Understanding the Psychological Determinants of Apparel Buying Behaviour among Students: A Comparative Study across Professional, Technical, and Higher Education Streams

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to investigate the apparel buying behavior of students across professional, technical, and higher education courses in Ahmedabad City. The primary objectives include examining differences in the frequency, timing, and types of clothing purchased, as well as the factors influencing purchase decisions and the perception of whether dressing sense reflects personality. The study also examines key psychological factors such as self-concept, motivation, perception, attitude, and lifestyle that influence apparel choices. These dimensions help explain the emotional and cognitive reasons behind students' purchasing decisions, linking fashion consumption with self-expression and personal identity. The sample consists of 90 students, with 30 participants selected from each educational stream using a random sampling method. A structured questionnaire was employed to collect data on various aspects of apparel purchasing behavior, such as preferences, purchasing frequency, and decision-making influences like family, friends, celebrities, and advertisements. The research adopts a comparative descriptive design, enabling the analysis of trends within each group and comparison across professional, technical, and higher education students. Data were analyzed using chi-square tests to identify significant differences among the groups. The results show no significant differences in apparel purchasing behavior, including frequency, timing, types of clothes worn, and the factors influencing decisions. The chi-square values for all variables, including apparel purchase frequency (4.63), timing of purchases (8.17), clothing preferences (11.24), factors influencing decisions (2.93), types of clothes preferred (3.10), and perception of clothing reflecting personality (4.60), were all below the critical value, suggesting that the apparel purchasing behavior is similar across the three student groups. The findings indicate that students across professional, technical, and higher education courses share common trends in their clothing choices and purchasing behavior. These similarities suggest that factors such as socio-economic background, peer influence, and brand consciousness may play a more significant role in shaping students' apparel buying decisions than their educational background. The study provides valuable insights for apparel marketers and educators in understanding the purchasing patterns of students and highlights the need for tailored marketing strategies that consider broader consumer behavior trends rather than educational classification alone

Keywords: Apparel Buying Behavior, Students, Educational Stream

INTRODUCTION:

The apparel buying behavior of students represents a vibrant and evolving dimension of modern consumer research. In an era dominated by digital marketing, social media influence, and rapid fashion cycles, students have emerged as informed and expressive consumers. Their purchasing decisions not only fulfil functional needs but also communicate personal identity, social belonging, and lifestyle aspirations. Understanding their behavior is therefore crucial, as it reflects the broader intersection of youth culture, education, and consumer psychology.

Students enrolled in professional, technical, and higher education courses form a heterogeneous population with diverse motivations and attitudes toward apparel consumption. Professional course students often prioritize formal, career-oriented clothing that aligns with their future occupational goals. In contrast, technical students may prefer practical, comfortable attire suited to hands-on learning environments. Those pursuing general higher education typically exhibit varied choices shaped by fashion trends, peer dynamics, and individual creativity. This diversity highlights the need to analyze apparel purchasing behavior within the context of educational backgrounds.

Educational settings and course orientations significantly influence apparel choices. Professional students tend to associate clothing with employability and social image; technical students value durability and functionality; and higher education students view apparel as a medium for personal expression. These variations illustrate the complex relationship between academic context and consumer identity.

The present study explores how factors such as peer influence, brand awareness, financial capacity, and digital exposure affect the apparel buying behavior of students across different academic disciplines. By examining these determinants, the research aims to deepen understanding of young consumers' decision-making processes and offer insights beneficial to marketers, educators, and policy developers.

Psychological factors play a crucial role in shaping consumer behavior, particularly in apparel choices where emotions and self-image strongly influence decisions. Students often purchase clothing not only for functional purposes but also to satisfy psychological needs such as belongingness, esteem, and self-actualization (Maslow, 1943). Attitude formation, brand perception, motivation to appear confident, and personality traits significantly affect apparel preferences. Therefore, integrating psychological variables such as motivation, perception, learning, and attitude is essential for fully understanding students' buying behavior.

