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Consumer Perception towards Ethnic Wear (A Case Study of Ram Narayan Garg Safawala)

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Abstract: The ethnic wear market in India is currently vast, with significant growth potential. The women's wear segment holds a major share of the market and is expected to continue expanding over the next decade. This study explores the scope of ethnic wear in India, market share trends, and future growth prospects while also assessing consumer awareness of branded ethnic wear products. Additionally, it bridges the gap between past and present research on the subject. A survey was conducted with 100 respondents, comprising an equal number of men and women, through direct interviews. The study also examines how consumers from different socio-economic backgrounds perceive brand extensions and the factors influencing their preferences. Furthermore, it analyzes how user experience levels impact their perception of extended brands and their effect on the parent brand's image. For marketers aiming to strengthen the performance of brand extensions, this study provides strategic insights and practical recommendations. It introduces fresh perspectives for marketers to consider in their efforts to enhance brand positioning and consumer engagement in the ethnic wear segment.

Keywords:

Consumer Perception, Ethnic Wear Market, Brand Extension, Market Growth

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Introduction

Understanding consumer behavior is crucial for businesses aiming to enhance sales. Retailers analyze consumer purchasing decisions to identify key factors influencing buying patterns. Consumer perception plays a vital role in shaping purchasing behavior and can be categorized into three key aspects: self-perception, price perception, and perceived quality-of-life benefits. Marketing and advertising strategies leverage consumer perception, similar to how sensory perception explains how individuals process stimuli through their senses. In the same way, consumer perception helps businesses gauge how customers form opinions about brands and their offerings. By applying consumer perception theories, businesses craft effective marketing strategies to retain existing customers and attract new ones.

Ethnic Wear in India

The Indian ethnic wear market is vast and continuously expanding. Women's ethnic wear, in particular, holds a significant market share and is projected to grow steadily in the coming decade. This

growth is driven primarily by the increasing number of working women. Over the next ten years, India's urban workforce will witness an addition of over 10 million women, contributing to an estimated 35 million consumers across key metropolitan areas. The rise in working women also increases household disposable income, directly influencing the consumption of both essential and lifestyle products, including ethnic apparel.

Regional preferences play a crucial role in ethnic wear choices. For instance, in North India, salwar kameez remains a staple for everyday and festive occasions, while sarees continue to hold prominence across other regions. While Tier I cities traditionally favored sarees, the demand for ethnic wear has grown significantly due to its balance between cultural aesthetics and modern convenience. Consequently, fabrics like cotton with moderate fashion elements are gaining popularity.

Growth of the Indian Ethnic Wear Market

The ethnic wear industry in India has traditionally been dominated by unorganized players, but recent years have witnessed steady growth in modern retail formats. Large retail chains and modern stores are rapidly expanding their presence in metro cities, contributing significantly to the sector's growth.

The ethnic kids' wear segment is expected to grow at a CAGR of 10% over the next few years. Interestingly, the market size for girls' ethnic wear is approximately 2.5 times larger than that of boys' ethnic wear.

The bridal and wedding wear segment presents immense business opportunities, attracting a wide range of retailers from local boutiques to large regional and national brands. Established brands such as Manyavar, Diwan Saheb, and Vastra have successfully positioned themselves as premium players in the market.

The diversity of festivals and cultural celebrations across India also plays a significant role in driving demand for ethnic wear. Festivals such as Lohri in January and Diwali in October-November lead to a surge in ethnic wear purchases, as brands introduce new designs tailored for festive occasions. These celebrations contribute to the growth of ethnic wear across all consumer segments, including men, women, and children.

Historically, ethnic wear was associated with older age groups, but today, it has gained popularity among younger consumers. Many young women are embracing a fusion of ethnic and western wear, pairing kurtas with jeans or leggings. In response, fashion brands are launching ethnic fusion wear lines that incorporate contemporary styles and patterns, redefining traditional fashion for younger audiences.

