GENDER DIFFERENCE IN DECISION MAKING STYLE OF MIDDLE AGE CONSUMERS OF CLOTHING

MADHAVI GUPTA & SUMAN PANT

Clothing and Textile, Faculty of Home Science, Banasthali University, Jaipur, Rajasthan, India

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to investigate the effect of gender on decision making determinants in purchase of clothing of middle age Indian consumers. Survey study was conducted on 600 respondents belonging to 40-60 years age group. A questionnaire was designed to collect data by face to face interview. Chi square was calculated to know association between sex and decision making of respondents. The result showed significant difference in fashion awareness and conformity to clothes.

KEYWORDS: Price, Brand, Fashion, Quality, Planned Purchaser

INTRODUCTION

Consumer has certain strategies and rules guiding the decision while making preference (Sproles, 1993). Each decision making style represents a mental orientation characterizing the consumer's approach to make a choice.

Kotler (2000) has defined market segmentation as the process of dividing market into distinct group of buyers with different needs, characteristics, or behavior. This helps manufacturer as well as marketer in formulating and implementing product & marketing strategies. A perusal of literature revealed that most of the researches have been conducted on clothing behavior of adolescents/teenagers. There is lack of data on middle age (baby boomers) adults' clothing purchasing behavior. Apparel companies have largely neglected this segment in their pursuit of the youth market. Lack of interest in older consumers has been attributed to several factors, one of them being negative stereotypes associated with aging.

Middle age is generally considered to extend from age forty to age sixty. Because middle age is a long span, it is customarily divided into early middle age, which extends from age forty to age fifty, and advanced middle age, which extends from age fifty to age sixty. During advanced middle age, physical and psychological changes that first began during early forties become far more apparent (Hurlock, 1981).

There are two philosophies about how people should adjust to middle age: one, that they should stay young and active and two that they should grow old gracefully, taking life comfortably. Some middle aged men and women desire to be inconspicuous therefore, they try to dress as conservatively as possible and yet adhere to prevailing style.

Interest in clothing in middle age, which begins to wane after marriage and especially during the early years of parenthood, intensifies when the external physical changes which accompany advancing age becomes noticeable. Both men and women use diet, exercise, cosmetics, or clothing either to reverse those changes or to hide them. Interests in fashionable quality of clothes shift to interest in clothes that make them look younger (Hurlock, 1981).

Middle- aged people are well aware that clothes are important to their image. Men recognize importance of clothing and grooming to business success. As they advance towards the peak of achievement in middle age, they become far more clothes- conscious than they were when they were younger and their status in the business world was lower. Women, by contrast, are less clothes conscious in middle age than in early adulthood, though they, like men, recognize the importance of clothes and grooming to success in business and social world (Ryan, 1966).

Middle age group is still the one that exerts the most impact on consumption pattern (Solomon and Rabolt, 2004).

Present study attempts to analyze clothing purchase behavior of middle-aged male and female adults to find out whether there is significant difference in their decision making with respect to fashion awareness, brand awareness, price consciousness, quality proneness, impulsive buying vs. planned purchasing, conformity vs. individuality.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Goldsmith (2002) examined the personal characteristics of frequent clothing buyers. The study found that two demographic variables, age and sex were associated with buying. Women reported buying more than men did and younger consumer's more than older ones. Peter's (1989) study also showed that female are more concerned about clothes and more involved in shopping than male. Some other studies seem to indicate that stage in the life cycle may be even more important determination of consumer behavior related to clothing than social class distinction and other factors (Horn and Gurell, 1981). Various evaluative criteria are used by consumer in decision making. Style, fit, price and quality have consistently been given high priority by consumer and; brand and country of origin being less important (Soloman and Rabolt, 2004).

OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

Main objective of the study is to find out effect of sex on decision making of adults for clothes.

SIGNIFICANCE

Consumer behavior is a complex area. Indian retailers and marketers do need to find out as much as they can about their customers in order to identify their needs, how they behave, what influences them to make a decision to buy and what processes they follow when selecting a product/service.