In a globalized world where fashion evolves at an unprecedented pace, comprehending students' apparel choices extends beyond market relevance. It offers a window into how social, cultural, and educational forces collectively shape youth consumption behavior, thereby filling a critical gap in contemporary consumer studies.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Consumer behavior research has long emphasized the importance of psychological, social, and cultural factors in influencing purchasing patterns. Apparel buying, particularly among youth and students, is closely linked to identity formation, self-expression, and social adaptation. According to Solomon (2018), clothing serves as a symbolic communication tool that conveys personality, lifestyle, and social belonging. In the context of students, apparel choice often reflects both individuality and conformity to peer expectations.

Previous studies by Beaudoin et al. (2000) and Khare (2014) highlighted the growing role of brand consciousness and fashion orientation among young consumers. Students increasingly associate branded apparel with status and confidence, demonstrating how material culture influences social identity. Similarly, Workman and Lee (2011) found that peer influence and media exposure significantly affect students' clothing preferences and purchase decisions. The rise of social media platforms such as Instagram and YouTube has further amplified these effects, transforming students into both consumers and influencers of fashion trends.

Socioeconomic background also plays a vital role. Research by Kumar and Joseph (2019) indicated that students from higher-income families tend to prioritize fashion and quality, while those from modest backgrounds focus on price and utility. Moreover, cultural values and regional norms shape perceptions of appropriateness and modesty in dress, as observed by Joy et al. (2012).

Psychological factors such as motivation, perception, attitude, and personality strongly affect apparel choices. Students often buy clothes to express identity, gain social acceptance, or boost confidence. Perception and attitude toward fashion trends, comfort, and brand image further shape their purchase intentions (Schiffman & Kanuk, 2019; Solomon, 2020).

Within educational settings, variations in discipline and academic orientation contribute to distinct apparel preferences. Professional course students often favour formal attire suitable for internships and career preparation, whereas technical students prioritize comfort and functionality. In contrast, students in general higher education courses display eclectic fashion choices influenced by creativity and peer trends.

Despite extensive literature on youth consumer behavior, limited research has examined how academic disciplines specifically shape apparel buying tendencies. The present study addresses this gap by comparing the behavioral and motivational differences across professional, technical, and higher education students.

3. METHODOLOGY

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3.1 Statement of the Problem

The apparel buying behaviour of students has undergone significant transformation due to rapid globalization, technological advancements, and evolving cultural norms. Students in professional, technical, and higher education courses represent a diverse and dynamic consumer segment with varying needs, preferences, and influences. Their purchasing decisions are shaped by a multitude of factors, such as academic environments, lifestyle requirements, peer pressure, brand consciousness, financial constraints, and exposure to social media. Despite the significance of this group in the consumer market, limited research has been conducted to comprehensively understand their apparel buying behaviour across different educational streams.

Professional course students may prioritize formal and business-appropriate clothing that aligns with their career aspirations. Technical course students might focus on apparel that emphasizes functionality and comfort, while students in higher education courses often showcase diverse preferences influenced by trends, self-expression, and social identity. This variation in buying behaviour raises critical questions about the specific needs and motivations driving their apparel choices.

Marketers, retailers, and educational institutions often overlook the nuanced differences in apparel preferences among these groups. A lack of understanding about what influences these decisions can lead to ineffective marketing strategies, unmet consumer expectations, and missed opportunities for businesses to connect with this vital demographic.

Therefore, the problem addressed by this study is the lack of a systematic and comparative understanding of the apparel buying behaviour of students enrolled in professional, technical, and higher education courses. This research seeks to identify and analyse the key factors influencing their buying decisions, assess how these factors vary across educational streams, and provide actionable insights for stakeholders. By addressing this gap, the study aims to contribute to a more nuanced understanding of student consumers and their impact on the apparel industry.

3.2 Objectives

1. To determine whether there is a significant difference in the frequency of apparel purchases among professional, technical, and higher education students.

2. To examine whether there is a significant difference in the timing of clothes purchases among professional, technical, and higher education students.

3. To assess if there is a significant difference in the types of clothes worn on regular days among professional, technical, and higher education students.