Among women of all age groups, salwar kameez remains a preferred choice due to its comfort, convenience, and evolving fashion trends. The increasing participation of women in the corporate workforce is further fueling demand for stylish yet professional ethnic wear. Brands have capitalized on this trend by adapting their collections to suit the preferences of working professionals.

While traditional retail continues to be important, modern retail formats are gaining popularity among urban consumers. Previously, local tailors and neighborhood boutiques catered to most ethnic wear needs. However, the introduction of large-format retailers has transformed the market by providing standardized quality and a wider variety of choices.

Brands such as Reliance Trends, Max, and Big Bazaar have successfully introduced private labels in the value segment, while premium brands like BIBA and W dominate the national market. Regional brands such as Neeru's (Hyderabad), Frontier Bazaar (Delhi), Bombay Selections (Delhi), and Jashn (Mumbai) also maintain a strong presence.

Retail chains like Shoppers Stop, Lifestyle, and Westside are expanding their private label offerings, giving consumers access to contemporary ethnic wear under one roof. Additionally, the growth of e-commerce has enabled brands to reach consumers in smaller cities, providing them with easy access to quality ethnic wear through online platforms. As distribution channels continue to evolve, brand differentiation through product quality and customer service will be crucial for long-term success.

Global Popularity of Indian Ethnic Wear

Indian ethnic wear has captivated global audiences due to its elegance and timeless appeal. Western cultures have long admired the glamour and intricate designs of sarees, salwar suits, and

lehengas. Over the years, innovative fashion designers have blended traditional craftsmanship with modern styles, giving rise to fusion wear that has gained international recognition. By combining the sophistication of western wear with the richness of ethnic aesthetics, designers have successfully elevated the global status of Indian ethnic fashion.

Market Players: Ram Narayan Garg Safawala

Established in 2006, Ram Narayan Garg Safawala has emerged as a leading supplier of ethnic wear and wedding apparel in India. Based in Jaipur, Rajasthan, the company is renowned for its extensive range of high-quality ethnic outfits, including Indo-Western styles, churidar sets, and designer kurtas.

The brand's product range is celebrated for its unique craftsmanship, fast color retention, trend-focused designs, and premium quality. The fabrics used, including cotton, chiffon, and georgette, are carefully sourced to ensure durability and comfort. Additionally, rigorous quality checks are conducted at various stages of production to maintain high standards.

Review of Literature

Several studies have explored consumer behavior and brand perception in the ethnic wear market.

Sharma Davendra (2017) examined consumer awareness and perception toward a private company's ethnic wear products. The study, based on a survey of 100 customers, concluded that while most consumers had a positive perception of the brand, there was scope for improvement in product variety and color options.

Variawa (2010) analyzed the impact of packaging on consumer decision-making in the FMCG sector. The study, conducted among 250 respondents at Star Hyper, indicated that low-income consumers preferred premium packaging, as it often had reusable value. However, the study also found a weak correlation between packaging and brand loyalty.

Backhaus et al. (2007) emphasized the significance of the purchase decision phase, where consumers finalize transactions after evaluating various alternatives.

Kacen et al. (2005) examined the consumer decision-making process in China's imported health food market. The study found that factors such as education, income, and marital status significantly influenced purchasing behavior. Family members played a crucial role in shaping purchase decisions.

Research Gap

Previous studies have largely focused on consumer behavior toward specific brands. This study aims to bridge the gap by analyzing the overall market potential of ethnic wear in India, its market share, future growth trends, and consumer awareness of branded products. Additionally, it examines consumer perceptions of brand extensions and their impact on the parent brand's reputation. The findings of this research offer valuable insights for marketers seeking to enhance brand performance and customer engagement.

Objectives of the Study

- To assess the current state of the ethnic wear market in India.
- To identify key factors driving the growth of ethnic wear.
- To analyze the limitations affecting the market.
- To explore marketing strategies for ethnic wear brands.
- To examine consumer awareness of different ethnic wear forms.
- To study market share trends and future growth prospects.
- To evaluate factors influencing consumer preference for branded vs. unbranded products.
- To identify gaps in product offerings and align them with consumer needs.

