephonic interview would not generate the required information, so home interviews were conducted. Non-probability convenience sampling technique was used to arrive at a total sample of one hundred respondents. The sample is skewed towards the higher socio economic classification (SEC), as it emerged from the retailer and focus group findings that these were the most likely to shop at high end retail and branded outlets. The localities were selected accordingly.

Respondents were administered a structured questionnaire comprising of 30 statements. The first half was related to demographic information. The second part, which was a mix of nominal and itemized rating scales, evaluated the shopper's garment buying process. The third part (Q47) used an interval scale to assess the relative significance of 15 different variables affecting garment purchase (five point scale ranging from 5 = very important to 1 = not very important). The last part was open ended and related to problems encountered in garment purchase.

Findings and Analysis

Sample profile

The sample was evenly divided in terms of males and females. Majority of the men were professionals, while most of the women were housewives. They were generally in the upper income bracket and well educated (Table 1).

Table 1
Sample Profile (All Values in Percentages)

Demographics	Males (41%)	Females (59%)
Age groups		
Below 30	22	12
31–50	61	56
50 & above	17	22
Education		
Graduate	3	15
Post graduate	97	85
Occupation		
Professional	78	18
Self employed	17	20
Housewife		62
Family income (Rs/mth)		
30,000–50,000	75	70
50,000 & above	25	30

Frequency of Purchase

To test the hypotheses that women shop more than men, an independent sample test was conducted to gauge the difference in terms of frequency of shopping (Table 2).

Table 2
Frequency of Shopping-Independent Sample t-test

Group	Mean	St.dev.	t-value	Significance
Male	2.24	.994	-.0500	.960
Female	2.25	1.027		

As can be observed from the data, there was no significant difference between the men and the women in terms of their frequency of shopping for apparel. Both groups showed equal enthusiasm and seemed to go shopping at least once in every three months. This was supported by the FGD results also (Appendix-A), where it was found that the urban male was responding to the changing trends, where it was imperative for the males to be equally concerned about their appearance due to social pressures (someone may point out that your shirt is old/old fashioned). Thus, our H_1 stands negated. This could be explained by the changing attitude of men and women towards fashion. It seems justified in the post modern era that the urban male is becoming more self aware and is taking more interest in his appearance and clothes. As Hodges (1987) and Potter (1987) have pointed out, there is evidence of the emergence of the 'new man' who is becoming more involved with garment purchase. Dholakia et al. (1995) also found that the apparel market has expanded and is no longer a woman dominated market.

Basket of Purchase

The products explored under the garment purchase were split into and categorized as children's, women's and men's wear and accessories including shoes, purses, jewellery, and handkerchiefs. Due to differing social roles fulfilled by men and women, it was felt that there might be a major difference in the purchases made by men and women. A non-parametric chi square test was carried out to validate the authenticity of these assumptions (Table 3).

Table 3
Chi-square of Garment Products
and Accessory Purchase

Variables	Children Wear	Men's Wear	Women's Wear	Matching Accessories
Chi-square value	17.80	3.89	25.06	34.86
Df	1	1	1	2
Asym sig	0.000	0.042	0.000	0.000

As can be seen, there was a significant association between gender and purchase of women's, men's and children's wear. The women themselves purchase 90 per cent of women's wear, 15 per cent is a joint decision and men exclusively purchased only 4 per cent of the time. In the case of children's wear, 65 per cent was purchased by women, 35 per cent was a joint decision and there were no instances of purchases made exclusively by men. In the case of men's wear (sig. = 0.05) 87.8 per cent of the garments were purchased by men and women purchased 42.3 per cent. These findings are in line with Hodges (1987) and Potter (1987), who also found the men becoming more involved in self-purchases rather than solely relying on the women. Dholakia et al. (1995) also found that the new age man was taking a keen interest in his garment purchase.

As far as accessories are concerned, again, the purchase was more amongst women (92 per cent) rather than men (8 per cent) and the association was highly significant as can be observed from the chi square value. Here, the traditional view that women are more concerned about outward appearance and subsequently with fashion, clothes and accessories (Browne and Kaldenberg 1997; Chiger 2001) seems to hold true. The kind of accessories that men and women purchase is also different, as can be observed from Table 4.

Majority of the men (80 per cent) shop for shoes with an occasional purchase of purses, ties and cufflinks (10 per cent). Women purchase shoes (45 per cent), purses (40 per cent) and artificial jewellery (35 per cent). Similar findings were found in the FGD (Appendix I), i.e., the range of family wear that the women were buying was more vast. Amongst women, the unmarried women bought more accessories.