4. To analyze whether there is a significant difference in the factors influencing purchase decisions (family, friends, celebrity, or advertisement) among professional, technical, and higher education students.

5. To investigate if there is a significant difference in the preference for ready-made, customized, semi-stitched, or all types of clothes among professional, technical, and higher education students.

6. To evaluate whether there is a significant difference in the perception of whether dressing sense reflects one's personality among professional, technical, and higher education students.

7. To identify and analyze the psychological factors (motivation, perception, attitude, and personality) influencing apparel buying behavior among students.

3.3 Null Hypothesis

There is no significant difference in the frequency of apparel purchases among professional, technical, and higher education students. The frequency of purchases is similar across these groups.

There is no significant difference in the timing of clothes purchases among professional, technical, and higher education students. The timing of purchases is similar across these groups.

There is no significant difference in the types of clothes worn on regular days among professional, technical, and higher education students. The clothing preferences are similar across these groups.

There is no significant difference in the factors influencing purchase decisions (family, friends, celebrity, or advertisement) among professional, technical, and higher education students. The influencing factors are similar across these groups.

There is no significant difference in the preference for ready-made, customized, semi-stitched, or all types of clothes among professional, technical, and higher education students. The preferences are similar across these groups.

There is no significant difference in the perception of whether dressing sense reflects one's personality among professional, technical, and higher education students. The responses are similar across these groups.

3.4 Sample

The sample for the study on *"Apparel Buying Behaviour of Students: A Study Across Professional, Technical, and Higher Education Courses"* consists of a total of **90 students**, with **30 students from each educational stream**: professional courses, technical courses, and higher education courses.

The study is conducted in **Ahmedabad City**, which provides a diverse and urban setting to capture varied perspectives on apparel buying behaviour. The selection of students is based on the **random sampling method**, ensuring an unbiased representation of the population within each educational category.

This sample size and selection method are designed to facilitate a comparative analysis of the apparel buying patterns and influencing factors across the three educational streams while maintaining reliability and generalizability within the scope of the research.

3.5 Research Design

This study adopts a **comparative descriptive research design** to examine the apparel buying behaviour of students across professional, technical, and higher education courses. The design aims to identify and compare the factors influencing students' purchasing patterns, such as socio-economic background, peer influence, brand consciousness, and educational stream.

The research is conducted in **Ahmedabad City** and involves a sample of **90 students**, with 30 students randomly selected from each educational stream. Data collection is carried out through a structured questionnaire, focusing on factors such as preferences, purchasing frequency, and decision-making influences.

The descriptive nature of the design helps in analysing trends and variations, while the comparative approach facilitates an understanding of differences across the three groups. This design ensures a systematic examination of the variables, providing actionable insights for stakeholders in the apparel and education sectors.

3.6 Self-Made Tool: A Questionnaire on Apparel Buying Behavior

The questionnaire is a comprehensive tool designed to capture key insights into the apparel buying behavior of students. The questions are structured to explore various dimensions, such as:

1. Frequency and Timing

Questions like *"How frequently do you purchase apparel?"* and *"When do you purchase clothes?"* identify purchasing habits and triggers.

2. Clothing Preferences

Questions such as *"What type of clothes do you usually like to wear on regular days?"* and *"Which type of clothes/style gives you confidence?"* explore preferences for casual, formal, and traditional attire.

3. Influencing Factors

Questions like *"Who influences you the most when you go for the purchase?"* examine the role of peer influence, brand consciousness, and quality.

4. Shopping Patterns

Queries such as *"Do you prefer ready-made or customized clothes?"* identify shopping behaviors across offline and online channels.

5. Psychological and Cultural Aspects

Questions like *"Does your dressing sense reflect your personality?"* delve into the psychological reasoning behind clothing choices.

"Do you feel more confident when wearing branded or trendy clothes?", "How important is peer approval in your clothing choices?", and "Do you consider fashion as a reflection of your mood or attitude?" These items capture the motivational and attitudinal dimensions of apparel selection.

This tool ensures a detailed understanding of the apparel buying behavior of students, providing valuable data for analyzing and comparing behaviors across professional, technical, and higher education groups.

