

CUSTOMER BEHAVIOUR IN HAUTE COUTURE

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ABSTRACT

The Customer Behavior research is a scientific study of the processes of choosing Haute couture which satisfies their needs. Companies and Ready-to-wear brand satisfy those needs only to the extent that they satisfy the customer. A vast body of knowledge exists regarding the attitudes involved in the consumption of luxury brands. The purchase of products for their symbolic and social value rather than for their inherent utility is now widely recognized as a significant determinant of consumer behavior with changes in industry trends, gaps in knowledge are created. Thus, it is important to examine luxury brands in relation to uniqueness. The importance of adult consumers has been explored in depth, but there has been less attention given to the emergence of symbolic consumption in young people. This study examines the causal relationships among consumers' need for uniqueness, and purchase intentions of an haute couture luxury apparel brand.

KEYWORDS: Customer Behavior, Fashion trend, Haute couture, Luxury

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND

Consumer Behavior Theories originated from psychology study in the beginning of 20 century and did not become systematic theories until 1968. Although it is a very young field, since its practical significance, there is already a large and expanding field of research that has emerged focusing on consumer behavior in the past few decades. From the marketing perspective, consumer behavior research is a necessary tool for the marketers to understand their target market and consumer group, to develop marketing strategies. Because of this, the consumer behavior theories have been quickly applied to various sectors of all fields in the world. Nevertheless, every field has its own features, and none of any theory can perfectly match all situations, the theory must be properly adjusted to a particular market. Besides that, as a young field, the consumer behavior theories system is not comprehensive enough, and there is still research remained to develop for maturity like many other theory fields' developing process. That is why this research is done to see in Haute couture how the consumer behavior theories applied and what the consumer behavior characteristics are.

Presently in existing works, the research about the connection between fashion and consumer behavior is not plenteous. However, a few research have been contributed to this field, for example the book Consumer behavior in fashion by Michael R. Solomon and Nancy J. Rabolt in 2004 (Solomon & Rabolt 2009) was providing a comprehensive analysis of today's fashion consumer. But for the Haute couture field, which should be separately treated from ordinary fashion field, seldom study in consumer behavior involves or pay attention to these newly growing market & also personal choices. Actually there are a lot of differences between fast fashion and Haute couture fashion, and it has significant meaning to find out the characteristics of the Haute couture consumer behavior.

1.2 CURRENT MARKET SCENARIO

Increasing competition and Globalization, and short life cycles of cloths in fashion retailing, improve symmetric consumer behavior and set several marketing challenges for retail firms. To survive in this industry, it is necessary for manufacturers and retailers to develop effective marketing strategies. It has been noticed that the

fashion apparel market has been extremely influenced by fashion trends in India. Especially when it comes to Luxury Fashion which is worn by niche category of people. Today fashion industry is a rapidly growing industry in the world. The fashion industry in India currently is considered dynamic. For the last few decades, the fashion industry in India is experiencing a boom due to increasing consciousness for fashion among Indians.

Fashion apparel industry has become more diverse by fashion brands, personalization, advertisement, and ethnicity in the global marketplace. If consumers' preferences can identify by manufacturers and retailers of fashion apparel, they can be better able to attract and maintain their target consumer group. Thus, the purpose of the present study is to investigate the dimension of fashion apparel shopping among consumers in Haute Couture. This study contributes to build the position of manufacturer and retailer in driving purchase intentions with factors like value and status, and price sensitivity and many more of customized cloths among consumers in India.

The current urban middle- and upper-class Indian consumer buying behavior to a large extent has the Western influence especially amongst females. There is an increase in positive attitude towards the Western trends. The Indian consumer has become much more open-minded and experimental in his perspective. Foreign brands gain wide consumer acceptance in India. Fashion is a billion-dollar industry employing millions of people not only in emerging economies but across the globe. By this changing landscape consumers are affected to a large extent by these swift changes.

The late 1980's, few large retailers' dominance the fashion industry, fashion industry has been experiencing major changes since last few decades. In the fast-evolving fashion industry even the best plans and activities can be failed by economic change and the actions of competitors.

After the independence, changes occurred in Indian Fashion industry and dressing style of Indians by the effects of globalization, which led to the fusion of Indian and western dresses. Wearing Kurtis on jeans, spaghetti with sarees are the examples showing the effect of western culture on Indian fashion industry. The work done by Indian designers is highly appreciated globally.

1.3 MAIN OBJECTIVE AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

2. To study the nature of Haute couture Fashion and awareness of customized apparels among consumers.
3. To study the behavior of customer towards Haute couture Fashion.

