A study on online buying of fashion apparel brands by female customers in Bangalore city

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to examine the reasons for the growing online buying of fashion apparel brands by the female customers. The study is conducted to understand the factors that influencing customers for purchasing fashion apparel brands online. The research is conducted by interviewing female students and working class females based in Bangalore city. The study findings state that there is growing trend of online buying of fashion apparel brands by female customers in Bangalore city. Because of their busy lifestyle, easy accessibility to internet at work station and home all the time, easy to make a transaction online, easy accessibility to various types of products and brands at one place, higher price discounts and offerings, and home delivery. This shows that even though there certain challenges and risks involved in online buying still it's growing at very fast rate because of the benefits.

KEYWORD: *Internet, e-retailing, Online shopping, Apparel brands, Lifestyle, Female customer, Discounts*

INTRODUCTION

Online shopping or online retailing or e-tailing or Internet retailing is a form of electronic commerce or electronic retailing/tailing which allows consumers to directly buy goods or services from a seller through the Internet using a web browser, (Retailing Management, M.Levy, et. al, 2008). There are different alternative names used for e-retailing are online store, e-web-store, e-shop, e-store, Internet shop, web-shop, web-store, and virtual store. As in like, at a bricks-and-mortar retailer or shopping mall, the process of buying products or services online is known as business-to-consumer (B2C) online shopping. The largest of these online retailing corporations are Amazon.com, Myntra.com, Flipkart.com, Jabong.com, Fashionara.com and eBay. Retail success is no longer all about selling products and services from seller to end consumer through physical conventional stores. This is evident because of the increase in retailers now offering online store or e-store interfaces for consumers. Online shopping is growing at very fast rate with growth and development of technology. Technology is changing every time, which is actually making easy for customers to shop for products and services online. With the growth of information technology and increase of online shopping, helping marketers to generate a wealth of new market footprint coverage opportunities for stores that can appropriately cater to offshore market demands and service requirements.
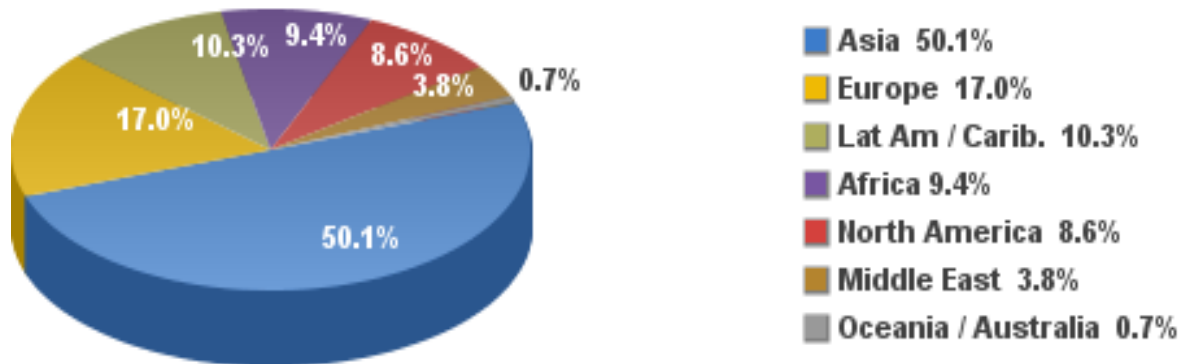
HISTORY AND GROWTH

The first World Wide Web server and browser was created by Tim Berners-Lee in 1990 and then it was opened for commercial use in 1991.Thereafter, subsequent technological growth and innovations emerged in 1994 which were later used for online banking, the opening of an online pizza shop by Pizza Hut, Intershop's first online shopping system. Immediately after, Amazon.com launched its online shopping site in 1995 and eBay was also introduced in 1995. Internet was first introduced in India in 1995 which marked the beginning of the first wave of e-Commerce or e-retailing in the country. The economic liberalization after the launch of reforms in1991 attracted MNCs and brought about the growth of the IT industry. India's first online business-to-business (B2B) directory was launched

in 1996. The liberalization of the country's international trade policies was the key factor that accelerated the growth of B2C and B2B online portals. It enabled buyers and sellers to easily connect with their global counterparts.

