

# A Study on ‘Convenience of Shopping’ in Apparel Sector

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## Abstract

*The organized retail sector of India is facing intense competition. With the opening of new stores and coming in international brands due to FDI in retail, this competition has further intensified. The ‘Apparel’ sector in organized retail is the second largest growing sector after ‘Food and Grocery’. According to the report of Ernst and Young on organized Indian retail, the Apparels sector is expected to grow by 30 – 35 percent by the year 2016. While the opportunities are immense threats of sustainability are no less. Hence, it is very difficult for retailers maintain an advantageous position only by offering good products, reasonable price and effective promotions. In such a situation offering ‘Convenience of Shopping’ can be profitable for retailers. It can stimulate consumers shopping action and then can result in enhancing consumer perceived value, satisfaction and loyalty for an apparel store. The present research paper analyzes ‘Convenience of Shopping’ in branded Apparel in Bangalore.*

**Key words:** Convenience of Shopping, Location, Sales, Service, Layout

## 1. INTRODUCTION

In today’s competitive market consumer’s preferences are changing rapidly. Customers see retail stores as identical in their offerings. Hence, to sustain and succeed marketers have to use different approaches to attract customers. Consistent growth of economy, rapid urbanization rate, favourable demographics and availability of easy credits has boosted consumerism. There is an increase in demand for superior shopping experience, especially in the metropolitan cities. It is a marketplace reality that customers do not only look for superior products and services, but also ‘Convenience of Shopping’ plays a vital role in shaping the perceived value, satisfaction and loyalty towards a retail store. ‘Convenience of Shopping’ becomes all the more important for apparel stores where competition is tough and customers are lured with many offers. Also a new competitor – Online Retailers have further intensified the competition further. To address such an issue it becomes very essential for apparel retail stores to provide a superior shopping experience to customers. This shopping experience can be made superior by providing ‘Convenience of Shopping’ in addition to basic offerings of quality products, reasonable price and effective promotions. The term ‘Convenience of Shopping’ here consists of many factors. These factors can be divided into four major categories namely: ‘Location of the Store’, ‘Salesperson’s Service’, ‘Layout of the Store’ and ‘Other Services’.

## 2. EXPLANATION OF FACTORS

### (i) Location

Location has long been recognized as one of the prime determinants of store choice and success in retailing. The location of a store and the distance, which consumers must travel to go shopping are basic criteria in their store choice decisions. In addition, store visibility is an element often discussed in the literature that does effect consumers’ decision of choosing one store over another (Levy et al 2009). They argue that store choice decisions also depends on the total shopping costs and time which is required to access the store. Therefore, it can be argued that ‘Location’ makes the overall shopping experience of customers convenient, thus enhancing the image of apparel store.

### (ii) Salesperson’s Service

According to Parasuraman et al (1985), an apparel retail store can differentiate its retail offerings by providing excellent ‘Salesperson’s Service’ and thus build customer loyalty. Overall shopping experience of the customers convenient because with these, the customers are well assured that there is someone in the store who will help in making their shopping experience easy and comfortable.

Once the shopping experience is easy and comfortable, the perceived value of the apparel store is enhanced which leads to satisfaction and ultimately customer loyalty. Customer satisfaction and loyalty are essential for sustainability and success of an apparel store.

### (iii) Layout of the Store

According to the literature, a convenient store ‘Layout’ can play a vital role in enhancing the overall shopping experience of a customer at apparel store (Bloomer et al 1997). This is indeed important in highly competitive retail sectors, like we assume the apparel sector to be, and is therefore an interesting and

relevant aspect to remember. A retail store 'Layout' should be designed to facilitate easy movement of customers within the store, and allow the optimal presentation of merchandise (Sharma et al 2000). As apparel stores are relatively huge as compared to other stores like footwear or optical stores, proper and convenient 'Layout' becomes an essential tool in making the overall shopping experience of the customer exciting and fruitful. Signage and Graphics is important element of store design and layout, which can help customers locate specific products and departments within the apparel store. Customer friendly signage and graphics provide product information, and suggest items of special purchases. By using visual communication, a retailer can help the customer through the store, especially in the case of multibrand apparel stores, which are huge in size and are spread over large areas and housing many brands less than one roof. We also do believe that signage at the entrance and in windows can be used to attract consumers' attention. In addition, signage of new arrivals is also a tool to get people's attention.

