

# A STUDY OF INDIAN YOUTH CONSUMER BEHAVIOR WHILE BUYING JEANS

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## **ABSTRACT**

The paper aims for understanding the Indian youth jeans buying consumer behavior and preferences. The paper highlights consumers' inclination towards brands and investigates the level of satisfaction by Indian youth consumer regarding the current available Jeans and issues related to it. In total 73 subjects (47 male and 26 female) aged between 18 to 35 years from diverse economic and social backgrounds were studied using the convenient sampling method. The structured questionnaire with a variety of questions having non-mutually exclusive options (multiple choice as well as dichotomous), rank, order and scale were used for the study. Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) was used to analyze results of the study. The research reveals that the Indian youth is highly inclined to brand while jeans buying and even after paying a decent amount, the consumer is not satisfied with the product. Fit related issues are very much prevalent and are a matter of concern. With the increased number of youth in India such issues need to be taken care by the product providers to take the business advantage.

## **INTRODUCTION**

India is one of the largest and fast growing economies of world and is country of youths with median age of 25 years (Ernst and Young 2010). The educated youth with increased disposable income is one of the key driving forces of Indian economy (Beinhocker et al., 2007). According to "India's Fast Growing Apparel Market (2010)", the Indian youth is becoming more fashionable every day and is open to spend a significant amount of their income on apparel products (Vittal, 2010 and ASSOCHAM, 2011). In the apparels, Jeans is one of the most important categories where consumer demand exists across all ranges (Technopak & Images F&R Research, 2010). Jean has become an integrated part of Indian youth lifestyle. Today it's not merely a garment but has evolved as a personality defining apparel to young consumers (Sengupta, 2012). Keeping in mind the popularity of this garment among youth of India, this research was undertaken to understand the Indian youth jeans buying patterns and satisfaction with the current available products to project the growth potential of this segment.

## **REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

In the recent past there have been numerous studies done on Indian retail market both by government as well as private consultancy firms. All of them are in unison about the growth prospective of Indian retail market however there are some difference of opinions about the value and volume of the market. The impact of the same on consumers has been observed by various market research agencies and individual researchers. According to US based global consulting firm, AT Kearney's report (Shabat *et al.*, 2011) on Global Retail Development Index-2011 (GRDI-2011), India has been ranked the fourth most attractive nation among the 30 fastest emerging markets moving economies and considers that factors like fast growth rate (9% GDP in 2010), and a

forecasted strong growth rate of 8.7 % throughout 2016 and additional factors like fast saving and investment rates, fast labor growth rate and increased consumer spending are responsible to make India as a very favorable retail environment. India's population is 1.2 billion, which is expected to overtake China's population in near future is also considered as one of the key factors. The report states that the size of Indian retail market is US \$ 435 Billion with 7% organized retail sector with expectation to grow to 20% by 2020. India as world's largest unexploited retail market in 2006 and recognized it as a leading destination for retail investment. Further as per the economics times of 9<sup>th</sup> June 2010, 40% of the organized retail in India is in the apparel segment which makes it the most promising sector. Also, according to the joint survey named "Indian Apparel Market-2009" done by Technopak Advisors and Images Fashion & Retail Research (2010) it is revealed that even in the economic slowdown of 2009, the Indian apparel market was intact and grew by 13.5% and growth has been observed in all the apparel segments including men, women and kids, of which denim products is undeniably one of the major contributor. There is no second thought about increased consumption on jeans by Indian youth in recent past. The rough fabric which was used by miners due to its robustness has become today's all-purpose wear, and considered as "eternally young fabric" which is getting more versatile day by day. A study "India Denim wear Market" says that the Indian retail market size (2008) for jeans wear Rs. 32.97 billion with a volume of 63.5 million pieces and grew at a rate of 7% in 2008. The study discusses the relatively good growth rate of denim jeans segment over other categories in the economic slowdown and claims that the denim, due to longer life span continues to hold the leading position among the other apparel categories. Indian denim market has observed the fastest growth (10-12% per annum) in the world (Images Business of Fashion, 2010).

A study done by Images Retail (Goswami, 2011) stats that denim has become the culture of youth as 65% of the India's population is youth and there are approximately 50 Cr. people aged between 15-39 Years. Approximately 80% of the denim wear sold in India is branded. Out of these branded garments 75% is contributed by men's garments followed by women and kids, 15% and 10% respectively (ASSOCHAM, 2011 and Images Business of Fashion, 2010)

## **JEAN CONSUMER BEHAVIOR**

Many studies have been undertaken on denims and jeans to understand the consumer behavior while jeans buying. It is established that there are differences in the buying attributes for fashion and clothing products by youth and older people (Rocha *et al.*, 2005) and these needs to be taken care by designers as well as the retailers.