The fast growth of e-commerce or e-tailing since the 1990s has dramatically changed the retail structure in the world economy. The fast advancement of the Internet infrastructure presented new opportunities for the traditional retailers and marketers in the world economy. With assistance from the latest development in communication and information technology, online marketers rush to establish positions in newly identified niches in an attempt to acquire new competitive advantages (Su-Jane, Chen; Tung-Zong, Chang, 2002). One distinctive advantage for e-retailers is the ability to reach a large number of consumers scattered around in various geographic locations, especially in hard-to-reach areas, in a matter of minutes or hours. Another advantage is the ability to reach out to younger generations that are heavily sought after by marketers.

Internet usage has increased globally over the past several years. According to a Miniwatts Marketing Group (2017) report, the majority of Internet users in 2016 were from Asia (50.1%), followed by Europe (17.0%) and North America (8.6%). As indicated in pie chart, Internet users come from all areas of the globe.
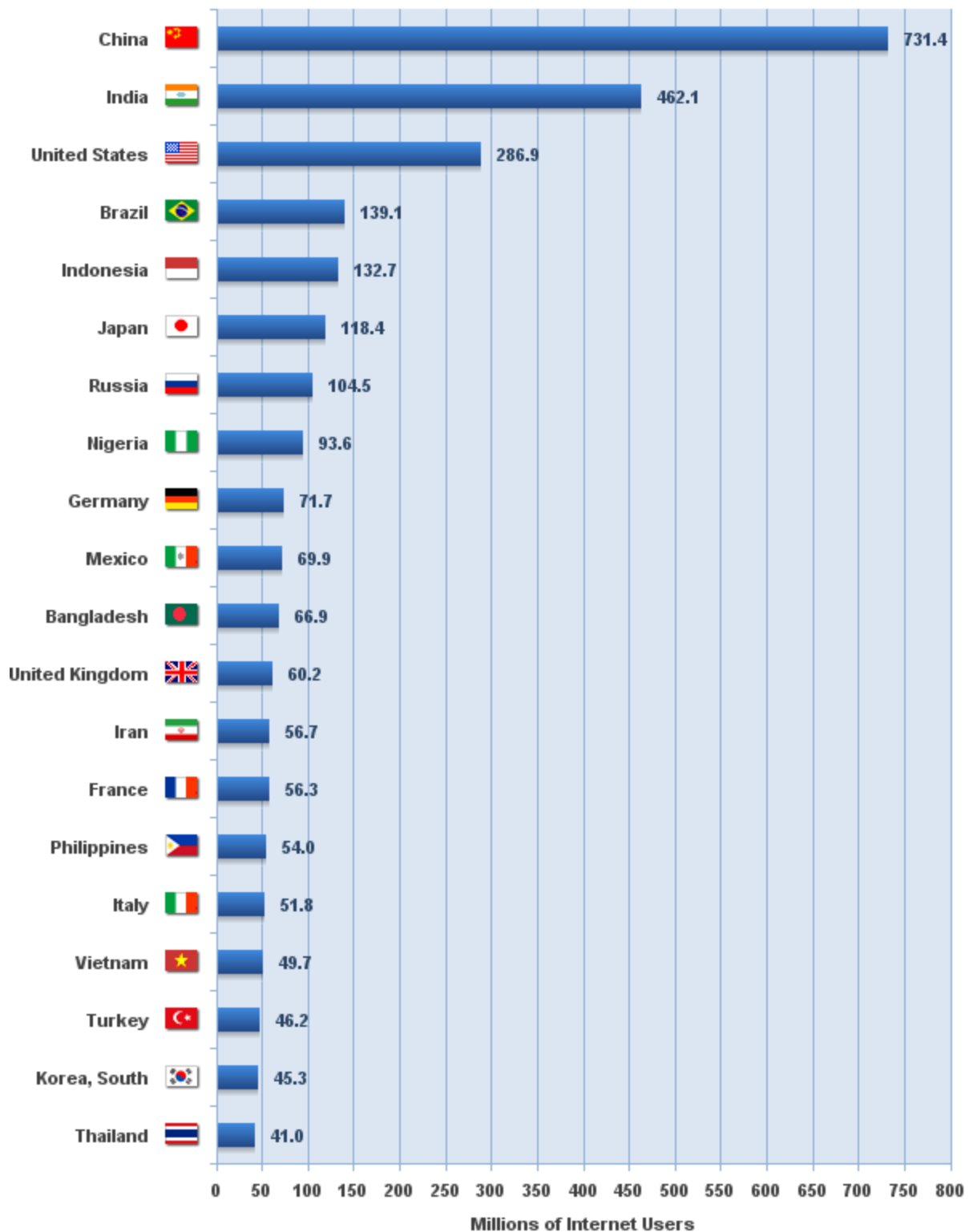