3.7 Procedure of Data Collection

Data for the study on *"Apparel Buying Behavior of Students"* was collected using a structured questionnaire designed to explore various dimensions of apparel purchasing behaviour. The sample consisted of 90 students, with 30 students randomly selected from each group: professional, technical, and higher education courses in Ahmedabad City. The questionnaire was distributed in person and online to ensure accessibility and convenience. Participants were briefed about the study's purpose, and responses were gathered confidentially. This systematic approach facilitated accurate and reliable data collection for comparative analysis.

3.8 Procedure of Data Analysis

The collected data were analysed using descriptive statistics to summarize trends in apparel buying behaviour. Comparative analysis was conducted using statistical tools like chi-square to examine differences across professional, technical, and higher education

groups. Results were interpreted to identify key influencing factors and patterns.

4. RESULT

TABLE 01: Chi-Square Table for "How frequently do you purchase apparel?"

Response Category	Professional (Observed)	Technical (Observed)	Higher Education (Observed)	Total (Observed)	Chi-Square	Level of Significance
Occasionally	12	11	12	35		
Weekly	8	5	5	18		
Once in a year	7	5	5	17	4.63	Not Significant
Monthly	3	9	8	20		
Total	30	30	30	90		

The chi-square table summarizes the observed responses from students in professional, technical, and higher education groups regarding how frequently they purchase apparel. Here's a breakdown:

Response Categories: The participants were divided into four response options:

Occasionally (A): 12 professional, 11 technical, and 12 higher education students selected this option, for a total of 35 responses.

Weekly (B): Chosen by 8 professional, 5 technical, and 5 higher education students, totaling 18 responses.

Once in a year (C): Selected by 7 professional, 5 technical, and 5 higher education students, totaling 17 responses.

Monthly (D): Preferred by 3 professional, 9 technical, and 8 higher education students, for a total of 20 responses.

Chi-Square Value (4.63): The calculated chi-square value is 4.63, which compares the observed frequencies with the expected frequencies under the null hypothesis.

Level of Significance: At the selected level of significance, the chi-square value (4.63) is less than the critical value for the degrees of freedom. This indicates that the differences in apparel purchasing frequency among the three groups are **not significant**, meaning there is no strong evidence to suggest a difference in

behavior among professional, technical, and higher education students.

ConclusionThe result suggests that students across professional, technical, and higher education groups do not significantly differ in their frequency of purchasing apparel.

TABLE 02: Chi-Square Table for "When do you purchase clothes?"

Response Category	Professional (Observed)	Technical (Observed)	Higher Education (Observed)	Total (Observed)	Chi-Square	Level of Significance
On a festival time/ For Vacation trips	6	7	5	18		
As per the need	4	5	6	15	8.17	Not Significant
On sale	12	17	16	45		
Right financial condition	8	1	3	12		
Total	30	30	30	90		

The table presents the chi-square analysis for responses from professional, technical, and higher education students about **"When do you purchase clothes?"** The breakdown is as follows:

Response Categories: Participants chose one of four reasons for purchasing clothes:

(A) On a festival time/For Vacation trips: Selected by 6 professional, 7 technical, and 5 higher education students, with a total of 18 responses.

(B) As per the need: Selected by 4 professional, 5 technical, and 6 higher education students, with a total of 15 responses.

(C) On sale: Chosen by 12 professional, 17 technical, and 16 higher education students, with a total of 45 responses.

(D) Right financial condition: Selected by 8 professional, 1 technical, and 3 higher education students, with a total of 12 responses.

Chi-Square Value (8.17): The calculated chi-square value is **8.17**, which compares the observed frequencies with the expected frequencies under the null hypothesis.

Level of Significance: The chi-square value (8.17) is less than the critical value at the chosen level of significance for the degrees of freedom. This indicates that the differences in purchasing times among professional, technical, and higher education students are **not significant**.

Conclusion: The results suggest that the choice of when to purchase clothes does not differ significantly among students from professional, technical, and higher education groups. The preferences for the timing of purchases are similar across the three groups.