Middle age adult segment is one of the most important consumer segments. Apparel manufacturers, retailers, marketers need to know if decision making in purchase of clothing of adults of different sex, socioeconomic status, life style and geographic location differ. This will help them in planning strategies; in production and marketing apparel products to mature segment. Thus this study will be useful to marketers to target this segment and develop appropriate promotional strategies as it will add to the knowledge base about evaluative criteria and decision making process of middle age adults.

METHODOLOGY

This research is exploratory in nature. Exploratory research includes survey method.

LOCALE OF THE STUDY

Present study was conducted in two locales- Gorakhpur city of Uttar Pradesh and New Delhi.

POPULATION AND SELECTION OF SAMPLE

Population comprised of middle aged adults residing in Gorakhpur and New Delhi. Data was collected from 600 respondents- 300 from Gorakhpur and 300 from New Delhi. Random sampling technique was used to select male and female adults from each locale with maximum variation to get a spread in their age, educational and demographic background. A list of citizens was obtained from Municipal Corporation. From list those adults were identified who belong to age group 40 to 60 years. To get accuracy in result, 150 males and 150 females were selected randomly from list of middle age adults.

A questionnaire was developed to collect the data. It was based on Consumer Style Inventory developed (CSI) by Sproles and Kendall (1986) to examine and describe decision making of consumers. Some items were modified and some new items were added in the inventory to achieve the objectives.

Data was personally collected by the investigator. After collection of data, it was coded and analyzed with the help of statistical tools.

RESULT AND DISCUSSIONS

Gender has been identified as a significant factor in understanding consumer behaviour in most of the studies. It is used as a fundamental marketing segment index by firms to meet their customers' needs and wants. Marketers try to understand the gender difference in decision making style.

HYPOTHESIS

Ho**:** There is no association between sex and decision making style of respondents of middle age.

To test null hypothesis chi square was calculated. Significance level of 0.05 was decided to accept or reject null hypothesis.

Table 1: When/ Why of Clothing Purchase

Sex	On special occasions	When needed	Discount sale	Personal enjoyment	χ^2 value
Male(300)	16.66%	66.33%	6%	11%	6.66
Female(300)	13.66%	61%	8%	17.33%	$P<0.08$

Regarding motivations for clothing purchases, the participants have been asked to select one of the most typical reasons for purchasing clothes. The utilitarian need for apparel appears to be most important to the middle aged consumers, followed by special occasion and satisfaction of hedonic need. Discount sale on the other hand, is not perceived to be as great an influence as other reasons for middle aged.

Quality Consciousness in Middle Aged Adults

Quality is an important factor when purchasing apparel products. Perceived quality is defined as the consumers' judgment about an entity's excellence or superiority.

Table 2: Importance of Very Good Quality Clothes

Sex	Yes	No	χ^2 value
Male	89%	11%	4.12, p<0.04
Female	93.66%	6.33%	

Table 3: Make Special Effort to Get Best Quality Clothes

Sex	Yes	No	χ^2 Value
Male	94%	6%	1.77,p<0.18
Female	96.33%	3.66%	

Majority of male and female of consider that quality of clothes is very important i.e. quality of fabric used in apparel, of workmanship etc. Chi square value shows that quality is more important for female than male consumers of middle age. That is why they make special efforts to purchase quality clothes (Table 3).

Store Image

How consumer view store image has long been considered an important aspect of consumer decision making. This is because of the consumers' view and feeling toward the store might create a habit to purchase at that shop repetitively or make them loyal to the store.

Table 4: Prefer To Buy the Clothes from Selective Shops

Sex	Always	Often	Sometime	Never	χ^2 Value
Male(300)	49%	38.33%	11.33%	1.33%	5.87
Female(300)	44.33%	36%	18.33%	1.33%	P<0.11

Data given in Table 4 shows that percentage of respondents always buying from selected shops is highest followed by those who often buy from selected shops. Preference to buy clothes from selective shops is not associated with sex of respondents as chi square calculated is not significant at .05 levels.