Internet Users in the World by Regions - 2017 Q1

Region	Percent
Asia	50.1%
Europe	17.0%
Lat Am / Carib.	10.3%
Africa	9.4%
North America	8.6%
Middle East	3.8%
Oceania / Australia	0.7%

Source: Internet World Stats - www.internetworldstats.com/stats.htm
Basis: 3,739,698,500 Internet users on March 31, 2017
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According to a Miniwatts Marketing Group (2017) report, there were 462.1 million internet users in India as of March 2017 and the number is expected to grow with the increased penetration of the internet during the forecast period.

TOP 20 INTERNET COUNTRIES - 2017
With the Highest Number of Internet Users

Country	Millions of Internet Users
China	731.4
India	462.1
United States	286.9
Brazil	139.1
Indonesia	132.7
Japan	118.4
Russia	104.5
Nigeria	93.6
Germany	71.7
Mexico	69.9
Bangladesh	66.9
United Kingdom	60.2
Iran	56.7
France	56.3
Philippines	54.0
Italy	51.8
Vietnam	49.7
Turkey	46.2
Korea, South	45.3
Thailand	41.0

Millions of Internet Users

Source: Internet World Stats - www.internetworldstats.com/top20.htm
2,738,949,556 Internet users in the Top 20 countries as of March 31, 2017
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In India e-commerce or e-retailing of apparel products is growing tremendously. Currently, online apparel retail constitutes merely 5-7 percentage of the Apparel market in India, but it is expected to grow more than 35 percentage in the next ten years. According to a report by ComScore, India now is the second largest online population in the Asia Pacific region, with 11.4% of the 644 million Internet users in Asia Pacific in 2013, as compared to 9.3% share of the 604 million internet users in 2012. Worldwide, now India has become third largest country with online population. The interesting fact about India's online population is that 75% of internet users are younger falling under the age of 35.