#### (iv) Customer Service

Looking at the findings contained in the literature, we can clearly identify the importance of 'Customer Service' elements in relation to store image (Siu et al 2001). In today's competitive retail environment, the delivery of high quality of 'Customer Service' has long been treated as the basic of retailing strategy.

A high quality of Customer Service is very much demanded by the current times customers who are well aware of similar offerings by retail stores across the world. A good Customer Service creates a positive impact about the shopping experience of an apparel store. This leads to improvement in consumer's perceived value, satisfaction and customer loyalty for the apparel store. Customer Service at an apparel store usually includes

- Good after Sales Service, for building and maintaining relationships with customers for store's success.
- Easy Payment Options: As the times are changing customers do not prefer to carry heavy wallets, they prefer plastic money i.e. credit cards or debit cards. Hence, a lot of Apparel stores can provide the facility of making payments by credit cards and thus delight the customers.
- Ample Parking Space is very much required by the customers residing in metropolitan cities. The apparel stores which provide ample parking space to its customers provide better satisfaction to their customers, this leads to customer loyalty and store success.
- Gift Wrapping An apparel store can enhance its Customer Service by providing free Gift Wrapping facility in the store in order to build on customer's perceived value and customer satisfaction.
- Convenient Trolley, Free and Nature Friendly Shopping Bag: These aspects can also be used to enhance the overall shopping experience of customers at an apparel store.

All the above variables were considered for study while writing this research paper. The questionnaire contained questions which studied the impact of these variables on consumer's perceived value, satisfaction and loyalty for an apparel store in Bangalore.

### 3. SCOPE OF THE STUDY

This study first analyzes the variables which can be included in the apparel store attribute – 'Convenience of Shopping' and then the study analyzes the contribution of 'Convenience of Shopping' in enhancing overall consumer's perceived value about the apparel store, the satisfaction customers derive while shopping at these stores and ultimately how customers can be made loyal to the apparel stores by working on store attribute called 'Convenience of Shopping'. The study was done at major apparel stores present in Bangalore.

### 4. OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

The study examines the variables which can be included in 'Convenience Of Shopping' and the impact of store attribute called 'Convenience Of Shopping' on building positive consumer's perceived value, satisfaction and loyalty towards the apparel stores in Bangalore.

The main objectives of the study are as follows:

- (i) To study the apparel segment of organized retail in Bangalore.
- (ii) To study the factors which can be included in store attribute called 'Convenience of Shopping'.
- (iii) To analyze the factors of 'Convenience of Shopping' on consumer's perceived value, satisfaction and loyalty towards an apparel store
- (iv) To offer suggestions to apparel store so that they can enhance the store attribute called 'Convenience of Shopping' for success.

### 5. METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

The study is embodied with both primary and secondary data. The primary data was collected using a structured questionnaire from the customers of apparel stores in Bangalore. The data was collected from apparel stores existing in Bangalore. The study was done at almost all kinds of apparel stores ranging from high-price to low-price stores in Bangalore. The selection criteria used for respondents was based on their availability and level of participation by them. This is an analytical study which studied the impact of 'Convenience of Shopping' on consumer's perceived value, satisfaction and loyalty towards an apparel store in Bangalore. The questionnaire contained fifty five questions to analyze the various factors considered for the study.

#### 5.1 Sample Selection

To select the sample non-probability convenience sampling method was used. All the respondents selected were above 18 years of age in order to get a mature opinion about the impact of 'Convenience of Shopping' on consumer's perceived value, satisfaction and loyalty towards an apparel store in Bangalore.