2. ABOUT HAUTE COUTURE

2.1 DEFINITION

Haute couture is a French word for 'high sewing' or 'high dressmaking'; refers to the creation of exclusive fashions. It is a common term for custom-fitted clothing as produced primarily in Paris but also in other fashion capitals such as New York, London, and Milan. Haute couture is not only made-to-order for a specific customer, but also usually made from high-quality, expensive fabric and sewn with extreme attention to detail and finish, often using time-consuming hand-executed techniques. The term is sometimes used to refer exclusively to French fashion; more often, it refers to any unique stylish design made to order for wealthy and high-status clients.

The term can refer to:

- The fashion houses or fashion designers that create exclusive and often trend-setting fashions.
- The fashions created.

2.2 HISTORY

French leadership in European fashion may perhaps be dated from the 18th century, when the art, architecture, music, and fashions of the French court at Versailles were imitated across Europe. Visitors to Paris brought back clothing that was then copied by local dressmakers. Stylish women also ordered fashion dolls from Paris – dolls dressed in the latest Parisian fashions, to serve as models.

As railroads and steamships made European travel easier, it was increasingly common for wealthy women to travel to Paris to shop for clothing and accessories. French fitters and seamstresses were commonly thought to be the best in Europe, and real Parisian garments were considered better than local imitations.

The couturier Charles Frederick Worth (October 13, 1826 – March 10, 1895), is widely considered the father of haute couture as it is known today. Although born in Bourne, Lincolnshire, England, Worth made his mark in the French fashion industry. While he created one-of-a-kind designs to please some of his titled or wealthy customers, he is best known for preparing a portfolio of designs that were shown on live models at the House of Worth. Clients selected one model, specified colors and fabrics, and had a duplicate garment tailor-made in Worth's workshop. Worth combined individual tailoring with a standardization more characteristic of the ready-to-wear clothing industry, which was also developing during this period.

Following in Worth's footsteps were: Callot Soeurs, Patou, Poiret, Vionnet, Fortuny, Lanvin, Chanel, Mainbocher, Schiaparelli, Balenciaga, and Dior. Some of these fashion houses still exist today, under the leadership of modern designers.

In the 1960s a group of young designers who had trained under men like Dior and Balenciaga left these established couture houses and opened their own establishments. The most successful of these young men were Yves Saint Laurent, Pierre Cardin, André Courrèges, and Emanuel Ungaro. Japanese native and Paris-based Hanae Mori, a woman, was also successful in establishing her own line.

Lacroix is perhaps the most successful of the fashion houses to have been started in the last decade. Other new houses are Jean-Paul Gaultier and Thierry Mugler.

3. HAUTE COUTURE IN INDIA

Indian designers have always had easy access to intricate craftsmanship, especially when it comes to embroideries, weaves, printing and dyeing techniques. However, in this context, the nature of couture in the country and in the West diverges and has led, over time, to Indian couture being conflated with occasion and bridal wear. Add to this the fact that it caters to the affluent, and you begin to see a pattern emerge.

For all these fashion houses, custom clothing is no longer the main source of income, often costing much more than it earns through direct sales; it only adds the aura of fashion to their ventures in ready-to-wear clothing and related luxury products such as shoes and perfumes, and licensing ventures that make the real money. Excessive commercialization and profit-making can be damaging, however. Cardin, for example, licensed with abandon in the 1980s and his name lost most of its fashionable cachet when anyone could buy Cardin luggage at a discount store.

The 1960s also featured a revolt against established fashion standards by mods, rockers, and hippies, as well as an increasing internationalization of the fashion scene. Jet travel had spawned a jet set that partied — and shopped — just as happily in New York as in Paris. Rich women no longer felt that a Paris dress was necessarily better than one sewn elsewhere. While Paris is still pre-eminent in the fashion world, it is no longer the sole arbiter of fashion. As shown in Figure 1,2,3 & 4.



Fig. 1



Fig.2



Fig.3



Fig.4

4. IMPORTANCE OF CUSTOM CLOTHING

Branded attire is a need for any sort of commerce. It builds brand awareness and advances a company's culture. If you connect the incalculable companies who utilize branded attire, at that point, you bring your company to another level. How you communicate your brand, use of textual styles and colors, how data is displayed on your site, or the application of logos on materials and resources - all these actions play into

creating your brand. To assist you, we have compiled the significant benefits of branding attire for your company.

Awareness

Awareness about branded apparel is very important for its label to grow. Custom branded apparel is a fantastic approach for growing your brand awareness. Not handiest is its continuous advertising and marketing, but it could flip customers, clients, and employees into walkable, wearable billboards. High, first-class custom branded apparel is a to- class object that your consumers will hold for an extended time.

Loyalty

When customers enjoy the clothes of the brand, they are more likely to return. People associate brands with experiences. For example, when clients see the logo, they know what to expect. When they have a positive experience with it, they will frequent their business and gladly sport the apparel. Especially when they could be sure to have positive experiences with the brand.

