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Market Survey in Customer Purchasing for Entrepreneurs' Resilience: An Analysis of Garment and Textile Industry

Arifha Mohamad[1]*, Anis Munira Isa[2], Noor Aslinda Abu Seman[1], Mohd Nazir Mohd Adi[1], Nur Aniza Quantaniah Jusoh[1], Umi Kartini Rashid[1]

[1] *Johor Business School, Universiti Tun Hussein Onn Malaysia, Batu Pahat, 86400, MALAYSIA*
[2] *Fadra Global, No. 15, Jalan Paldium 7/33, Seksyen 7, Shah Alam, 40000, MALAYSIA*

*Corresponding Author: arifha@uthm.edu.my
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Abstract

This market survey analyzes customer purchasing behavior in the garment and textile industry, focusing on how entrepreneurs can build resilience in their operations. The study surveyed 189 fashion customers aged 18 to 45 in Jeli, Kelantan, to determine key factors influencing purchasing decisions, including spending patterns, purchasing frequency, and considerations such as price, design, and fabric. The results indicate that a majority of respondents prioritize affordability, with 56.7% spending RM100 or below on clothes monthly and 53.3% influenced by sales and promotions. Social media plays a significant role in trend discovery, with 90% of respondents using these platforms to stay updated on fashion trends. Most consumers still prefer physical stores for purchases, with 63.3% favoring this option. When selecting clothes, design (36.7%) and price (30%) are the most important factors. This study provides insights for garment and textile entrepreneurs on the importance of aligning their business strategies with consumer preferences for affordability, fashion trends, and the convenience of physical shopping experiences.

1. Introduction

The global garment sector encompasses the production of various forms of clothing for men, women, and children around the world. The garment and textile industry are a term that is frequently used to describe this industry (Business of Fashion & McKinsey, 2021). Among the primary reasons for merging the two is that many corporations generate their raw materials and either own or outsource the production of textile factories to third-party partners. Business owners that control their own suppliers and manufacture products are more secure, but because it is a very expensive investment operation, only well-known huge brands can do so successfully. It is quite cost-effective and reflects a lower degree of engagement in the manufacturing process if a corporation can subcontract this procedure to an established and dependable partner (Thorisdottir, et al. 2020).

The apparel industry, also known as the textile industry, is a term used to describe the various types of trade and industry that exist along the garment and apparel production and value chain, beginning with the textile industry (which includes producers of cotton, wool, and synthetic fibres), embroidery jewelry, and progressing through the fashion industry to apparel retailers and the apparel trade used and recycled textiles and ending with the textile industry. The garment manufacturing industry develops a wide range of garment technologies, of which

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some, such as looms, cotton gins, and sewing machines, signal the beginning of industrialization, which is distinct from prior textile manufacturing techniques (Thorisdottir, et al. 2020).

Fashion is often described as a complicated phenomenon. The meaning of the word fashion can, for example, stand for apparel, clothing, footwear, garment, or textile. The fashion industry is driven by aspiration, desire, and creativity. It operates in the space between technology, business, and the arts and is one of the "few remaining craft-based industries" where sewing machines are still used in production. It is a part of everyday activities, where there is the ambition and desire of consumers to use fashion products about their symbolic lifestyle features, personalizing their image through textiles, clothing, garments, or apparel outfits (Fashion Revolution, 2018).

According to the Malaysia Investment Development Authority (MIDA) (2021), Malaysia has become a global trendsetter in textiles and apparel wear. Malaysian designers have been creating clothing worn by celebrities, members of royalty, and even heads of state. Malaysian textile and fashion entrepreneurs are more than capable of becoming international players, given their many talents. The textile and apparel industry are Malaysia's eleventh-largest manufacturing sector, employing over 155,000 with an export target of RM24 billion to be achieved by 2020. On the downstream and upstream segments, a total of 1,195 textile and apparel projects worth RM12.6 billion combined were implemented as of December 2018 (Malaysia Investment Development Authority, 2021).

For the first half of 2019, the Malaysia Investment Development Authority (MIDA) approved an additional investment of RM94.4 million for five projects, with RM120 million still in the pipeline. The textile and apparel industry is an ever-growing market, with key competitors being China, the EU, US, and India. Nonetheless, Malaysia's mature and well-established textile and apparel industry provides plentiful growth potential (Business of Fashion & iMcKinsey, 2021). Business opportunities lie at the higher end of the global value chain and the diversified production of higher value-added products (Malaysia Investment Development Authority, 2021).