Table 4
Frequency Purchase of Accessories (%)

Group	Shoes	Purses	Artificial Jewellery	Tie/ cufflinks	Handkerchief
Men (Yes = 6)	80	10	0	10	5
Women (Yes = 41)	45	40	35	0	10

Product Involvement and Information Processing

The FGD results demonstrated a more enduring involvement amongst women as compared to men in terms of garment purchase. To further establish the truth of the finding, the level of involvement with the product category was measured in terms of the total time spent on apparel purchase by the two groups (Table 5). The men and women groups demonstrated a distinctly individual pattern of behavior. A most significant difference was observed between the two segments in the total purchase time for clothes, 73.6 per cent of the males spent between half an hour to one and a half hours in making their purchases whereas the women (100 per cent) spent between one and a half hours to more than two hours. This clearly demonstrates the role of gender in clothes purchase involvement. Brown and Kaldenberg (1997) and Tigert et al. (1976) have also found

women to be more involved in buying clothing products than man.

Table 5
Total Time of Purchase (Values in %)

<i>Total Purchase Time</i>	<i>Males</i>	<i>Females</i>
15–30 minutes	0	0
½–1 hr	28.1	0
1–1½ hr	45.5	0
1½–2 hr	15.5	41.2
>2 hr	10.9	58.8

Table 5(a)
One Way Analysis of Variance

	<i>Sum of Squares</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>Mean Squares</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
Between Groups	8.277	1	8.277	8.408	.005
Within Groups	96.473	98	.984		
Total	104.750	99			

An attempt was made to understand the decision making process for buying garments by men and women. It was assumed that, based on the presumptions of the selectivity model (Meyers-Levy 1989; Meyers-Levy and Maheswaran 1991; Meyers-Levy and Sternthal 1991), there might be a gender difference in the processing strategies of males and females.

To find out how the customers get educated about new offerings and deals, the respondents were given five options (along with any other). These had to be converted

into ranks on the basis of the frequency of the most frequently cited reason (e.g., 83.9 per cent of women said friends and clubs were a source of getting educated about new products). This information source was given a ranking of 1 and so on. Table 6 gives a comparative picture of the information sources of the two groups.

The women often rely first on the recommendation of their friends. Then comes window-shopping, experience, salespersons recommendation and lastly the print media. The men show a different pattern, with information acquired more from experience (70.3 per cent) followed by window shopping (20.3 per cent), print information, friends and lastly the salesperson. This clearly demonstrates the kind of involvement that men and women have with their garment purchase. For men it is more individual involvement where all the cues relied on are more self-oriented. For the women, there is more normative involvement where the role of others are more significant.

Another element of the information processing was the time of purchase in terms of the choice parameters. In order to study the customer's quality evaluations, the respondents were given five parameters. The parameters were ranked on the basis of the most frequently cited reason and then next and so on for both males and females (Table 7).

Table 6
Information about Apparels

<i>Variables</i>	<i>Window Shopping</i>	<i>Catalogues & Magazines</i>	<i>Friends/Club</i>	<i>Salesmen</i>	<i>Experience</i>
Men	2 20.3%	3 13.5%	4 3.8%	5 3.5%	1 70.3%
Women	2 69.2%	5 14.2%	1 83.9%	4 18.04%	3 44.0%

Table 7
Quality Evaluations

<i>Variables</i>	<i>Brand Name</i>	<i>Store's Name</i>	<i>Appearance</i>	<i>Touch & Feel</i>	<i>Salespersons Recommendation</i>
Men	1 83.7%	2 56.4%	4 15.7%	3 23.66%	5 7.1%
Women	3 42.8%	5 11.8%	1 74.4%	2 55.5%	4 31.6%

The difference that we observe here, in terms of the number one parameter, is brand name for men and appearance for women. However, this result needs to be treated with caution as this might not be solely because these are the most important considerations but possibly because of the fact that more branded men's wear was available in the town under study, as against branded women's wear. Women seem to be relying more on the look and feel of the product while the appearance of the garment seemed to rank quite low for the men. The fact that the men are shopping more at specialty and franchise outlets corroborates this (Refer to FGD data in the Appendix I). The name of the store is the second most important parameter for evaluating quality for men.

To test the hypotheses that women are more influenced by others opinion (e.g., sales person's and accompanying person's recommendation) than men, a chi square test was conducted to measure the relation between gender and selection criteria (Table 8).