Table 5: Selection Criteria of Clothing Shop

Criteria	Male	Female	χ^2 Value
Good Service	16.33%	20.33%	
Availability of quality garment	43%	37%	
Availability of branded garment	21.66%	10%	
Availability of clothes as per trend	2.33%	7.33%	28.70 P<0.00
Availability of clothes of good style/ designs	6.33%	10%	
Availability of garment of right price	8.33%	12.33%	
Easy to reach	2%	3%	

Table 5 shows that availability of quality clothes is most important criteria for selection of particular shop followed by good service and availability of branded clothes respectively. Fourth is availability of clothes in reasonable price. Easy to reach is of least importance in selection criteria of shops. The reason may be better transport facility. Selection criteria are dependent on sex of the respondents. Availability of quality clothes and branded garment is more important for male but good service, availability at right price, trendy clothes is more important for female.

Table 6: Type of Shop Preferred For Purchasing Of Clothes

Sex	Traditional Retail Shop	Boutique	Shopping Mall	Branded Shop	x^2 Value
Male	35%	5%	20.33%	39.66%	41.65
Female	43%	14.33%	24.66%	18%	P<0.00

It is clear from Table that Preference for particular type of shop is dependent on sex of respondents. Branded shop is more preferred by male whereas traditional retail shops, boutique and shopping mall are more preferred by females.

Brand Consciousness and Brand Loyalty among Middle Aged

Brand is a powerful tool to attract consumers to buy a product. Branding more or less for centuries has been a means to differentiate goods of one company from that of another. Few empirical studies have analyzed that brand preferences vary with age. Eight questions of the tool assessed attitude of old people towards branded clothes and their preference for them.

Table 7: Selection of Branded Clothes

Sex	Always	Often	Sometimes	Never	x^2
Male	36.66%	35.66%	22.66%	5%	3.17,p<0.36
Female	30%	38%	26.33%	5.66%	

It is evident from Table that about one third of the total middle aged respondents always select branded clothes whereas 36.8% often purchase branded clothes. Very few people never purchase branded clothes. There is no association between selection of branded clothes and sex of respondents.

Attitude toward Brands

An attempt has been made to know the attitude of middle aged respondents towards branded clothes.

Table 8: Branded Clothes Are Fashionable

Sex	Agree	Somewhat Agree	Disagree	x^2 Value
Male	40.66%	50.33%	9%	4.75
Female	32.66%	59%	8.33%	P<0.09

It is evident from Table that most of the middle age people somewhat agree whereas about one third completely agree that branded clothes are fashionable. Attitude of both the sexes is similar towards the fashionable aspect of branded clothes.

Table 9: Branded Clothes Are Costly Compared To Unbranded Clothes

Sex	Agree	Somewhat Agree	Disagree	χ^2 Value
Male	72%	27%	1%	11.20
Female	73.66%	21%	5.33%	P<0.00

Data given in Table shows views of middle aged about the statement that branded clothes are costly compared to unbranded clothes. It is found that most of the male and female respondents agree that branded clothes are more costly as compared to unbranded clothes. This view is dependent on sex of middle aged people.

Table 10: Branded Clothes Are Of Good Quality and Last Longer

Sex	Agree	Somewhat agree	Disagree	χ^2 value
Male	53.66%	40.33%	6%	3.75
Female	51%	38.66%	10.33%	P<0.15

They have been asked to express their views about the statement that branded clothes are of good quality and lasts longer. Table shows that about fifty percent agree whereas about forty percent somewhat agree. The attitude towards quality of branded clothes is independent of sex of middle age consumers.

Table 11: Branded Clothes Increase the Status of Person

Sex	Agree	Somewhat Agree	Disagree	χ^2 Value
Male	51.66%	38.33%	10%	5.57
Female	46%	37.66%	16.33%	P<.06

The opinion of middle age respondents to the statement that branded clothes increase status of person has been presented in Table. About fifty percent respondents agree and 38% somewhat agree. Value of chi square shows that opinion of male and female of different age groups is same in this regard.

Table 12: Preference to Buy Favorite Brand Even If Good Clothes of Other Brands Are Available

Sex	Always	Often	Sometimes	Never	χ^2 Value
Male	34.66%	37%	18.33%	10%	22.97
Female	20%	35.33%	28%	16.66%	P<0.00

Loyalty to favourite brands is dependent on sex of respondents. More male always prefer to buy favourite brand whereas more female sometime or never prefer to buy favorite brand even if good clothes of other brands are available.