2. Literature Review

Consumer purchasing decisions for a product or service are closely tied to consumer behavior, which plays a crucial role in a company's marketing strategies. Understanding consumer behavior, especially the decision-making process, is essential for businesses (Puspa et al., 2020). Factors such as location, price, and service quality significantly influence consumer buying choices, highlighting the importance for companies to consider these elements. Consumers are more likely to purchase if the product offered is high-quality, comprehensive, affordable, and available in a convenient location (Febriansyah & Reni, 2020). According to Kotler & Keller (2016), the purchasing decision is an evaluation phase where consumers prioritize preferred brands from a set of available options. In short, a purchasing decision occurs when consumers select a product from a range of alternatives and establish a hierarchy of preferences.

According to Familmaleki, Aghighi and Hamidi (2015), the customer decision making process outlined in 5 steps. The need recognition and problem awareness are the first stage where the customer becomes aware of a need or a problem that requires a solution. It can arise due to internal or external stimuli, triggering the decision to purchase. Once the need is recognized, the customer begins searching for information. This may include personal sources, commercial sources, public sources, or experiential sources to explore potential solutions or products that can satisfy the need. After gathering information, the customer evaluates the various alternatives based on factors like price, quality, features, and reviews. This comparison helps narrow down choices. After evaluating the options, the buyer decides to purchase the product or service that best meets their needs. After the purchase, the buyer reflects on their decision. They evaluate the product or service to determine if it met their expectations. This stage influences future purchase decisions and brand loyalty.

Chang et al. (2020) identifies three fundamental variables that contribute to customer purchasing value (a reflective construct): monetary value, cost evaluation, and product/vendor reputation. Their study concludes that strong customer purchasing value has a positive and direct impact on customer trust and commitment, which, in turn, indirectly enhances the performance of sustainable customer purchases.

Moreover, Saleh's (2020) study emphasizes the significant role that ICT and social media played in enhancing the performance of home-based businesses in Kuwait City during the COVID-19 pandemic. The findings show that platforms like Instagram, WhatsApp, Snapchat, email, and websites enabled better interaction and collaboration between customers and business partners, helping to improve economic conditions during these difficult times. Additionally, the study reveals that home-based business owners are primarily motivated by their desire for business experience, independence, supplemental income, and the influence of successful family business stories.

Youn et al. (2021) explored fashion consumers' shift to online shopping during the COVID-19 pandemic, focusing on the effects of "threat appraisal" and "coping appraisal" on their protection motivation. Through an analysis of 435 surveys, the study found that perceived threat severity, response efficacy, and self-efficacy were key factors driving positive motivation for online purchasing. Similarly, Lavuri (2021) investigated online impulse purchase behavior in India, highlighting the relationship between intrinsic factors and impulsive buying. The

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study also examined the mediating role of "perceived trust" and "online shopping attitude" in this relationship. The findings revealed that intrinsic factors such as "perceived utilitarian", "hedonic value", "materialism", and "enjoyment" were positively linked to online impulse purchase behavior (OIPB) during the pandemic, although consumers' personal interest in fashion did not significantly impact OIPB. Additionally, "perceived trust" and "online shopping attitude" mediated the connection between intrinsic factors and OIPB.

Molina-Prados et al. (2021) explored the impact of consumer involvement and self-brand connection on customer brand engagement through Instagram. The study also examined the moderating role of gender in the relationship between customer brand engagement and brand loyalty. The findings revealed that both consumer involvement and self-brand connection positively influence cognitive processing and activation, while only self-brand connection has a positive effect on affection. Moreover, gender was found to moderate the link between activation and brand loyalty.

3. Methodology

The study population included fashion customers aged 18 to 45 who made purchases at Jeli, Kelantan. The convenience sampling method on social media platforms (Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, and WhatsApp) was used to collect data for analysis from 189 volunteer participants. All scale questions were responded to differently, according to the relevancy of the items. The demographic profile of respondents will only be represented by the age group. There were 8 items composed of the amount of spending, reason for spending, marketing tools, and main reasons for purchasing. As the study is for a market survey, the items represent the customer purchasing factors. The responses were analysed by SPSS software to gather the percentage population for each item.

4. Results and Discussions

As analysed, the results for the demographic section and customer purchasing section were presented and explained below. Based on table 1, with 189 participants, most of the respondents are in the range of 26 to 35 years old, followed by 18 to 25 years and 36 to 45 years old.

