Demographic Characteristics and Clothing Purchases: the Case of Casual and Formal Wears

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Abstract

This paper aims to analyze the impact of demographic categories on clothing purchases in terms of formal and informal wear. This research employed solely primary sources of data. A structured questionnaire was used to collect information on consumer demographics that affect clothing purchasing decisions. A total of 180 customers were approached in different shopping malls and supermarkets. Of which 159 customers have participated in this research. For data analysis, t-tests and one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) are employed. The findings indicate that age has no apparent effect on preferences for casual clothes. The findings are also noteworthy, suggesting that formal clothing choices vary with age. Gender is one of the important demographic factors that affect purchase decisions. The findings indicate that gender matters in formal as well as informal clothes. Income also matters in making purchase decisions. The results suggest that income levels influence the affordability and brand preferences for casual wear. They also show that income affects the willingness to spend on formal wear, with higher-income individuals possibly favoring premium brands or bespoke tailoring. Regarding the education level, significant differences were found for casual wear and formal wear. It implies that purchasing preferences are influenced by education level both generally and in specific categories. Occupation is also one of the key factors that affect the buying decisions of individuals. Results show that occupation strongly impacts purchasing decisions across all categories. These results give companies important information about how to target particular demographic groups with their products and marketing tactics, increasing customer happiness and market efficacy. Companies can utilize these insights to position their brands to appeal to a variety of consumer segments, design product lines tailored to particular demographics, and launch focused marketing efforts.

Keywords: Demographic characteristics, Clothing purchase, Formal wear, Casual wear, Consumer behavior

Introduction

The global fashion industry has experienced remarkable growth (Kimemia, 2024). In a similar vein, the fashion sector in Nepal has expanded rapidly in the past several years. Local fashion boutiques, retail apparel stores, and fashion labels are more prevalent than ever. This growth has also given rise to a culture that celebrates the works of photographers, makeup artists, and fashion designers (https://kathmandupost.com/fashion/2021/12/16/how-nepali-stylists-are-navigating-their-path-in-the-ever-growing-fashion-world). This has led to an increase in the formal and informal clothing enterprises in Nepalese marketplaces. Due to this increase, it is now more important than ever to comprehend Nepalese consumer behavior, and demographics, and how these factors affect the country's purchases of clothing, formal, as well as informal. Consumer behavior encompasses making decisions,

engaging in physical activity, and participating in the evaluation, acquisition, utilization, or disposal of goods and services. In business, the client is king. Consumers' responses to a company's marketing mix or techniques determine whether it succeeds or fails. Businesses should design their marketing mix or strategies to satisfy the demands and desires of their target audience. In order to create an ideal marketing mix that fulfills customers' unfulfilled needs and desires, a business should take their purchase behaviors into account (Shrestha, 2022).

Consumer behavior is a collection of attitudes that define the patterns of decisions made by customers. Numerous external situational settings influence customer choices in addition to the fundamental internal elements that are known to influence purchasing behavior (Kotler & Keller, 2016; Dawson et al., 2006). Mainly, consumer behavior is shaped by both external incentives that have the potential to modify behavior and the purchasing consciousness of individual customers. In addition to influencing how individual consumers buy and use products, norms, conventions, customs, religion, festivals, class, lifestyle, and other facets of society's culture also shed light on the behavior of consumer groups (Lawan & Zanna, 2013). Therefore, one of the biggest challenges facing today's marketers is understanding consumers' purchase behavior.

Purchasing decisions for clothing or apparel fashion are influenced by a variety of consumer factors (Wiederhold & Martinez, 2018; Park et al., 2015; Iqbal et al., 2013). Numerous demographic factors, such as gender (Sung & Woo, 2019), age (Segal & Podoshen, 2013; McNeill & Moore, 2015), education level (Anić & Mihić, 2015), occupation and income (Cham et al., 2018) have been found to influence fashion consciousness. In addition to occupation, age, and income level were significant factors in the process of making decisions about what to buy when it came to clothes consumption, as highlighted by Riungu (2009), who also pointed out that these factors had an impact on clothing selection and purchasing habits. The importance of age and gender in clothing fashion consumption decision-making is highlighted by the findings of Anić & Mihić (2015), who also found that younger consumers are more likely than older consumers to engage in apparel fashion purchasing and that female consumers are more likely to enjoy the experience. According to Rahman et al. (2020), the fast fashion preferences of both genders steer "fast apparel fashion," which satisfies young consumers' "deeply held desires" for luxury garments in the industrialized world. On the other side, McNeill and Moore (2015) found that among females, the impact of age on fashion shopping was not particularly strong. Wai Yee et al. (2016) also pointed out that while both young and old women like shopping for clothing, their reasons, and methods differ. The age and job title of the trader were the socioeconomic factors that had the biggest effects on the kind of clothing offered (Kimemia, 2024; Imo et al., 2010).