Research Methodology

This study incorporates both **primary** and **secondary** research methods.

- **Primary Data:** Data was collected from consumers purchasing ethnic wear at Ram Narayan Garg Safawala through structured interviews. The study followed a stratified random sampling method, with a sample size of 100 respondents (50 men and 50 women).
- **Secondary Data:** Information was gathered from various sources, including online research, books, newspapers, journals, and industry reports.

Hypothesis

Null Hypothesis (H₀)

- There is no significant relationship between consumer demographics (age, gender, income level) and their preference for ethnic wear.
- Celebrity endorsements and social influence do not significantly impact consumer perception of ethnic wear.
- Price and quality do not significantly influence the purchase decisions of consumers regarding ethnic wear.
- The cultural background of consumers does not significantly affect their preference for ethnic wear.

Alternative Hypothesis (H₁)

- There is a significant relationship between consumer demographics (age, gender, income level) and their preference for ethnic wear.
- Celebrity endorsements and social influence significantly impact consumer perception of ethnic wear.
- Price and quality significantly influence the purchase decisions of consumers regarding ethnic wear.
- The cultural background of consumers significantly affects their preference for ethnic wear.

Limitations of the Study

- Time constraints may have limited the depth of research.
- Data may not be entirely up-to-date in some areas.
- Potential errors due to respondent bias.
- Primary data collection was time-consuming and costly.
- The sample size was limited to 100 respondents.

Analysis and Interpretation

Q1. Where do you usually take inspiration for new purchases?

Source	Percentage of Respondents	Number of Respondents (100)
Friends	54%	54
Family	16%	16
Celebrities	18%	18
Other	12%	12

From the survey, it is evident that friends are the most significant source of inspiration for new purchases (54%). Family influences 16% of respondents, while 18% take inspiration from celebrities. The remaining 12% seek inspiration from other sources.

Q2. What is your main criterion when purchasing clothing?

Criterion	Percentage of Respondents	Number of Respondents (100)
Quality	44%	44
Price	22%	22
Comfort	21%	21
Brand	13%	13

When choosing clothing, 44% of respondents prioritize quality, while 22% focus on price. Comfort is a key factor for 21% of respondents, and 13% consider the brand as their primary criterion.

Q3. Who usually accompanies you while shopping?

Companion	Percentage of Respondents	Number of Respondents (100)
Alone	22%	22
Friends	33%	33
Family	38%	38
Colleagues	7%	7

The data indicates that 38% of respondents prefer shopping with family, 33% with friends, 22% shop alone, and 7% shop with colleagues.⁶

Q4. Are you interested in celebrity fashion labels?

Response	Percentage of Respondents	Number of Respondents (100)
Yes	76%	76
No	24%	24

A majority (76%) of respondents express interest in celebrity fashion labels, whereas 24% do not find them appealing.

Q5. Are your purchases usually planned or spontaneous?

Purchase Type	Percentage of Respondents	Number of Respondents (100)
Planned	52%	52
Spur of the moment	33%	33
Other	15%	15

The survey shows that 52% of respondents prefer planned purchases, 33% make impulsive buying decisions, and 15% follow other purchasing habits.

Q6. When purchasing a new item, do you buy a matching outfit item?

Response	Percentage of Respondents	Number of Respondents (100)
No	16%	16
Not very often	17%	17
Sometimes	23%	23
All the time	44%	44

A significant 44% of respondents always buy matching outfits, 23% do so occasionally, 17% rarely purchase matching items, and 16% never do.

Q7. Does the store's location affect your purchase behavior?

Response	Percentage of Respondents	Number of Respondents (100)
Strongly agree	36%	36
Agree	22%	22
Neither agree nor disagree	7%	7
Disagree	18%	18
Strongly disagree	17%	17

The survey findings suggest that 36% of respondents strongly believe that a store's location influences their purchasing behavior, 22% agree, 7% are neutral, 18% disagree, and 17% strongly disagree.

Q8. What is your favorite pattern to wear?