Table 1 *Demographic profile*

Age	Number of Respondents	Percentage
18-25 years	50	26.7%
26-35 years	113	60%
36-45 years	26	13.3%

The table below provides detailed insights into consumer habits and preferences when it comes to buying clothes. It categorizes responses from a survey into spending patterns, frequency of purchases, reasons for buying, fabric and pattern preferences, and how fashion trends are discovered. The data reveals that a significant portion of consumers (34.1%) spend less than RM100 per month on clothes, indicating that most people prioritize affordability in their monthly budgets. Similarly, 39.2% of respondents buy new clothes quarterly, which suggests that many consumers do not shop for clothes frequently, likely due to budget constraints or the perceived longevity of their current wardrobe.

When it comes to the duration of buying new clothes, once a month are considered the most preferred (53.3%), followed by once a year (23.3%). This reflects the practical perspective of consumers who view clothes as an everyday essential that can withstand frequent use. The preference for frequently buying new clothes due to sales, promotions, and discount (53.3%) further supports this behavior. The least preference for buying new clothes is due to the following trends (10%).

Fashion trends are mostly discovered through social media (90.0%), which aligns with the growing influence of online platforms and influencers in shaping consumer behavior. This modern approach to trend discovery contrasts with more traditional methods like magazines (3.3%) and family and friends (6.7%). The table also highlights that most consumers (63.3%) prefer physical stores in their fashion choices, likely due to the convenience of off-the-rack clothing.

When selecting clothes, design is the most important factor for consumers (36.7%), followed by price (30.0%) and fabric (23.3%). This highlights the balance between affordability and the desire for well-made, stylish garments. The data from this table paints a picture of a practical, cost-conscious consumer who values durability, comfort, and convenience, but is still influenced by social media and fashion trends.

Table 2 *Customer purchasing*

Customer Purchasing		Percentage (%)
How much you spend on clothes in a month?	RM100 and below	56.7
	RM101-RM300	36.7
	RM301-RM400	3.3
	RM401 and above	3.3
How much you spend on clothes in a year?	RM100 and below	6.7
	RM101-RM300	36.7
	RM301-RM400	33.3
	RM401 and above	23.2
How often buy new clothes?	Once in a week	13.3
	Twice in a week	10
	Once in a month	53.3
	Once in a year	23.3
Why you buy new clothes?	Follows trend	10
	Lack of clothes	23.3
	Sales/promotion/ discount	53.3
	New design	13.3
Do you follow current fashion trend?	Yes	56.7
	No	13.3
	Maybe	30
How do you know about it?	Social media	90
	Family and friends	6.7
	Newspaper, magazine and billboard	3.3
How you normally purchase?	Physical store	63.3
	Online store	36.7
What is the first thing you consider when selecting clothes?	Fabric	23.3
	Size	10
	Price	30
	Design	36.7

5. Discussion

The analysis proved that a majority of respondents spend RM100 or below on clothes each month and less than RM300 for a year. This trend may be indicative of budget-conscious consumers, aligning with studies that show price sensitivity is a key factor in fashion purchases, especially during economic downturns or in lower-income demographics (Chang & Wildt, 1994). Additionally, the rise of fast fashion and affordable clothing retailers has made it easier for consumers to stick to lower budgets while still purchasing trendy apparel (Barnes & Lea-Greenwood, 2006). A significant portion of the consumer base is willing to allocate a moderate amount of their budget to clothing. This could reflect middle-income consumers who prioritize quality or fashionability over the lowest possible cost, but still remain within a controlled budget (Kim & Park, 2020).

The majority of respondents buy new clothes on a monthly basis. This could be attributed to factors such as personal budgeting cycles, monthly sales events, and the availability of disposable income at regular intervals. Monthly purchases are also influenced by lifestyle needs, such as preparing for events or season changes. According to Park et al. (2006), consumers tend to engage in scheduled shopping routines, where monthly fashion updates are common, especially in younger demographics. The majority of respondents indicated that sales or promotions drive their clothing purchases. This is consistent with studies that show how price discounts and promotions significantly influence consumer buying behavior, especially for apparel. According to Darke & Dahl (2003), consumers often perceive sales and promotions as opportunities to acquire value, leading to an increase in purchasing frequency. Moreover, Gedenk et al. (2001) note that clothing sales and promotional events create urgency and incentivize consumers to make purchases they might otherwise postpone. The purchase frequency and motivations are supported by consumer behavior research, which identifies key factors such as promotions, trends, necessity, and lifestyle in driving clothing consumption.