Women are more influenced by others opinion—salespersons (65.55 per cent) and accompanying person's (78.32 per cent)—than men as can be seen from the high chi square values. The men arrived at the final selection by putting all the selected garments together (77.3 per cent). The FGD also revealed that women generally did not shop for clothes alone and they generally arrived at a decision more quickly if their companion also said that the garment 'looked good' (Appendix I).

Table 8
Chi-square of Comparisons of Products

<i>Variables</i>	<i>Printed Catalogue/Magazine</i>	<i>Appearance</i>	<i>Touch & Feel</i>	<i>Salesperson Recommendation</i>
Chi-square value	4.87	7.2	19.66	14.78
<i>Df</i>	1	1	1	1
Asym sig	0.032	0.007	0.000	0.000

Table 8(a)
Chi-square of Final Selection of Garment

<i>Variables</i>	<i>Appearance on Models</i>	<i>Putting Garments Together</i>	<i>Trial</i>	<i>Salesman's Recommendation</i>	<i>Accompanying Person's Recommendation</i>
Chi-square value	1.57	11.11	0.11	34.66	41.23
<i>Df</i>	1	1	1	1	1
Asym sig	0.210	0.000	0.740	0.000	0.000

Thus, there emerged significant differences amongst the two groups in terms of information processing. The search process amongst the women was more comprehensive while the men tended to rely on single cues. Quality parameters considered were also different. The results are in accordance with Meyers-Levy (1988), who determined that in general, males are characterized as being relatively self-focused, whereas females are more sensitive to the needs of both self and others. Another reason for the results is the fact that for women the normative risk in selecting a garment seems to be more, where as for the men, the garment is more a form of self-expression (Kaiser et al. 1993).

Consumer Attitude

To gauge the overall attitude of the consumer towards garment purchase, the shopper was questioned on what garment purchase meant to him/her and was required to choose from the options presented to him/her. A non-parametric chi square test was performed to measure the association between gender and various attitudinal parameters.

As can be seen in Table 9, there was no association between gender and relating garment purchase to entertainment. But when we measure the need, such as an outing, updation of new products, necessity/habit and an opportunity for socialization, there existed a significant relation between gender and consumer attitude. The women look on

garment purchase as an opportunity for socialization (75.26 per cent), as an outing (68 per cent) and as an opportunity for updation about new products (68 per cent). For the men, it was more of a habit and necessity (79.44 per cent) and updation of new products (32 per cent). The sheer hedonistic pleasure women obtained from garment shopping is supported by their reactions to the shopping experience (Appendix I).

The results clearly indicate that while for the men, garments satisfied a utilitarian function, for the women it ranged from value expressive to the knowledge function. Again, the results verify the 'badge' value of garments for women as compared to men.

Product Attributes-key Determinants of Garment Purchase

Customers considered a number of different factors while carrying out garment purchase. The set of 15 diverse elements of the decision process offered to the respondent were derived from earlier research (Eckman et al. 1990) as well as the FGD inputs (Appendix I). In order to assess the underlying dimensions, the data was subjected to factor analysis. The SPSS 10.1 factor analysis program was employed using Varimax rotation. Items with a factor loading of above 0.35 were considered part of a particular factor. The resulting output is presented separately for men and women in Tables 10 and 11.

Table 9
Chi Square of Consumer Attitude

<i>Variables</i>	<i>Outing</i>	<i>Entertainment</i>	<i>Socialization</i>	<i>Updation about New Products</i>	<i>Necessity/Habit</i>
Chi-square value	17.80	3.438	14.327	13.63	32.78
Df	1	1	1	1	1
Asym sig	0.000	0.064	0.000	0.000	0.00

Table 10
Key Determinants of Garment Purchase Behavior (Men)

<i>Factors</i>	<i>Factor Loadings</i>
Factor-1 <i>Quality Judgement</i>	
Quality of merchandise	0.895
Touch & feel	0.867
Eigen value	3.2937
Variance explained	32.94%
Factor-2 <i>Available Range</i>	
Depth and Width of merchandise and accessories	0.863
Availability of merchandise and accessories	0.824
Eigen Value	2.348
Variance explained	23.48%
Factor-3 <i>Customization</i>	
Convenience in locating the desired fit, design, size and colour	0.860
Garment's alteration according to preference	0.798
Eigen value	1.766
Variance explained	17.76%
Factor-4 <i>Value for Time</i>	
Shopping time	0.836
Delivery speed & quality	0.662
Eigen Value	1.050
Variance explained	10.50%
Total variance explained by four factors	84.68%