All of these discussions highlight the significance of a consumer's demographic factors while making clothing purchases. Therefore, this paper aims to analyze the impact of demographic categories on clothing purchases in terms of formal and informal wear.

Review of Literature and Hypothesis Development

Consumer behavior is any action taken by people, groups, or organizations which directly or indirectly related to looking for, acquiring, purchasing, utilizing, and discarding products, services, concepts, or experiences to fulfill their needs and desires (Lawan & Zanna, 2013). These actions are performed methodically, beginning with the identification of the demand, followed by information searching, purchasing evaluation, and post-purchase actions (Kotler & Keller, 2016). Apart from external situational contexts that affect consumer choices, there are several essential internal factors, which are recognized as influential to buying behavior. The demographic characteristics of the consumer including age, gender, income, occupation, and education, are among these internal elements.

Age

The age of consumers is one of the major demographic characteristics (Lawan & Zanna, 2013). It matters a lot at the time of making a purchase decision. Study shows that older people make decisions about what to buy based on their understanding of the value of the satisfaction they get from using the product or service (Iqbal et al., 2013). Young people, on the other hand, frequently seek advice from salespeople before making a final decision (Homburg, 2001). Younger age groups find shopping to be more enjoyable (Kimemia, 2024; Quittkat et al., 2019;

Weber et al., 2017). Therefore, this leads to the following hypothesis:
H1: The types of clothing that different age groups purchase differ.

Gender

Men and women view the same topic from different perspectives. They each consider different factors when making purchases. Men and women have distinct expectations, lifestyles, needs, and wants, all of which are reflected in their shopping behavior, making gender an important factor in consumer behavior. Whereas men prefer prompt responses, women prefer greater interaction. Males don't want to deal with people. They are emotionally stable, domineering, rule-abiding, and watchful; women are more sensitive, warm, and wary than men. Each of them takes a different approach to the same problem. Women tend to share and discuss solutions when they are worried about how problems are solved, but men's approaches show their competence in solving problems (Shukla, 2019). Several issues are raised, including gender identity, the amount of time spent searching, and the influence of gender on impulsive purchases based on differences in purchasing intentions between the sexes. Compared to women, men are less active and have a greater interest in shopping. There are significant differences between males and females when it comes to their emotionality in purchasing intentions and decision-making processes (Koca & Koc, 2016). Women are more interested in the shopping process, spend more time there, believe that buying clothes is a basic human right, and usually make impulsive purchases (Kimemia, 2024; Rahman et al., 2020; Wai Yee et al., 2016; Imo et al., 2010). Therefore, this leads to the following hypothesis:
H2: Gender differences exist in the styles of clothing that people purchase.

Income

Income, which is a customer's total income from all sources, is the most crucial demographic component that has a big impact on their spending, clothing choices, and sales volume. Customers change their purchasing habits in response to shifts in their financial circumstances. The worldwide market and national economies have an impact on consumer behavior as well (Bishnoi, 2023; Anisha & Kalaivani, 2016). Customers will spend more on both formal and casual clothing if their income is higher. According to Ünal (2010), there is an immediate association between one's income level and the amount of money set aside for clothing. Thus, the hypothesis is:
H3: The types of clothing that are purchased vary depending on the customers' income.

Education Level

Education also shapes people's perceptions of marketing and advertising tactics, which in turn affects consumer buying decisions. Well-educated customers are more likely to be aware of and resistant to deceptive business practices that aim to convince them to purchase expensive or pointless goods. They are ultimately able to make more sensible purchasing judgments because they are able to distinguish between true value and misleading marketing claims. In fact, education is widely regarded as a crucial factor in determining human growth. According to Kunwar (2018), people with master's degrees and those pursuing technical or professional courses, who are either employed in profitable positions or enrolled in professional courses like mass communication or management, tend to purchase more formal attire than others with only a high school level. Therefore, this leads to the following hypothesis:
H4: Different educational groups purchase clothing in different ways.