Cost-Effective

Unlike other varieties of advertising that have a brief lifespan, custom branded apparel is designed to be worn, washed, and worn again. Customers look for cost effective branded clothes. They want the balance between the money & luxury. At the same time when it is cost effective and satisfying the needs, Brand gains the loyalty.

Promotions

As custom branded clothing is uniquely designed and made to a brilliant widespread, it's the perfect product for giveaways for crucial advertising and marketing channels. This includes through e-mail database, social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and LinkedIn. Creating a buzz and a demand for products reward social media followers with a garb item that is uniquely the brand. Continuously captivating the customers and giving them unique, customized material is the vital thing to keep them coming back and bring their friends along too.

5. METHODOLOGY OF STUDY

Haute couture has entered a new era, with a governing body—Fédération de la Haute Couture et de la Mode—that's switched up its style to bridge the gap between heritage and contemporary design. The Fédération has approximately 100 members and comprises three Chambres Syndicales, or central bodies (Haute Couture, Women's Fashion and Men's Fashion). FHCM president Ralph Toledano works alongside the board of directors—Pietro Beccari (Christian Dior), Delphine Bellini (Schiaparelli), Riccardo Bellini (Maison Margiela), Philippe Fortunato (Givenchy), Bruno Pavlovsky (Chanel) and Sophie Waintraub (Jean-Paul Gaultier)—to approve members. The geographic boundary of the study covers the markets, consumers, and available brands in Sweden, which is one of the most advanced countries in fast fashion field, owning its typical brand H&M. Some fast fashion brands are chosen here, H&M, Ginatricot, and Zara, as the main study brands involved in the thesis. H&M (Hennes & Mauritz) is a Swedish brand offering fashion forward clothing for women, men, teenagers, and children. Founded in 1947, today H&M operate around 2,000 stores spread over 37 markets (Hm.com 2010). H&M says that it owes its success to three factors: inventive design, the best quality at the best price, and efficient logistics (Tungate 2008). Ginatricot is a Swedish fastest growing fashion brand founded in Borås in 1997. The focus of Ginatricot is at selling fashion forward casual clothes for women. Every week there's new clothes released to the stores. In 2009 the company's turnover exceeded SEK 2.3 billion from over 135 shops in Sweden, Norway, Finland, and Denmark (Ginatricot.com). Zara is established in 1975 in Spanish, belonging to Inditex group. As one of the biggest international fashion brands, Zara has men's clothing and women's clothing, each of these subdivided in Lower Garment, Upper Garment, Shoes, Cosmetics and Complements, as well as children's clothing (Zara Kids). Zara needs just two weeks to develop a new product and get it to store, compared with a six-month industry average, and launches around 10,000 new designs each year. Zara has 8 stores in Sweden (Tiplady 2006).

6. SCOPE AND LIMITATION

In this thesis, the research of consumer behavior is partly based on the questionnaire surveys and observation on the consumers, as well as on some existing common knowledge. Due to the limitation of resource in

interviewees, the analysis can only focus on the available resources, which means the results may only apply to the High fashion market and niche consumers. Though, the global fashion market, with a lot of conceptual ready-to-wear labels which are already spread around the globe, is regarded very representative of the global fashion market, as well as the consumers in this environment. The regarding respondents are only female, from 13 to 55 years old, only female is chosen to be involved here because most fast fashion consumers are females, and one of the three selected brands only offers women's clothing. Moreover, the male behavior in fashion consumption is very different from the behavior of the female. In the thesis, the consumer behavior happens in the physical stores, so the in-home shopping, such as e-commerce or teleshopping, is not included here.

7. RESULTS

This study examines the causal relationships among consumers' need for uniqueness, brand perceptions, brand judgements and emotional value, purchase intentions of an haute couture luxury apparel brand and its ready to wear range among Customers. A vast body of knowledge exists regarding the attitudes involved in the consumption of luxury brands. The purchase of products for their symbolic and social value rather than for their inherent utility is now widely recognized as a significant determinant of consumer behavior. With changes in industry trends, gaps in knowledge are created. Thus, it is important to examine luxury brands in relation to uniqueness.

8. DISCUSSIONS

The paper adds knowledge to the field of consumers' need for uniqueness and status consumption and provides an insight into consumers' purchasing intentions toward an haute couture luxury apparel brand and offers several significant contributions. Although the findings of this research are market specific, they have important implications for general fashion consumption research. This research demonstrated the value of the consumers' need for uniqueness and the status consumption scales in explaining fashion adoption behavior especially pertaining to luxury apparel.

9. CONCLUSION

It is concluded that the customers of India are more interested in buying fashion and branded apparels. Even they are restricted through some financial aspects like individual income still they are very much interested in Buying branded apparels getting customized by their own choice and they are Usually Updated for new arrivals in fashion and brands. However, they have less income, but they want to look smart and up to date.

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