In a study "A comparison of Chinese and Indian consumers' evaluative criteria while selecting denim jeans" (Byoungho *et al.*, 2009) it is concluded that for the Chinese consumers price was the most important attribute, followed by the fit of the garment, brand, country of origin, quality and design whereas for Indian consumers fit of the garment was the leading attribute followed by brand, country of origin, design, price and quality. Rahman (2011) had undertaken similar study for Canadian people and established fit is the most important cue followed by style, quality and brand name and country of origin were found relatively insignificant.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A survey was undertaken with objective to understand the preference (purchase, brand, fit, style and price) in jean of Indian youth and the problems being faced by them in the currently available products. A convenience sample of 73 subjects (47 male and 26 female) aged between 18 to 35 years from various professions participated in the study. The study was conducted in Gandhinagar, the capital city of Gujarat state of India, as this is one of the fastest growing education and IT hub in India and provides an ideal environment for study with richness of youth population from different cities of India.

**Questionnaire Design/Structure-** The structured questionnaire had a variety of questions having non-mutually exclusive options (multiple choice as well as dichotomous), rank, order and scale. The questions were framed as close-ended in nature to minimize the subjectivity resulting in better quantitative analysis hence clearly defined outcomes. Five point Likert scale of agreement ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree were used to measure the attributes

**Instrument-** The questionnaire which was developed for the study asked for the demographic general information (As shown in Table I) like Name, age, gender, profession, annual house hold income from the participants. The questionnaire was focused on six key issues regarding jean buying behavior i.e. Purchase preferences, Brand preferences, Price preferences, Fit and styling preferences, Criteria of selection of jeans. It also examines the fit related problems in jeans currently available in the market by investigating level and frequency of alteration required in the jeans.

To achieve the objective the questions were asked on the following areas-

**Purchase Preferences** – To gain understanding on popularity of jeans and its usage, questions were framed to check the number of jeans possessed by them, frequency of buying jeans, and number of jeans bought in one purchase, frequency of wearing jeans etc.

**Brand Preference-** The consumers' inclination towards the branded jeans were studied and the respondents were asked to rate the jeans brands as per their liking.

**Price Preference-** The respondents were asked to select from the following price range to establish their price preference - Economy range (Up to Rs. 499), Mid-range (Rs. 500-1000), Premium range (Rs. 1001-2000) and Super premium range (Above Rs. 2001) were given.

For the fit and styling investigation questions related to fit, leg line variations and the preferred level on waist line for wearing of jeans were asked. For the ease and clarity visuals were used in the questionnaire and in fit the respondents were given option of tight/slim, regular/straight, semi fit/comfort and loose/baggy; in leg-line variations they had to select among straight, tapered, boot cut and bell bottom and for level of wearing jeans on waist, the selection had to be made among the following options true/normal waist, low waist and high waist.

To investigate the *criteria of selection* while buying a pair of jeans; the subjects were requested to rate the criteria of selection like brand name, fit, color, washing effect, price, leg styling and any other on a scale of 1 to 7.

To understand the *magnitude of the alteration and consumers reaction* to it, questions were framed around examining if alteration was required in new pair of jeans and frequency of the same. Respondents were also asked on there level of satisfaction on purchase of new jeans with and without the need for alterations.

**Table I: Demographic data of subjects who participated in the study**

Variable		%
Age	18-20	17
	21- 25	67
	26-30	08
	31-35	08
Gender	Male	64
	Female	36
Profession	Student	81
	Academician	08
	Engineer	08
	Doctor	00
	Self Employed	00
	Others	03
Annual House hold income*	Less than Rs. 90,000	05
	Rs. 90,000 to 199,999	21
	Rs. 200,000 to 499,999	44
	Rs. 500,000 to 1,000,000	21
	Above Rs. 1,000,000	10

\* Classified as per Socio economic Classes (SECs) developed by Market Research Society of India (MRSI) and Media Research Users Council (MRUC) (Sheth et al., 2007 and Beinhocker et al., 2007)

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

**Purchase preferences-** It is noteworthy to mention that all 73 participants use jeans, while out of valid responses a significant 87% of the participants wear jeans daily and 10% of the participants wear jeans on Fridays plus weekends and holidays. 41% of the total respondents have 3-4 pair of jeans in wardrobe at any point of time while 27% of the respondents have 5-6 pairs of the jeans in their wardrobes at a time. 40% of the respondents buy jeans more than twice in a year, while 44% of the respondents buy jeans at least twice in a year. Together this makes a whopping 84% of the respondents who buy a pair of jeans at least twice or more than twice in a year. It indicates the popularity of jeans among youth consumers.