LITERATURE REVIEW

E-retailing is growing rapidly. Growth and development of technology is making lot of impact on growth of e-retailing. There is a tremendous increase in online shopping by the consumers due to changing demographics of the population. Since, consumers are easily accessible to internet due to the advancement of the technology; it's becoming easier for them to shop online for the various products. According to Goswami, Shubham; Khan, Shagufta (2015), majority of respondents are comfortable and like to shop online for apparels. Their study resulted that almost same number of male and females are shopping online for apparel products. They almost spend an average of 1-2hrs online for browsing and shopping for apparels. Romeo, Laurel Dawn; Lee, Young-A (2015), conducted research to study the issues faced by plus-size teens between the age group of 12-17years for shopping apparels online. The plus size teenage females faced three important issues while shopping online for apparel; lack of plus-size apparels in desired categories, confusion over size designations, and fit issues. Tonjia S. C and A J. Morgan (2013) conducted research study to examine how women consumers behave while shopping online and their perception on online shopping. The objective of their research was to understand the women online shoppers by investigating them in relation to their e-commerce behaviours and perception. The finding of their research was that women enjoy shopping online and there is a relation between race, income, and education of women shopping online. Since, there is a tremendous growth in women education and employment; there is also continuous increase in women shopping online. According to McCormick, H., & Livett, C. (2012), there are two elements; product viewing and fashion information on website have greater effect and influence on consumer selection and buying of fashion apparels online. According to Huiju Park and Hira Cho (2012) research study, 84 percent of female college going students are members on Social network online communities for longer times. And information posted on these sites is good sources for them for shopping apparels online. The result of this study showed that there is a casual relationship between psychological attachment, commitment, and information seeking behaviour. Hence, there are so many apparel retailers are using social networking sites as platform for showcasing and promoting their products. According to Kim, M., Jung-Hwan, K., & Lennon, S. J. (2011), different service attributes are required on website for male and female consumers buying fashion apparels online. Since, female fashion apparels will have more details and to be checked before buying online, hence, it requires different service attributes on their websites compared to fashion apparels for male consumers. According to Lee, Z. C. (2010), website design, features, and attributes plays important role for consumers for the selection and purchasing of products online. Since, touch and feel factor is not possible on online buying, web features and design for checking the color, size, style, texture of fabric, print, etc., are very important for selection of apparels by consumers. According to Sung, H., & Jeon, Y. (2009), people who shop for products online are young, educated, busy in life, tech-savvy, and having high income. Due to advanced technology it has become economy and easy for people to accessible to internet. According to So Won Jeong, (et al. 2008), features of website especially product presentation influence female student consumers to browse these sites and gives emotional pleasures. These websites are kind source of entertainment and lead them to shop online. Young people feel pleasure shopping online as they get to see lot of products and brands at a time. They also are getting attracted too much for shopping online due to the offers and higher discounts.

The Indian e-retail sector is poised for a boom due to changing demographics and an increase in the quality of life of urban population. Apparel e-tailing has experienced significant growth across the country due to increasing time-poverty, changing lifestyles, convenience and flexibility of shopping from home and option of free home delivery (in most cases). Factors such as dramatic increase in penetration of IT devices and communication solutions (especially tablets, broadband and smart-telephony), and emergence of exciting new "virtual reality" technologies are contributing to the expansion of apparel e-tailing. The average Indian consumer has been experiencing increasing time-poverty these days. People have been spending more time commuting to and at their offices, on leisure and recreation, on vacations, in grooming and maintaining their well-being, socializing, teaching school-going children etc. leading to limited time available for shopping and such activities. There is an increasing emphasis on reducing the stress and time taken for routine activities (household chores/ shopping etc.) and

maximizing the time spent with families and friends. Convenience in terms of ease and time, information, decision-making, transactions and flexibility has been a major factor influencing adoption of e-commerce. This factor to a large extent also plays out for apparel e-tailing.

Growth and development of technology is playing a major role in addressing some key issues of online apparel retailing. High resolution graphics, streaming videos of garments donned by models, virtual dressing rooms and 3D viewing and zoom tools have made online shopping an interesting exercise. Customers can key in their vital measurements to find the right fit, and can also browse through multiple brands for the perfect dress. Players like Yempe.com, India's first online fashion brand, trying to get the first-mover advantage, aim to create experiences and craft consumer memories, apart from offering private-label fashion brands. It has integrated, advanced and highly user-friendly facilities like 'Virtual Dressing Room' where users can "try" the merchandise before the actual purchase. Among big cities, consumers in Mumbai topped the numbers of online shoppers, followed by Ahmedabad and Delhi. However, shopping on the net is gaining traction with consumers beyond metros and Tier I cities as well and gaining momentum across the country.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Secondary data: Related Books, Magazines, Journals, Newspapers, and Internet will be used for collecting secondary data.

Primary data: Observation and interview was conducted with the female customers who buy apparel products online. A judgmental convenience random sampling method is followed for the selection of sample.