Pattern	Percentage of Respondents	Number of Respondents (100)
Stripes	48%	48
Dots	17%	17
No Pattern	13%	13
Other	22%	22

Stripes are the preferred pattern for 48% of respondents, while 17% favor dots. Meanwhile, 13% prefer plain outfits, and 22% choose other designs.

Q9. Do you follow current fashion trends?

Response	Percentage of Respondents	Number of Respondents (100)
Yes	78%	78
No	22%	22

According to the survey, 78% of respondents follow current fashion trends, whereas 22% do not.

Q10. Does the culture of your country and society influence your purchase decisions?

Response	Percentage of Respondents	Number of Respondents (100)
Strongly agree	42%	42
Agree	22%	22
Neither agree nor disagree	5%	5
Disagree	18%	18
Strongly disagree	13%	13

Cultural and societal influences strongly affect the purchase decisions of 42% of respondents, while 22% agree to some extent. Meanwhile, 5% remain neutral, 18% disagree, and 13% strongly disagree.

Findings

Consumer behavior is shaped by a variety of influences, including family, friends, celebrities, and personal preferences. This study provides a comprehensive analysis of these factors, shedding light on emerging shopping patterns, particularly in the ethnic wear segment.

- **Sources of Purchase Inspiration:** The study reveals that 50% of respondents rely on family members for inspiration when making new purchases. This suggests a strong cultural influence where family opinions and traditions play a key role in consumer decision-making. However, the remaining respondents draw inspiration from other sources such as friends, celebrities, and social media influences. This indicates a shift in consumer behavior, particularly among younger generations, who are more inclined toward trends promoted by influencers and public figures.
- **Factors Influencing Ethnic Wear Purchases:** Quality is the most significant factor influencing the purchase of ethnic wear, with 45% of respondents prioritizing it over other considerations. However, a considerable percentage of consumers base their decisions on factors such as price, comfort, and design. This variation highlights the need for brands to offer a diverse range of products catering to different consumer preferences.
- **Shopping Companions and Experience:** The study finds that 40% of respondents prefer shopping with family members, reflecting traditional shopping behaviors. Others choose to shop with friends or even follow recommendations from celebrities. This trend underscores the importance of social influence in shaping purchasing decisions.
- **Interest in Celebrity Fashion Labels:** A significant 80% of respondents show interest in celebrity-endorsed fashion labels, demonstrating the impact of brand association with popular figures. Celebrity-backed brands enjoy higher credibility and appeal, often leading to increased sales. This trend suggests that endorsements and collaborations with well-known personalities can enhance brand visibility and consumer trust.
- **Planned vs. Impulsive Shopping:** Half of the respondents plan their purchases of ethnic wear in advance, indicating a thoughtful approach to shopping. This planned behavior is often driven by factors such as upcoming cultural events, weddings, or festivals. On the other hand, the remaining respondents engage in more spontaneous shopping, influenced by seasonal sales, discounts, or social trends.
- **Preference for Matching Outfits:** 45% of respondents express a preference for purchasing matching outfit items, such as coordinated family attire or complementary accessories. This trend is especially prominent in cultural and festive shopping, where synchronization in clothing choices is highly valued.

- **Impact of Store Location on Purchase Decisions:** According to the study, 40% of respondents acknowledge that the proximity of a store affects their shopping behavior. Consumers are more likely to visit stores that are conveniently located, emphasizing the need for retailers to establish outlets in easily accessible areas.
- **Pattern Preferences in Clothing:** When it comes to clothing patterns, 50% of respondents favor striped designs, while others prefer dots, solid colors, or other patterns. This insight is crucial for designers and retailers in curating collections that cater to consumer preferences.
- **Adherence to Fashion Trends:** A striking 80% of respondents actively follow current fashion trends, indicating that contemporary styles and seasonal collections significantly influence their purchasing decisions. The remaining consumers, however, prioritize classic or timeless designs over fleeting fashion trends.
- **Cultural and Societal Influence on Shopping Choices:** The study highlights that 40% of respondents strongly agree that their country's cultural heritage and societal norms play a crucial role in shaping their shopping preferences. This reinforces the importance of cultural sensitivity in marketing and product development.