Occupation

One of the major demographic aspects influencing consumers' purchase decisions is their occupation. Occupation has a big impact on clothing, thus it needs to be recognized and supported (Lawan & Zanna, 2013). In a study, Kunwar (2018) found that people who use services, both public and private, like to buy formal attire, followed by students. Due to their obligation to uphold office and institutional etiquette, students and members of the service class are influenced to purchase formal attire in addition to casual clothing for everyday usage. Thus, this leads to

the following hypothesis:
H5: The types of clothes that are purchased vary by occupation.

Research Methods

This research employed solely primary sources of data. A structured questionnaire was used to collect information on consumer demographics that affect clothing purchasing decisions. The people of Kathmandu Valley are taken into consideration as the population for this study.

The population of this valley is diverse in terms of culture, customs, religion, and economic background. Residents of three districts—Kathmandu, Lalitpur, and Bhaktapur—were chosen for the study's population using the purposive sampling technique.

A total of 180 customers were approached in different shopping malls including City Center, Civil Trade Centre (CTC) Mall, Civil Mall, Labim Mall, United World Trade Center, and different stores of Bhat Bhateni Supermarket. Of which 159 customers have participated in this research. For data analysis, t-tests and one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) are employed. The respondents with various demographic factors are shown in Table 1.

Table 1

Demographic characteristics of participants

Age	Frequency	Percent	Income (Rs. per month)	Frequency	Percent
18-25	58	36.5	Below 15,000	27	17
26-33	63	39.6	15,001-25,000	42	26.4
34-41	23	14.5	25,001-35,000	54	34
41-48	14	8.81	35,001-45,000	29	18.2
49-56	1	0.63	45,001-55,000	4	2.52
56+	0	0	55,001-65,000	2	1.26
Education Level			Above 65,001	1	0.63
School level	31	19.5	Occupation		
Bachelors	40	25.2	Government Service	45	28.3
Masters	37	23.3	Private Service	31	19.5
Others (professional courses)	51	32.1	Professional (self-employed)	22	13.8
Gender			Business	11	6.92
Female	77	48.4	Student	27	17
Male	82	51.6	Others (Housewife, unemployed)	23	14.5

Results and Findings

This part displays the results and findings from the data analysis. One-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) and t-tests for age, gender, income, education level, and occupation are used to assess whether variations in demographic variables in clothing types (in terms of casual and formal wear) and overall results are significant. Table 2 shows the results of t-tests and one-way ANOVA to identify significant differences between casual and formal wear, as well as general results by demographic category.

Table 2

Demographic characteristics and clothing purchases

Demographic characteristics	p-values		Overall
	Purchase Type		
	Casual wear	Formal wear	
Age	0.09	0.017*	0.02*
Gender	0.01*	0.04*	0.05*
Income	0.03*	0.032*	0.01*

Demographic characteristics	p-values		Overall
	Purchase Type		
	Casual wear	Formal wear	
Education group	0.02*	0.019*	0.04*
Occupation	0.03*	0.01*	0.01 *

* Indicates a significant difference (p<0.05)

The results examine the effects of demographic characteristics, including age, gender, income, education group, and occupation influence purchasing preferences across three categories: casual wear, formal wear, and overall purchase decisions.

The findings indicate that age has no apparent effect on preferences for casual clothes (p=0.09). This implies that casual clothing appeals to people of all ages, perhaps as a result of its more inclusive and informal style. The findings are also noteworthy, suggesting that formal clothing choices vary with age (p<0.05). For instance, older people might favor classic and conservative designs, while younger people might favor current formal ones. Overall, the results show that age affects the general purchasing preferences of people, reflecting its role in shaping broader clothing choices. It partially supports the hypothesis H1. As a result, when it comes to formal wear, segment marketing campaigns into age groups and provide styles that suit the tastes of different generations. A wide, age-neutral marketing approach might be adequate for casual clothing.

Gender is one of the important demographic factors that affect purchase decisions. The findings indicate that gender matters in formal as well as informal clothes. This indicates that buying decisions for both formal and casual clothing are continuously influenced by gender. For example, males may place more value on comfort and functionality than women do on trendy trends or colorful, informal clothing. In addition, women may seek out stylish yet professional selections, while males may concentrate on suits and ties. These results support the hypothesis H2. Therefore, marketers need to create collections tailored to a certain gender, making sure that product offerings and marketing appeal to both male and female tastes. To capitalize on the expanding trend of gender-neutral fashion, they need to take into account unisex options for casual clothes.