TABLE 03: Chi-Square table for "What type of clothes do you usually like to wear on regular days?"

Response Category	Professional	Technical	Higher Education	Total (Observed)	Chi-Square	Level of Significance
Formal	8	11	9	28		
Casually	7	12	13	32		
Ethnic	5	5	4	14	11.24	Not Significant
All of the above	10	2	4	16		
Total	30	30	30	90		

The table presents the chi-square analysis for responses from professional, technical, and higher education students regarding **"What type of clothes do you usually like to wear on regular days?"** The breakdown is as follows:

Response Categories: Participants chose one of four options:

(A) Formal: Selected by 08 professional, 11 technical, and 9 higher education students, with a total of 28 responses.

(B) Casually: Chosen by 07 professional, 12 technical, and 13 higher education students, with a total of 32 responses.

(C) Ethnic: Selected by 05 professional, 05 technical, and 4 higher education students, with a total of 14 responses.

(D) All of the above: Selected by 10 professional, 2 technical, and 4 higher education students, with a total of 16 responses.

Chi-Square Value (11.24): The calculated chi-square value is **11.24**, which compares the observed frequencies with the expected frequencies under the null hypothesis.

Level of Significance: The chi-square value (11.24) is less than the critical value at the chosen level of significance for the degrees of freedom. This indicates that the differences in clothing preferences among

professional, technical, and higher education students are **not significant**.

Conclusion: The results suggest that preferences for the type of clothes worn on regular days do not differ significantly among students from professional, technical, and higher education groups. All groups share similar trends in their clothing choices.

TABLE 04: Chi-Square Table for "Who influences you the most when you go for the purchase?"

Response Category	Professional (Observed)	Technical (Observed)	Higher Education (Observed)	Total (Observed)	Chi-Square	Level of Significance
Ready-made clothes	14	12	12	38		
Customized clothes	4	4	4	12		
Semi-stitched clothes	3	4	3	10	3.10	Not Significant
All of the above	9	10	11	30		
Total	30	30	30	90		

Response Category	Professional (Observed)	Technical (Observed)	Higher Education (Observed)	Total (Observed)	Chi-Square
Family	6	5	6	17	
Friends	10	10	9	29	
Celebrity	10	14	11	35	2.93
Advertisement	4	1	4	9	
Total	30	30	30	90	

The table presents the chi-square analysis for responses from professional, technical, and higher education students regarding **"Who influences you the most when you go for the purchase?"** The breakdown is as follows:

Response Categories:

(A) Family: Selected by 6 professional, 5 technical, and 6 higher education students, with a total of 17 responses.

(B) Friends: Chosen by 10 professional, 10 technical, and 9 higher education students, with a total of 29 responses.

(C) Celebrity: Selected by 10 professional, 14 technical, and 11 higher education students, with a total of 35 responses.

(D) Advertisement: Chosen by 4 professional, 1 technical, and 4 higher education students, with a total of 9 responses.

Chi-Square Value (2.93): The calculated chi-square value is **2.93**, which compares the observed frequencies with the expected frequencies under the null hypothesis.

Level of Significance: The chi-square value (2.93) is **not significant** at the chosen level of significance. The expected differences in the responses across the groups (professional, technical, and higher education students) are not large enough to reject the null hypothesis.

Conclusion: The results indicate that the influence of family, friends, celebrities, and advertisements does not significantly differ across professional, technical, and higher education students. All groups show similar patterns in the factors influencing their purchase decisions.

TABLE 05: Chi-Square Table: "Do you prefer ready-made or customized clothes?"

The table presents the chi-square analysis for responses from professional, technical, and higher education students regarding **"Do you prefer ready-made or customized clothes?"** The breakdown is as follows:

Response Categories:

(A) Ready-made clothes: Chosen by 14 professional, 12 technical, and 12 higher education students, with a total of 38 responses.

(B) Customized clothes: Selected by 4 professional, 4 technical, and 4 higher education students, with a total of 12 responses.

(C) Semi-stitched clothes: Chosen by 3 professional, 4 technical, and 3 higher education students, with a total of 10 responses.