Price Consciousness among Elderly

Price consciousness or value for money is first factor for many consumers in taking buying decision. Considering the fact that middle age consumers have family responsibilities to fulfill such as education of children, their marriage and so may have comparatively less disposable income, an attempt has been made to find out how price conscious they are.

Table 13: High Price of Clothes Indicates High Quality

Sex	Agree	Somewhat Agree	Disagree	χ^2 Value
Male	27.33%	48.66%	24%	4.083
Female	20.33%	54%	25.66%	p<0.13

Middle aged respondents' opinion towards 'high price of clothes means high quality' is shown in table. About fifty percent of them somewhat agree that high price indicates high quality. Almost twenty five percent disagree whereas almost similar number of middle age people fully agrees. Attitude of male and female consumers of middle age is same.

Table 14: Search for Less Priced Clothes

Sex	Always	Frequently	Sometime	Never	χ^2 Value
Male	6.33%	17.66%	46.66%	29.33%	31.65
Female	3%	2.66%	62.66%	12.66%	P<0.00

Table shows that there is association between sex of respondents and habit of middle aged for searching clothes in lower price. Percentage of male always or frequently searching clothes in lower price is higher whereas percent age of female who sometime or never search for clothes in less price is higher.

Table 15: I Go To Market during Sale/ Promotional Season

Sex	Always	Frequently	Sometime	Never	χ^2
Male	8%	8.66%	47.33%	36%	27.63, p<0.00
Female	6%	20.33%	52.66%	21%	

It is clear from chi square value that sex of respondents is significantly associated with purchase of clothes at discount sale. More number of females often or sometimes purchases clothes at discount than male whereas more number of male never purchase from discount sale compared to female.

Table 16: Focus On Good Value or Money

Sex	Always	Frequently	Sometime	Never	χ^2
Male	74.66%	19%	6.33%	0%	2.381,p<0.49
Female	72%	20.33%	7%	0.66%	

Majority of middle aged respondents, irrespective of sex, always make sure that quality of clothes is as per the amount of money spent. 19.7% often focus on good value for money.

Impulsive Buyer vs. Planned Purchaser

According to Park (2005), impulsive buying behaviour is a sudden, compelling, hedonically complex buying behaviour in which the rapidity of an impulsive decision precludes thoughtful and deliberate consideration of alternative information and choices. An endeavour has been made to find out whether middle age consumers are impulsive buyer or

they plan carefully before taking decision considering their experience and maturity.

Table 17: Plan Carefully Before Purchasing the Clothes

Sex	Always	Frequently	Sometime	Never	χ^2
Male	31.33%	25.66%	29.66%	13.33%	17.60
Female	33.66%	37.33%	23%	6%	P<0.00

They have been asked whether they plan carefully before purchasing clothes, viz. how many clothes to buy, which clothes to buy, price range etc. Findings shows that planned purchase is significantly associated with sex of respondents. More number of female than male always or often plans everything carefully before purchasing clothes. On the other hand more male sometime or never plan carefully before buying clothes.

Table 18: Take Time in Making Brand and Product Decision

Sex	Always	Frequently	Sometime	Never	χ^2
Male	11.66%	16.33%	37%	35%	10.21, p<0.01
Female	11.66%	25.66%	36.66%	26%	

Habit of taking time in making brand and product decision is dependent on sex of middle age consumers. More female than male frequently take time in making brand and product decision whereas more male never do that. Male does not have patience.

Table 19: In Spite of a Preplanned Agenda I Tend to Do a Lot of Unplanned Purchase

Sex	Always	Frequently	Sometime	Never	χ^2
Male	25.33%	39%	31%	4.66%	13.59,P<0.00
Female	19.66%	31.66%	38%	10.66%	

Middle aged respondents have been enquired if they find clothes of appealing colour, design or; seasonal sale, do they tend to purchase even if there is no need. Sex is significantly associated with impulsive buying of clothes. It is interesting to find that more male than female always or often do impulsive buying. Percentage of middle aged female sometimes or never doing unplanned purchase is higher in comparison to male.