Income also matters in making purchase decisions. The results suggest that income levels influence the affordability and brand preferences for casual wear. They also show that income affects the willingness to spend on formal wear, with higher-income individuals possibly favoring premium brands or bespoke tailoring. In fact, income is a critical determinant of purchasing behavior across categories. These results support the hypothesis H3. Thus, marketers must provide tier-based pricing structures or product lines to accommodate varying income levels. For instance, low-income organizations can choose from reasonably priced alternatives, while high-income groups can buy upscale formal and casual clothes.

Regarding the education level, significant differences were found for casual wear and formal wear. It implies that purchasing preferences are influenced by education level both generally and in specific categories. These results support the hypothesis H4. In fact, more educated people may favor eco-friendly or brand-conscious products. These people could have certain tastes in formal attire whether it comes to quality or style. These findings suggest that marketers should target highly educated consumers with sustainable or ethical apparel brands since they are more likely to value these aspects. On the other hand, while advertising formal clothes to this group, they must emphasize elegance, quality, or usefulness.

Occupation is also one of the key factors that affect the buying decisions of individuals. Results show that occupation strongly impacts purchasing decisions across all categories. These results support the hypothesis H5. Indeed, professionals might choose smart-casual looks, while students might put comfort and cost-effectiveness first. Different professions have different formal dress codes (e.g., academics, corporate professionals). Because different occupations have different lifestyle needs and dress regulations, the occupation has a significant impact on overall purchase decisions. Marketers must therefore adjust their product offers to meet the needs of the workplace. For example: While creative professionals prefer trendy or unusual trends in both the casual and formal categories, corporate professionals prefer fine, tailored formal clothing.

Discussion and Conclusion

Clothing is an object that changes based on season, age, and fashion in order to cover oneself, cover the body from the elements, and enhance one's appearance. In addition to purely physical motivation, people dress for psychological and social reasons as well. A well-groomed individual who is conscious of the circumstances is more upbeat and confident in themselves. Clothing choices are influenced by a person's political and ideological inclinations, as well as their local and religious identities, among many other characteristics (Ünal, 2010). Demographic characteristics matter a lot in this respect.

The findings show that age has an impact on the kind of formal wear that is purchased as well as the total cost of the transaction. According to Dorota (2013), changes in consumer behavior have occurred over time. Compared to younger people, older people have more purchasing experience. Due to their expertise, older adults take into account a variety of possibilities. Conversely, younger, less seasoned ones depend on price and brand (Kimemia, 2024; Quittkat et al., 2019; Weber et al., 2017).

Furthermore, the findings show that there are gender differences and influences on the types of formal and casual clothing purchases as well as overall purchases. Some personality specialties paired with masculinity and femininity may be the cause of the notable variances, as they explain the differences in the behavior of male and female clients (Blackwell et al., 2001). In actuality, women tend to purchase more casual and party attire, whereas men like purchasing business attire (Kimemia, 2024; Rahman et al., 2020). This might be because, in order to preserve professional etiquette, the majority of men who work need to wear formal attire (Karthikeyan, 2011; Shukla, 2019).

Individual buying behavior is also influenced by national economies and the global market (Bishnoi, 2023; Anisha & Kalaivani, 2016). Income is a better predictor of consumer behavior, according to Dorota (2013). The lifestyle and attitude of a consumer are influenced by their income level. Paul et al. (1996) also found that those with higher incomes choose to buy more expensive products, while those with lower incomes prefer to purchase less expensive products.

There is a notable variation in the sort of formal attire purchased depending on the degree of education (Kunwar, 2018). People's expectations are frequently influenced by their education, which also determines their values, beliefs, attitudes, interests, hobbies, and way of life. In a similar vein, there are notable variations in formal wear depending on the occupation (Lawan & Zanna, 2013; Kunwar, 2018). Customers in the service class and students are influenced to buy formal attire in addition to casual clothing for everyday wear since they must uphold business and institutional politeness.

In conclusion, there are significant distinctions between the preferences for formal and casual wear, and demographic factors are important in determining clothing purchase behavior. Increased market resonance, improved customer loyalty, and a competitive edge in the ever-changing garment business are all possible for companies that comprehend and adjust to these demographic-driven preferences.

Implications

These results give companies important information about how to target particular demographic groups with their products and marketing tactics, increasing customer happiness and market efficacy. Companies can utilize these insights to position their brands to appeal to a variety of consumer segments, design product lines tailored to particular demographics, and launch focused marketing efforts. The disparities in preferences between formal and casual clothes highlight the necessity of two methods: fragmented approaches for formal wear and broad inclusivity for casual wear.

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