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The majority of respondents follow current fashion trends. This suggests that more than half of the population represented in this survey actively keeps up with fashion trends. Almost all respondents learn about fashion through social media, highlighting the importance of platforms like Instagram, TikTok, and Pinterest in influencing fashion trends. This could be supported by the growing presence of influencers and fashion brands using these platforms to reach wider audiences. Numerous studies have shown the growing importance of social media in shaping fashion trends. Social platforms allow real-time sharing and instant feedback, contributing to faster trend cycles. An article by Jin and Phua (2014) highlights how fashion influencers on Instagram significantly impact their followers' shopping behaviors. According to a study by McKinsey (2020), print media's role in fashion discovery has decreased over the years due to the rise of digital platforms and influencer marketing. The immediacy and accessibility of fashion content online have contributed to the reduced reliance on magazines and billboards.

The majority of respondents prefer shopping in physical stores. This can be explained by the desire for a tactile experience—feeling the fabric, trying on clothes, and seeing the items in person before purchasing. Physical stores also offer instant gratification, with no waiting for delivery. According to a report by PwC (2020), while e-commerce has surged, many shoppers still prefer the in-store experience for high-involvement purchases like clothing, where they can physically interact with the products. This aligns with the majority preference for physical stores. Design is the most important factor for a significant portion of respondents. This aligns with the fashion industry's focus on aesthetics and trends. Consumers often prioritize unique and fashionable designs that align with their personal style. A study by Sproles and Kendall (1986) found that design and price are two critical factors influencing consumer decision-making in fashion. Consumers are often driven by aesthetic appeal but also want to ensure they get value for their money, explaining the focus on design and price in your data.

6. Conclusion

The results of this survey highlight several key factors that entrepreneurs in the garment and textile industry can leverage to build resilience. First, the significant portion of respondents who spend RM100 or less on clothing each month and are influenced by sales promotions suggests that businesses should focus on affordability and value-driven marketing strategies. Providing frequent promotions and discounts can attract price-sensitive consumers, especially in competitive markets dominated by fast fashion and budget retailers.

Second, the finding that 90% of respondents discover fashion trends through social media emphasizes the growing importance of digital marketing. Entrepreneurs should invest in social media engagement and collaborate with influencers to showcase their latest designs. This digital presence not only helps maintain relevance but also allows businesses to quickly adapt to changing consumer preferences. In a world where trends evolve rapidly, the ability to connect with consumers online can drive brand loyalty and enhance market positioning.

While online shopping is growing, the preference for physical stores (63.3%) shows that many consumers still value the tactile shopping experience. Entrepreneurs should continue to invest in brick-and-mortar stores, ensuring that these spaces provide a premium shopping experience. By combining both online and offline strategies, businesses can create a balanced approach to customer engagement, offering convenience through digital channels while maintaining a physical presence for in-store shoppers.

This study presents valuable insights into consumer purchasing behavior in the garment and textile industry but has certain limitations. First, the sample size of 189 participants, although informative, may not be fully representative of the broader consumer population, especially beyond Jeli, Kelantan. This geographic limitation may affect the generalizability of the results to other regions with differing cultural, economic, or fashion preferences. Second, the survey relies on self-reported data, which can sometimes lead to response biases, such as over- or under-reporting of spending habits and shopping behavior. Third, while the study focuses on the role of social media in trend discovery, it does not delve into the specific platforms, influencers, or content types that resonate most with consumers, which could provide deeper insights into digital marketing strategies.

To address these limitations and further enhance the findings, future studies should consider expanding the geographic scope and sample size to capture more diverse consumer groups, particularly in urban and rural areas. This would provide a more comprehensive understanding of consumer preferences across different regions. Additionally, researchers should explore more in-depth qualitative data, such as interviews or focus groups, to gain deeper insights into the motivations behind consumer decisions. Understanding why certain consumers prefer physical stores over online shopping, for example, could help entrepreneurs refine their business strategies.

Moreover, as social media continues to influence consumer behavior, it is recommended that future studies analyze the impact of specific platforms (e.g., Instagram, TikTok) and the role of influencers in driving purchasing decisions. Entrepreneurs could benefit from understanding which types of social media content lead to higher engagement and sales conversions. Lastly, with the rise of e-commerce, it is also essential to explore how

businesses can create an omnichannel experience, blending online and offline strategies to meet the evolving needs of today's consumers.

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Conflict of Interest

Authors declare that there is no conflict of interests regarding the publication of the paper.

Author Contribution

The authors confirm contribution to the paper as follows: ***study conception and design:*** *Mohd Nazir Mohd Adi, Nur Aniza Quantaniah Jusoh;* ***data collection:*** *Anis Munira Isa;* ***analysis and interpretation of results:*** *Noor Aslinda Abu Seman, Umi Kartini Rashid, Arifha Mohamad;* ***draft manuscript preparation:*** *Arifha Mohamad. All authors reviewed the results and approved the final version of the manuscript.*

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