**Brand Preferences** – 75% of the participants wear only branded jeans while rest use both branded and unbranded jeans. This is an indicator that today’s youth is very much inclined towards branded jeans.

**Price Preferences** – 71% of the respondents (52 respondents out of 73) preferred buying pair of jeans from the premium range followed by 23% of the respondents (17 respondents out of 73) belonging to mid-range price preference. And interestingly there was no respondent preferred economy range. It indicates that youth consumers are willing to pay a decent amount for a pair of jeans. This result reconfirms their inclination towards the branded jeans.

**Fit and styling preferences** – Based on the fit and styling options (as shown in table II) given to the respondents, it was observed that the regular/straight fit was preferred by 49% of male respondents followed by tight/slim fit (27%) and semi fit/comfort (24%), while tight/slim fit was preferred by 65% of the female respondents followed by regular/straight and semi fit/comfort by 27% and 8% respectively. And as expected loose/baggy fit was not preferred by any of the respondents.

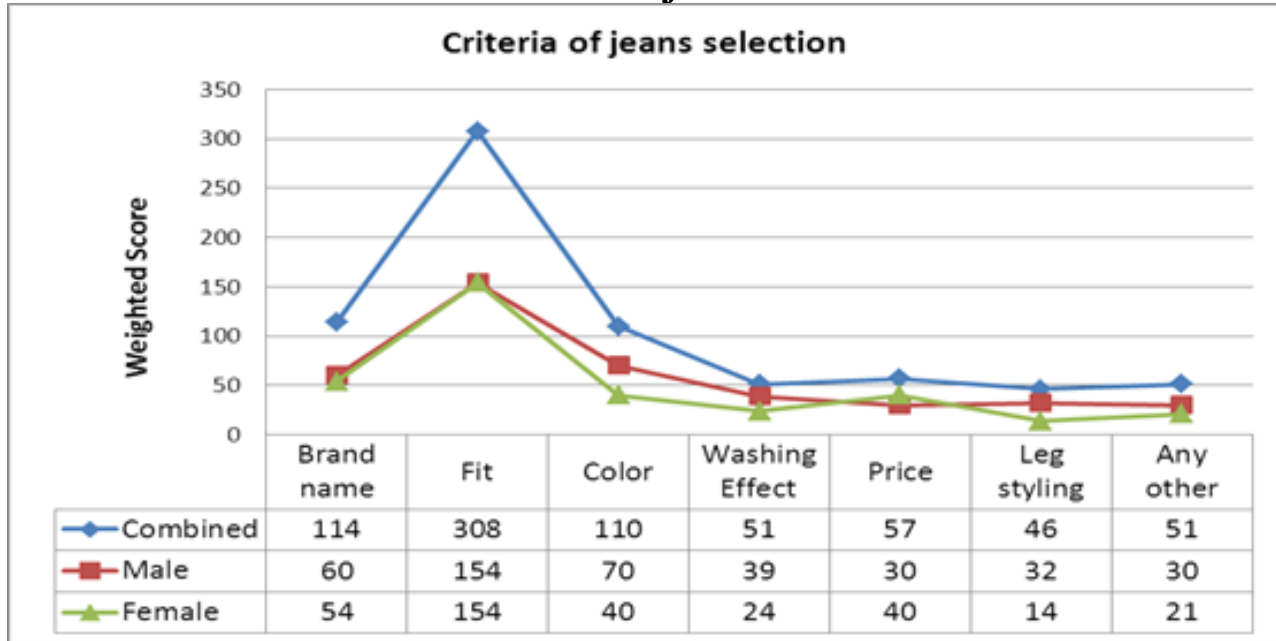
**Table II: Fit and Styling Parameters**

<b>Fit &amp; Styling Parameter</b>	<b>Options</b>
Garment Fit	Tight/Slim, Regular/straight fit, Semi fit/comfort and Loose/Baggy
Leg styling variations	Straight, Tapered, Bell bottom and Boot cut
Waist level variations	Low waist, True/Normal waist and High waist

Clear inclination towards tapered and straight leg variations was observed as 55% of the male respondents preferred tapered leg variation while straight leg variation was preferred by 45% of male respondents. For the female consumers; tapered, straight and boot cut were preferred by 54%, 38% and 8% respectively. Inclination towards low waist jean was observed in both male as well as female consumers. 55% of male and 71% of female respondents opted for low waist jeans. And it’s noteworthy saying that high waist jeans were not preferred by any of the respondents. These results highlights the fit and styling preferences of the youth consumers and it can be stated that Regular/straight fit with tapered leg variation and low waist level is most desired combination for male consumers while tight/slim fit with tapered leg variation with low waist level is most liked combination by female consumers.