(D) All of the above: Selected by 9 professional, 10 technical, and 11 higher education students, with a total of 30 responses.

Chi-Square Value (3.10): The calculated chi-square value is **3.10**, which compares the observed frequencies with the expected frequencies under the null hypothesis.

Level of Significance: The chi-square value of **3.10** is **not significant**, as the value is lower than the critical value for the chosen level of significance.

Conclusion: The results indicate that there is **no significant difference** in the preference for ready-made, customized, semi-stitched, or all of the above types of clothes across professional, technical, and higher education students. All groups show similar patterns in their clothing preferences.

TABLE 06: Chi-Square Table: "Does your dressing sense reflect your personality?"

Respo	Profess	Techn	Highe	Total	Chi	Level

nse Category	ional (Observed)	ical (Observed)	r Education (Observed)	(Observed)	-Square	of Significance
Yes	12	10	6	28		
No	8	12	10	30		
Sometimes	4	3	5	12	4.60	Not Significant
Most times	6	5	9	20		
Total	30	30	30	90		

The table presents the chi-square analysis for responses from professional, technical, and higher education students regarding the question **"Does your dressing sense reflect your personality?"** The breakdown is as follows:

Response Categories:

(A) Yes: Selected by 12 professional, 10 technical, and 6 higher education students, with a total of 28 responses.

(B) No: Chosen by 8 professional, 12 technical, and 10 higher education students, with a total of 30 responses.

(C) Sometimes: Chosen by 4 professional, 3 technical, and 5 higher education students, with a total of 12 responses.

(D) Most times: Selected by 6 professional, 5 technical, and 9 higher education students, with a total of 20 responses.

Chi-Square Value (4.60): The calculated chi-square value is **4.60**, which compares the observed frequencies with the expected frequencies under the null hypothesis.

Level of Significance: The chi-square value of **4.60** is **not significant**, as the value is lower than the critical value for the chosen level of significance.

Conclusion: The results indicate that there is **no significant difference** in the perception of whether dressing sense reflects one's personality across professional, technical, and higher education students. The responses from all groups are not significantly different from each other, suggesting that students from these different educational backgrounds have similar views on this aspec...

5. Findings

1. The chi-square analysis of apparel purchasing behavior reveals no significant differences between professional, technical, and higher education students. The calculated chi-square value of 4.63 is below the critical value, indicating that the frequency of apparel purchases is similar across these groups. Therefore, the hypothesis of no significant difference is accepted.

2. The chi-square analysis for the timing of clothes purchases shows no significant differences between professional, technical, and higher education students. The calculated chi-square value of 8.17 is below the critical value, indicating similar purchasing patterns across the groups. Therefore, the hypothesis of no significant difference is accepted.

3. The chi-square analysis reveals no significant differences in clothing preferences among professional, technical, and higher education students. The calculated chi-square value of 11.24 is below the critical value, suggesting similar trends in clothing choices across the groups. Thus, the hypothesis of no significant difference is accepted.

4. The chi-square analysis indicates no significant differences in the factors influencing purchase decisions among professional, technical, and higher education students. The calculated chi-square value of 2.93 is below the critical value, suggesting similar patterns across the groups. Therefore, the hypothesis of no significant difference is accepted.

5. The chi-square analysis reveals no significant difference in clothing preferences among professional, technical, and higher education students, with a chi-square value of 3.10. The value is below the critical value, indicating similarity across groups. Thus, the preference for clothing types is consistent across the student groups.

6. The chi-square analysis shows no significant difference in the perception of whether dressing sense reflects one's personality across professional, technical, and higher education students, with a chi-square value of 4.60. The value is below the critical threshold, indicating similarity in responses. Therefore, all student groups share similar views on this matter.

7. Although no significant statistical differences were found across educational streams, the qualitative interpretation indicates that psychological factors—particularly motivation for self-expression, perception of social image, and attitude toward fashion—strongly shape students' apparel choices. This aligns with previous studies emphasizing the emotional and cognitive aspects of clothing consumption among youth

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