Almost 200 questionnaires were administered out of which, 19 were discarded as they were incompletely filled. Three Point Likert-scales used to obtain the responses of the respondents. It is believed that the information obtained from these respondents was genuine and unbiased.

## 6. ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

### 6.1 Demographic Characteristics of the Sample Respondents

#### a. Gender

In the total population of respondents, 51% percent of the respondents were male and 49% respondents were females. However, the gender differences could be due to the fact that shopping in India is undertaken by the family as a group and male heads of households are more likely to be the respondents.

#### b. Occupation

Out of the total population, most of the respondents were either salaried or were students, very few were self-employed; this can be due to the reason that most of the apparel stores are visited by the young crowd which consists of either salaried people or students. Distribution of population is shown in figure 1.

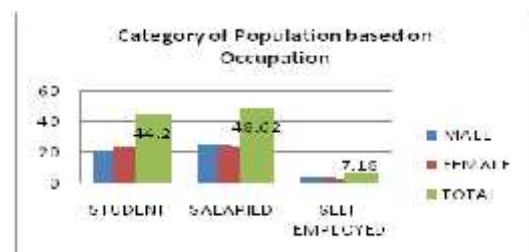


Fig 1. Category of Population based on Occupation

The majority of the respondents fell into the 25-35 years age group. As we have already seen that most of the respondents were either salaried or students so it becomes evident that they will fall in the above mentioned age group. Distribution of population is shown in figure 2.

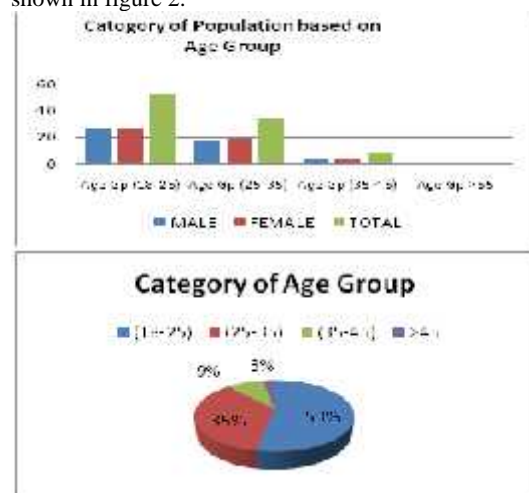


Fig 2. Category of Population based on Age.

### 6.2 Study on Convenience of Shopping on customer's perceived value, satisfaction and loyalty towards an apparel store in Bangalore:

#### a. Frequency of Going for Shopping At an Apparel Store:

Most of the respondents visit an apparel store for shopping or other purposes at least once in a month, a considerable number of respondents go at least once in two months. A very small number of respondents visited these apparel stores for shopping for at least once in more than two months to less than three months.

This indicates that the apparel stores have a good footfall which they need to convert into purchase by enhancing the experience of customers while they are visiting the store. This can be done by making their shopping experience convenient and enjoyable. Distribution of the same is shown in figure 3.

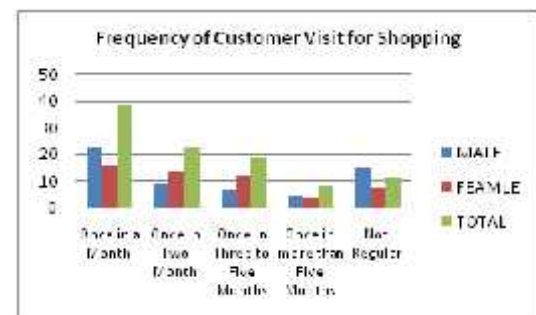


Fig 3. Frequency of Customer Visit for Shopping

#### b. Location of the Store

Many questions were asked to analyze the factor 'Location of the Store' and its contribution in the store attributes 'Convenience of Shopping'. It was found out that 'Location of the Store' enhances customer's perception towards the store substantially and can be considered as an important element in shaping store's image in consumer's minds.