Sampling plan: Sample size is 50. Sample unit includes thirty female students, twenty working class females.

DATA ANALYSIS

Data is collected by conducting direct interview with the fifty respondents who are based in Bangalore. Respondents are categorized into two groups. First group includes thirty female students and second group includes twenty working class females. Female students are of age between 21 to 25 years, post graduates; all are from well off families from urban background. These students have easy accessibility to internet 24/7. The working class females are of age group between 30 to 40 years, post graduates and above post graduates, working in government and private organizations with earning high income, and based in Bangalore city. These working class females are too easy accessible to internet service during working time.

The respondents are interviewed asking questions related to their online buying of fashion apparel brands to understand their views and opinions on process of online buying. The interview with respondents are conducted to collect information on their experience with respect to factors such as trust, satisfaction level, home delivery period, quality, price ranges, offers and discounts. The back ground information of consumer respondents sampled for the study is the basic to know about the respondents. Hence, regarding gender of the respondents, the ratio is 100% as all the respondents are females. The age wise combination of the respondents, the data shows that about 60% of the respondents are in the range of 21-25 years, and 40% of the respondents are in the range of 30-40 years. Regarding the educational level of the respondents, the data shows that maximum i.e., 80% of the respondents are post graduates, 20% of the respondents possess above post graduate level of education.

Occupation of the respondents also plays important role in the process of respondents' suitability for the study. Hence, the occupation of the respondents also taken into consideration for the data analysis, the study statistics shows that almost 40% of the respondents are found to be an employee of either government or private institutions while 60% of the respondents found to be students. The kinds of occupation the respondents are holding have direct relation with the online buying. Because of the respondents' occupational (work station) requirements of technology and internet facility is making them accessible to e-retailers. It is well known that online shopping is carried out through internet connection either on personal computers or mobile phones. Availability of internet network infrastructure is very crucial in the business of online retailing. Therefore, it is found to be one of the most influencing factors both from the consumers and retailers aspect.

All most all the respondents are having positive experience with the online buying of fashion apparel brands. The most commonly cited reasons by students and working class females for shopping fashion apparel brands on the Internet have been price and higher discounts, convenience, and varieties. Another great interesting factor cited by respondents is the ability to shop online without leaving the house or office and to have the ordered products delivered to their place or home. This may be because of increased women literacy rate and women employment in India. Working class females are not having sufficient time to visit and shop from conventional physical stores. The other factor which is influencing these females to buy apparels from online is higher discounts on prices. Indian fashion apparel consumers are price-sensitive and value-conscious. They want higher value for their money. This is also one of the reasons for increased online buying of fashion apparel brands by Indian customers. The online shopping not only provides customers access to many different types of fashion apparel brands under one roof, but also provides discount benefits and allows customers to compare products or services and prices offered by various companies. They also can access to customers' post purchase reviews and feedbacks on fashion apparel brands. There are a number of online retailers such as such Flipkart, Jabong, Fashionara, Myntra, Snapdeal, Junglee, Onestop, Limeroad, and many more present in the market, offering a variety of apparels with exclusive services and discounts to attract customers. Hence, online shopping is appealing to youth and working class females in India and the demand for apparels is expected to grow during the forecast period.

MAJOR FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

According to the analysis of both primary and secondary data that made in this study, it is clear that there are some important factors with respect to customers buying of fashion apparel brands which need to be identified and made proper suggestions as per the research study conducted. Therefore, the following are the suggestions made as per the major findings drawn from the research study.