Table 20: Compare the Price of Clothes before Purchasing

Sex	Always	Often	Sometimes	Never	χ^2
Male	41%	34%	15.33%	9.66%	20.797,P<0.00
Female	56.33%	26.33%	14.33%	3%	

Findings of above table shows that most of middle aged consumers compare price of clothes. There is significant association between sex and price comparing behviour of the respondents. More female always or often compare price than male. Mean score

Table 21: Check All Aspects of Garment before Purchasing

Sex	Always	Often	Sometime	Never	χ^2 Value
Male	57.66%	30%	10%	2.33%	6.177
Female	58%	34%	7.66%	0.33%	p<0.10

Consumers have been asked whether they check different criteria of quality of clothes such as quality of fabric, cut/hole in fabric, quality of sleeve, collar, neckline, seam, trimming etc while buying clothes. Result has been reported in Table. It is clear that most of the respondents always check various quality criteria of clothes. Chi square values reveal that sex of middle aged is not associated with the behavior of quality checking of clothes. Thus they exhibit similar behavior with regard to quality check of clothes.

Table 22: Read Label before Purchasing the Clothes

Sex	Always	Often	Sometime	Never	χ^2
Male	48.33%	28.33%	16.33%	7%	7.46, p<0.06
Female	46%	33.33%		2.66%	

Table shows that most of the middle age people read label for size of garment, fiber content, and care instruction. However, there is no significant association between sex of respondents and habit of reading label.

Table 23: Collect Information before Purchasing the clothes

Sex	Always	Often	Sometime	Never	χ^2
Male	50%	26.33%	20.33%	3.33%	1.45, P<0.69
Female	53.33%	25.33%	19.33%	2%	

Consumers acquire information to reduce uncertainty and risk in purchasing decision. Result reported in table shows that about fifty percent respondents of middle age always and one fourth often collect information before purchasing the clothes. There is no association between sex and information acquiring habit of middle age respondents.

Table 24: Sources of Information of Clothes before Purchasing the Clothes

Sex	Window Shopping	Friends And Colleagues	Newspaper Magazine	Internet	TV	Shopkeeper	χ^2
Male	15.66%	22.333%	10.33%	7%	15.66%	29%	14.45 p<0.01
Female	21.33%	24.33%	11.33%	11.66%	13%	18.33%	

The influence on an individual to select a product or store depends upon the communication of information from sources to individual. Significant difference is found in source of information used by both sexes. Friends and colleagues, window shopping and internet are used by more female whereas shopkeepers, TV are used by more male.

Fashion Consciousness of Respondents

Fashion consciousness refers to a person's degree of involvement with the styles or fashion of clothing. An individual does not have to be either a fashion opinion leader or a fashion innovator to be considered fashion conscious.

Rather, fashion consciousness is characterized by an interest in clothing and fashion, and in one's appearance. Studies conducted in western countries indicate that elderly are fashion conscious. An attempt has been made to find out fashion consciousness of Indian middle aged persons. Result is presented in Tables 25 – 28.

Table 25: Preference for Fashionable Trendy Clothes

Sex	Always	Frequently	Sometime	Never	χ^2
Male	17.66%	25.33%	43%	14%	30.35 P<0.00
Female	24.66%	33.33%	39.33%	2.66%	

Preference for fashionable trendy clothes is dependent on sex of middle aged as calculated value of chi square is significant. Percentage of females always or often preferring trendy clothes is higher than male.

Table 26: Knowledge of Fashion Trend

Sex	Always	Frequently	Sometime	Never	χ^2 Value
Male	16.66%	21.66%	44%	16.66%	39.96 P<0.00
Female	19%	41%	35%	5%	

Awareness about fashion trend is dependent on sex of respondents. Obviously more females than males are always or often aware of current fashion trends.