Table 11
Key Determinants of Garment Purchase Behavior (Women)

<i>Factors</i>	<i>Factor Loadings</i>
Factor-1 <i>Available Range</i>	
Depth and Width of merchandise & accessories	0.919
Availability of merchandise and accessories	0.894
Convenience in locating the fit, design, size and colour	0.803
Eigen value	3.496
Variance explained	34.96%
Factor-2 <i>Customer Care</i>	
Personal attention	0.845
Recommendation based on personal preference	0.705
Garment's alteration according to preference	0.669
Eigen Value	2.1683
Variance explained	21.68%
Factor-3 <i>Quality Judgement</i>	
Quality of merchandise	0.880
Touch & feel	0.680
Eigen value	1.667
Variance explained	16.67%
Total variance explained by three factors	73.31%

The factor analysis conducted separately for the men and women clearly demonstrates distinct differences in the key attributes considered in garment purchase. The men value quality and rely on their own quality judgement through the touch and feel of the garment. The women rate the variety and availability of merchandise as the most important factor for garment purchase. Burt and Gabbott (1995), in a similar trend, found women were more inclined to cite product related factors, especially features such as style and fit and variety, of products available. Men look for quality and also are highly driven by habit and loyalty.

The second most important attribute the women look for is information from other sources in terms of personal attention, recommendation and garment altered to their preference. For men it is the variety and availability of range. These findings are in line with Meyers-Levys (1989). The Selectivity Model suggests that women engage in effortful, comprehensive collection of information unlike men who rely on single cues or cues that are highly available (Factor I Quality Judgement). The third most important factor for women was found to be quality and touch and feel of the merchandise, while for men it was more related to convenience and garment alteration. For men there was a fourth factor also related to convenience in terms of time. As noted in Table 5, almost the whole sample of men were looking at a total purchase time of less than two hours.

Summary and Implications

The purpose of this study was to explore the fast growing and evolving Indian domestic

clothing market. With the advent of the retailing culture proliferating the smaller metros and towns, clothes retailing and franchising is a great business opportunity. Further, keeping in view the changing sex roles and evolving lifestyles, it was decided to compare men and women for differences in garment purchase. In the light of previous research and articles, some hypotheses were formulated regarding gender influence on garment purchase. Some predictable and some unpredictable results were found during the course of the study. Surprisingly, no significant difference was observed between men and women in their frequency of shopping. Both groups showed an equal interest in shopping for garments. However, in terms of relative importance of garment buying, there was a marked difference. When it came to purchase time, the women were spending double the time spent by men. The results demonstrate the difference between the two sexes in terms of purchase involvement. This was further supplemented by the fact that the women looked on garment purchase experience as an outing, an avenue for socializing and updating oneself on the latest trends in fashion. For the men it was more of a necessity and habit.

In terms of basket of purchase, women shop more for themselves, children and men, while the majority of men do self purchasing and sometimes indulge in joint decision making for children's wear. Women are also avid shoppers of accessories like shoes, purses and artificial jewellery. The men, on the other hand, very rarely go in for accessory purchase and even if they do, mostly restrict themselves to shoes.

The women in our sample had more of a normative involvement with clothes as is

demonstrated by the fact that they rely on their friends and window shopping for information acquisition. Quality cues for men are brand and store name while for women it was appearance and touch and feel. These results are not surprising since branded apparel for men is available more than for women. For the comparison and final selection of garment, women rely on significant others like salespersons and accompanying persons. The men rely more on touch and feel. The factor analysis results of key attributes considered were also in congruence and it was found that while men valued quality and range of products, women were more influenced by available range and customer care provided by the store.

Thus, the age old emphasis on outward appearance and fashion and style is no longer the premier privilege of the women. The study did reveal a shift in attitude among the urban male population and could be an indication of trends to come where gender identity might need to make way for self identity. However, the level of involvement and importance of garment purchase for the female population still merits a difference in approach when servicing the two genders.

From the findings of the study, it can be inferred that it is possible to impact the orientation of the male and female shopper by offering different options. An outlet catering predominantly to the men should have the available range of products and brands, conveniently treated and systematically laid out.

The salesperson should be more inconspicuous and avoid interference. The layout, product delivery and alteration process should be efficient and such that it reduces total transaction time. In fact, this could be the *modus operandi* systematized by any branded or franchise outlet. The retail and departmental stores, frequented more by women, need to have a vast range of garments for women and children and a smaller section for men. Accessories alongside would be an added advantage. The salesperson here needs to be more friendly and knowledgeable with information on the latest trends. Since clothes shopping is an outing and a socialization opportunity, some music in the background, catalogues and magazines kept around the place and a café would further add to the appeal of the store.