- ➢ All the respondents replied that shopping online saves time for customers as compared to shopping offline. This is may be because of increased women employment and as women have to manage both office as well as home it's difficult by them to shop offline often.
- ➢ All the respondents indicated that shopping online allows to shop at any time the customer wants. But offline shopping requires customers to plan for their visit to conventional retail shops as most of the offline retailers will not be open 24/7. Shopping from far places within the city is becoming difficult for customers because of increased vehicles and traffic jams during peak hours.
- ➢ Another major findings from the study is that all the respondents have replied that shopping fashion apparel brands online will not only save their money on transportation cost but also on their purchase cost as they get higher discounts and offerings on the products. This is another major factor which is attracting more customers as well as making e-retailing growing.
- ➢ All the respondents have indicated that online shopping of fashion apparel brands provides customers access to many different types of fashion apparel brands under one roof as well as allows customers to compare products, services and prices offered by various companies. Hence, this can also help e-retailers to know the customers' feedback on their products, offerings, services and about their competitors' performance.
- ➢ All the respondents have indicated that there is increase in customers buying fashion apparel brands online because of home delivery facility which is making customers' shopping more easier than before. This is one of the challenging factors for e-retailer to maintain and manage their logistics partnership effectively to meet the customer expectations.
- ➢ Most of the respondents have indicated that customers are satisfied with the quality of fashion apparel brands offered by e-retailers which are established and available in physical conventional retail stores. But customers are facing problem regarding quality issues with the private brands of e-retailers. The limitation of touching and feeling of the products in the process of online shopping is found to be adversely affecting the purchase decision of many customers especially with the e-retailers brands. Hence, the e-retailers should follow certain quality standards for their private brands of with respect to size, color, fit, and construction of garment as per the expectations of customers.
- ➢ Another major finding from the study is that the customers have major concern about security issues with respect to usage of their credit/debit cards for online shopping of fashion apparel brands. Most of the respondents have indicated that customers shop online but make cash payment after delivery of the products to their places or homes. This is one of the challenges in the business of online retailing in the country in general and in Bangalore city in particular.

Is it worth going online buying of fashion apparel brands?

Of course, it's worth buying fashion apparel brands online. The findings of the study state that there are many benefits for customers who buy fashion apparel brands online. It's very easy for customers to buy products online than buying from physical conventional retail stores. It is more convenient and time saving, because it does not require customers to visit a conventional store. Customer can access to many related and different kind of products and brands at a time under one roof, which will save lot of customers' time in terms of visiting market and searching for the stores and products. Customers can also view and compare the reviews and ratings given by other customers about the products and brands. This will actually makes customers' buying decision easier. Otherwise, whenever customer will decide to buy a product, first he will take views and opinions from his family members, friends, and colleagues about product and brands. Then he visits physical conventional stores in the market to compare and decides about buying a product and brand, which is actually a time consuming process. All this process the customer can do sitting at one place with accessible to internet. Along with this the customer can also access to various other related products and brands at the same time. But when customer visits the physical conventional store in the market will be accessible to only one particular type of products and brands. Hence, buying products online will always saves time. Online shopping not only saves the customers' time and transportation cost, it will also save the customers' purchase cost with the higher discounts and offerings offered by e-retailers. As the overhead costs and operational costs will be less, online marketers sell the products and brands at much more less than what customers buy from physical retail stores. Therefore, the customers who buy fashion apparel brands online will get more percentage of discounts and offerings. Hence, it's worth buying fashion apparel brands online than offline.

CONCLUSION

In the long run, online retail or e-retailing is far more suited to a country like India where conventional retailing requires extremely high fixed costs and operational expenses, because of which e-retailers are able to sell the products at much lesser prices than the conventional retailers. Hence, as Indian customers are price sensitive and value conscious E-retailing is growing at a fast rate where the customers are getting products with lesser prices and higher discounts. Online retailing has fundamentally stronger value proposition for customers such as convenience, range of products available, and ability to compare products, offerings, brands, and their prices and discounts. E-retailing has come in to existence to serve the market through low price with high value. This makes the industry well known to compete mainly based on pricing strategy. Therefore, competition is so stiff in online retailing compared to offline retailing. Online retailing business is found to be competitive and hence makes retailers to operate at lower margin compared to the offline market. The growth and development of technology is also playing major role in supporting the growing trend of e-retailing of apparel products. Applications of IT tools in e-retailing of apparels made online shopping of apparel products more exciting and interesting.

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