Table 27: When Do They Purchase Fashionable Clothes

Sex	Before Everyone Else	When Everyone Buys, In Season	At The End Of Season	χ^2 Value
Male	7%	76.66%	16.33%	6.213
Female	11.66%	77%	11.33%	p<.04

An attempt has been made to find out whether middle age respondents are leader or follower of fashion. Majority of them buy clothes when it is in fashion. Some buy at the end of season whereas very few buy before everyone else. However, significant difference in the behavior of male and female respondents is found.

Conformity Vs Individuality in Middle Aged Respondents

It is said that phenomena of conformity is present in most form of clothing behaviour which is very strong in teen age. Whether middle age respondent follow conformity in dress or individuality has been studied by investigator.

Table 28: Preference of Clothes Similar To Friends and Colleagues

Sex	Always	Frequently	Sometime	Never	χ^2
Male	15.66%	33.33%	38%	13%	17.66 P<0.00
Female	9.66%	24.66%	42.33%	23.33%	

To assess conformity in clothing selection, middle age respondents have been asked whether they prefer to wear clothes similar to friends and colleagues. It is evident that percentage of respondents who sometimes prefer to wear clothes

similar to friends and colleagues is highest. Chi square calculated shows significant difference in behaviour of both the sexes towards preference to wear clothes similar to friends. More male than female always or often follow clothing trend of friends and colleagues.

Table 29: Advice of Husband/Wife and Family Members in Purchase of Clothes

Sex	Always	Frequently	Sometime	Never	x^2 Value
Male	14%	12%	22.33%	51.66%	12.19, P<0.00
Female	8%	11%	16.33%	64.66%	

Calculated value of chi square indicates that advice of husband and family in purchase of clothes is dependent on sex as significant difference is found in the views of males and females. It is interesting to find that percentage of female who never takes advice of husband/family members in selection of clothes is higher than that of male. More number of male always, frequently or sometimes is influenced than female.

Table 30: Search for Clothes That Are New and Different From Others

Sex	Always	Frequently	Sometime	Never	x^2
Male (300)	17.33%	25.66%	30%	27%	13.50 P<0.00
Female (300)	24.66%	29%	30.66%	15.66%	

Chi square value reveals that there is association between search for new & different clothes and sex of respondents. Percentage of females who always /often search for clothes new and different clothes in the market is higher than males. On the contrary percentage of males never searching new clothes is higher.

CONCLUSIONS

- Majority of male and female consider that quality of clothes is very important. That is why they make special efforts to purchase quality clothes, check all aspects of garments before buying.

- Although attitude of middle aged male and female is almost same towards brands, brand loyalty is higher in male than female.

- The result shows that middle aged consumer is price conscious. However, more female respondents than male search clothes in less price and go for discount sale.

- Middle aged consumers are perfectionist purchaser; they plan carefully, compare price, read label, and acquire information before buying clothes. In spite of being perfectionist, they are impulsive buyer also.

- Significant difference in preference for fashion clothes, knowledge of current trend is found. Females are more fashion conscious than male.

- It is interesting to note that conformity in clothes is more important for male than female.

REFERENCES

1. Goldsmith, R., (2002). "Some personality traits of frequent clothing buyers''. Journal of Fashion Marketing and Management, vol.6 no.3, 303-316.

2. Horn, M. J., and Gurel. L. M., (1981). "The second skin: an interdisciplinary study of clothing" (3rd ed.). Houghton Miffin Company, Boston.

3. Hurlock, E. B., (1981). "Developmental psychology: a life- span approaches" (5th ed.). Tata McGraw Hill Publishing Ltd., New Delhi.

4. Kotler, P., (2000). "Marketing; Management". Upper saddle river, NJ: Prentice Hall

5. Peters, J. F., (1989). Youth clothes- shopping behavior: "An analysis by genders. Adolescence", vol.24, pp575-580.

6. Ryan, M. S., (1966). "Clothing: a study in human behavior". New York: Holt.

7. Soloman, M. R., and Rabolt, N. I., (2004). "Consumer behavior in fashion" (2nd ed.). Dorling Kindersley (India) Pvt. Ltd., New Delhi.

8. Sproles J. B. and Kendall E.L., (1986), "A methodology for profiling consumers decision   making styles", Journal of Consumer Affairs, vol. 20 no.2, pp 267-279