#### c. Salesperson's Service

The questions which were analyzed to study the element 'Salesperson's Service' revealed that in current times an affable attitude of the salesperson is required for creating a positive image of the store. This in turn leads to customer satisfaction and customer loyalty which are very essential for the success of an apparel store.

#### d. Layout of the Store

It was observed that a good 'Layout' of the store is an important factor of attracting customers. The apparel stores which have a customer friendly layout are liked by the customers as it saves their time in moving around the store and helps them in locating the products easily with usage of proper signboards and graphics. The results of the study revealed that, a store with ambient layout can be differentiated from its

competitors, and can create a positive image in customer's minds.

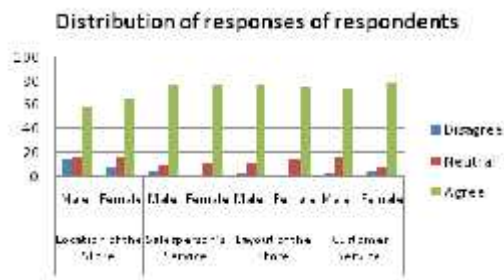
**e. Customer Service**

The questions which were asked to analyze the element 'Customer Service' revealed that a good 'Customer Service' is very essential for differentiating the apparel store from the rest. A good 'Customer

Service' not only makes the shopping experience memorable but also enhances customer's perceived value, satisfaction and loyalty towards the apparel store. Distribution of responses of respondents on factors considered for Convenience of Shopping is shown in Table 1 and Figure 4.

**Table 1. Distribution of responses of respondents on factors considered for Convenience of Shopping**

Factors	Location of the Store		Salesperson's Service		Layout of the Store		Customer Service	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Disagree	15	8	4	1	2	0	2	4
Neutral	17	17	10	12	12	15	16	7
Agree	59	65	77	77	77	75	73	79



**Fig 4. Distribution of responses of respondents on factors considered for Convenience of Shopping**

should be made to enhance the quality of customer service. New and innovative services can also be introduced to make the shopping experience of customers great.

Good customer service is an important differentiator aspect for an apparel store. Therefore, it can be concluded that, good customer service is an element for enhancing consumer's perception, satisfaction and loyalty towards an apparel store.

**7. FINDINGS**

1. Study reveals that about 53% of respondents attracted towards apparel stores in Bangalore are students with the age limit of 25 years and 35% are in between 25 to 35 years indicates that there is a great scope of growth in this sector, due to the high preference of customers towards it.
2. Study reveals that location of the store, salesperson's service and layout of the store will influence the customers in convenience shopping. Customers get attracted towards the apparel stores which have an ambient layout.
3. Result reveals that 'Convenience of Shopping' is not associated with 'Customer Service'. Customers like an apparel stores which provides them with good customer service. Hence, various strategies

In order to test Association between the factors Convenience of Shopping and its factors, scores had been prepared on 3 point Likert- scale and tabulated as in table 2.

From the result it is found that Chi-square test fails for factors viz., location of the store, salesperson's service and layout of the store indicating there is an association between Convenience of Shopping and these factors. On the other hand factor 'Customer Service' is independent of convenience of Shopping.

**8. CONCLUSION**

The theoretical analysis demonstrates that in order to enhance the consumer's perceived value, satisfaction and loyalty, the overall shopping experience of the customers has to be made memorable. This can be achieved by focusing on the store attribute – 'Convenience of Shopping' and by combining and enhancing major aspects of 'Convenience of Shopping'

**Table2. Scores on factors considered for Convenience of Shopping**

Factors	Location of the Store			Salesperson's Service			Layout of the Store			Customer Service		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Disagree	15	8	48	4	1	5	2	0	2	2	4	6
Neutral	51	51	102	30	36	66	36	45	81	48	21	69
Agree	295	295	590	385	385	770	385	375	760	365	395	760
Total	361	354		419	422		423	420		365	420	
Chi-Square	2.062			2.335			3.121			12.387		

**Chi-Square Table at 5% level of Significance = 5.991 with (r-1)(c-1) degree of freedom**

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