While the findings of the study have important implications in terms of gender differences in apparel shopping, the study is limited to a small mini metro only and needs to be replicated in other cities and metros as the socio-cultural milieu there might have different nuances. With branded apparels and western wear for women emerging as a big market in metros, the gender influences might emerge to be quite different. Gender was only one of the demographic variables, the influence of age, family, life cycle stage and psychographics might have different implications and thus need to be further explored.

APPENDIX I

Summary of the Focus Group Discussions

Description: A total of 12 focus group discussions were held at different locations in the mini-metro under study. The respondents were in the SEC A & B category. The discussions for the female respondents were held during the weekday forenoon (except two held on weekends). The discussions for the males and mixed groups were, however, held on Saturday afternoon and Sunday mornings.

Composition: Five FGDs were conducted with female respondents. In these groups there were both married and unmarried women. Two groups were of working women and three groups consisted of non-working women. The age group ranged from 25 years to 55 years. Five FGDs were conducted with male respondents consisting of both married men and bachelors. The groups had a mixed composition regarding occupation, some were professionals and others were self employed and some retired. The age group of the respondents ranged from 25 years to 60 years. Two mixed groups of equally divided male and female respondents were selected. This was basically a validation sample group discussion to test the responses given by the respondents in the same sex groups.

Information Areas: The discussion was moderated to cover the following information areas:

- Attitudes towards garments
- Type of involvement with garments
- Decision making process: The decision making process in terms of frequency of purchase, pattern of buying, products purchased, information search, attributes considered and purchase influences were the areas explored.

Key Findings:

- ✓ The men said that they had no choice about paying attention to 'fit' and 'style' as nowadays even your male colleagues pointed out that the shirt you are wearing has been repeated too often and/or it is too old fashioned.
- ✓ The importance of clothes is there for young and old alike. In earlier times the older people were

careless about clothes. However, today everybody wants to look good.

- ✓ More younger people in the workplace so more emphasis on appearance.
- ✓ Garments thus were high involvement product category for both men and women and except for a handful of the respondents involved complex decision making for the sample.
- ✓ The women, however, had a more enduring involvement whereas the men experienced more situational involvement. For working women, the element of comfort and fit was more important for their office wear and latest fashion for casual and party wear.
- ✓ The men gave more value to the product benefit and relied more on their own judgment and trial for the purchase; whereas the women were usually not satisfied with a trial to test the fit. They usually went with friends or family to purchase the garment and majority of the time they went ahead with the purchase if the others also said that 'it looked good'. The women did not want to shop at a place which did not have trial rooms with big mirrors. This was observed both for the working as well as nonworking women.
- ✓ The men shopped less than women. Women shopped for everybody where as the men mostly shopped for themselves or jointly decided about the children garments.
- ✓ The men and the working women preferred to shop in the evenings and on weekends. Surprisingly, occasional buying was not observed and there seemed to be across the groups' agreement on 'bought clothes when ever the need for the garment was felt'.
- ✓ Retired persons and housewives preferred to shop in the morning as they said the colors and designs are more clearly visible.
- ✓ The men shopped at specialty stores whereas the women shopped at retail shops, departmental stores and did bulk shopping during festivals and sales.
- ✓ The quality ,brand, ease in locating the garment and hassle free shopping were the elements the men looked for in garment purchase and they did not mind paying extra for this. The women

- also looked for quality but evaluation of quality was based on different parameters, like others opinion, touch and feel, price and exclusive store image.
- ✓ Service was an element that was of paramount importance for both men and women. Personal attention, alterations, delivery, comfortable and pleasing environment with trial facilities were service parameters of significance for men and women both. In fact they seemed to be an integral part of the purchase experience.
 - ✓ Accessory purchase for men was mostly ties and shoes, whereas for women it was sandals, costume jewellery and occasionally purses.
- However, the accessory basket was more expanded for the younger unmarried women than others.
- ✓ Even though most of the respondents (the men and some women) possessed a credit card, they preferred to carry out cash transactions.
 - ✓ Garment shopping was 'fun', an 'outing', 'a chance to go out with friends', 'stress relieving', 'colorful', 'a topic of conversation amongst friends' 'exciting' and 'simply pleasure', for the women. For the men it was an 'outing', 'a family outing', 'a necessary evil', 'o.k.', 'important today' and 'a chance to see what is the latest in the market'.

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