Results of Hypotheses Testing

- H₀₁:** There is no significant relationship between consumer demographics (age, gender, income level) and their preference for ethnic wear.
- **Rejected:** The survey data shows that **friends (54%) and family (16%)** significantly influence purchasing decisions. Additionally, **78% of respondents follow fashion trends**, indicating that personal preferences are shaped by demographics and external influences.
- H₀₂:** Celebrity endorsements and social influence do not significantly impact consumer perception of ethnic wear.
- **Rejected:** The data reveals that **76% of respondents are interested in celebrity fashion labels**, showing that celebrities play a major role in influencing consumer preferences.
- H₀₃:** Price and quality do not significantly influence purchase decisions regarding ethnic wear.
- **Rejected:** The findings indicate that **44% prioritize quality, while 22% focus on price**, proving that both factors play an essential role in purchasing decisions.
- H₀₄:** The cultural background of consumers does not significantly affect their preference for ethnic wear.
- **Rejected:** The survey results show that **42% strongly agree and 22% agree** that culture and society impact their purchase decisions. This confirms that ethnic wear choices are influenced by cultural backgrounds.

The study rejects all null hypotheses (H_0) and supports the alternative hypotheses (H_1), indicating that demographics, celebrity influence, price, quality, and cultural background significantly impact consumer perception and purchasing behavior towards ethnic wear.

Conclusion

Brand extensions are no longer limited to Western markets but have gained prominence in India as well. With rapid urbanization and industrialization, Indian consumers are increasingly open to diverse purchasing options, leading to evolving shopping behaviors. This study provides valuable insights into emerging consumer patterns and the factors influencing their preferences.

One of the most significant contributions of this research is its examination of brand extensions within a non-Western context. By identifying the key factors that drive consumer choices, this study offers a framework for businesses to tailor their strategies to better align with consumer expectations. Differences in preferences based on socio-economic status, experience levels, and cultural background further emphasize the need for targeted marketing approaches.

Moreover, the study explores the perception of extended brands and their impact on the parent brand's image. For companies looking to expand their product lines, this research suggests effective strategies to maintain brand loyalty and consumer trust. By understanding the factors that influence consumer behavior, businesses can enhance their market positioning and ensure long-term success.

Suggestions

Based on the study's findings, several recommendations can be made to improve consumer experience and drive sales:

- **Raising Awareness About Online Shopping:** Traditional shopping remains the preferred choice for many consumers. To encourage the adoption of online shopping, awareness campaigns should be conducted, targeting both literate and illiterate populations. Educating consumers on the benefits of e-commerce, including convenience, variety, and cost savings, can help bridge the gap between traditional and digital retail.
- **Enhancing Website Design and User Experience:** A well-designed website significantly impacts customer satisfaction in online shopping. E-commerce businesses should focus on improving website navigation, aesthetics, and overall functionality to ensure a seamless shopping experience.
- **Providing Detailed Product Information:** Consumers often hesitate to shop online due to a lack of comprehensive product details. Online retailers should provide in-depth descriptions, usage guides, and customer reviews to assist buyers in making informed decisions.
- **Addressing Challenges in Online Shopping:** Identifying and resolving issues such as payment security, return policies, and product authenticity can enhance consumer confidence and drive e-commerce growth. Addressing these concerns will help boost revenue and retain customers.
- **Effective Advertising Strategies:** Promoting products through television, newspapers, radio, and social media can significantly increase brand visibility. Engaging advertisements that resonate with target audiences can lead to higher sales and customer engagement.
- **Improving Delivery Services:** Faster and more reliable product delivery is a key factor in online shopping satisfaction. Companies should invest in efficient logistics to ensure timely delivery and enhance customer trust.

By implementing these recommendations, businesses can align themselves with consumer expectations and improve their overall market performance. The insights from this study provide a roadmap for brands to develop effective strategies that cater to evolving consumer needs while maintaining strong brand equity.

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