**Criteria of selection of jeans-** While buying a pair of jeans, fit (as shown in Chart I) of the product emerged as the most important criteria in both male as well as female consumers followed by color in male consumers and brand name in female consumers. Weighted score was calculated by assigning points as 7 for the most preferred and 1 point being the least preferred. Further these points were multiplied to the frequency of respondents to that particular attribute. This result was the conformance to the results of earlier studies done by Woods (2004) on denim jeans, Hsu and Burns (2002) on clothing, and Rahman (2011) on denim jeans.

**Chart I: Criteria of jeans selection**



Spearman Rank correlation tests (Table III) were conducted for the 67 valid responses to investigate relationship between various criteria of selection by the consumers while buying a pair of jeans. These parameters included brand name, fit, price, color, washing effect and leg styling.

**Table III: Spearman's Correlations for criteria of jeans selection**

		Fit	Brand Name	Color	Washing Effect	Price	Leg Styling
Spearman's rho	Fit	1.000	-.012	.031	.218	-.240	-.162
	Brand Name	-.012	1.000	-.268*	-.402**	-.051	-.082
	Color	.031	-.268*	1.000	.122	-.259*	-.143
	Washing Effect	.218	-.402**	.122	1.000	-.065	-.391**
	Price	-.240	-.051	-.259*	-.065	1.000	-.320**
	Leg Styling	-.162	-.082	-.143	-.391**	-.320**	1.000
* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).							
** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).							

Positive correlations were observed between fit and color (0.031) and fit and washing effect (0.218) of the pair of jeans. While correlation between fit and brand name was not found significant (-0.012). Interestingly correlation between fit and price was observed negative (-0.240) but not significant. In the similar way brand name and washing effect (-0.402) and brand name with color (-0.268) was observed negative and significant, which is against the general perception of good brand name means good washing effect and good color.

**Current issues with the available products** – Magnitude of the alteration and consumers' reaction to it have been studied aiming to investigate the level of satisfaction with the pair of jeans at the time of purchasing. While analyzing the alteration related issues, it was observed that for 17% of the respondent alteration in jeans was always required while for 38% of the respondents it's frequently required. This makes 55% of the total respondents needed alteration always and or frequently in newly bought jeans. Regarding the satisfaction level due to alteration in the newly bought pair of jeans it was observed that there were only 18% respondents who were indifferent of alteration in the pair of jeans while for 28% respondents it matters little. Among the rest 54% of the respondents, 11% were highly dissatisfied, 19% dissatisfied and 24% get irritated due to alteration in the newly bought jeans.

While investigating about the consumers' response to the fit of pair of jeans, it was observed that 18% of the respondents will definitely not buy the pair of jeans and 17% of the respondents who will probably buy the pair of jeans if it doesn't fit at leg length and needs alteration. This makes 35% (more than 1/3 of the respondents) of the people who may not buy the jeans if it doesn't fit them at leg length. While only 15% will go to buy the pair of jeans even if it doesn't fit at leg length. It was observed that almost half (49%) of the respondents will definitely not buy the pair of jeans if it doesn't fit at some other area, though leg length is OK. And there were 18% of the respondents who probably not buy such pair of jeans. This makes 67% (2/3 of the total respondents) who may not buy the pair of jeans if it doesn't fit them at some other area, though leg length is OK.

These figures show that fit is one of the most important area of concern while jeans buying and youth consumers are dissatisfied with the level of fit offered by available products. Majority of the consumers don't prefer alteration in the newly bought pair of jeans and are unhappy with such kind of alteration requirement. The results of the study clearly indicates that fit issues in the pair of jeans apart from leg length are just not acceptable to the consumers and in such cases they avoid buying the pair of jeans. This situation establishes the need of the research in the area of fit for a pair of jeans to the consumers.

## **CONCLUSION**

The study provided an opportunity to the researchers to investigate the real consumer behavior patterns for jeans buying and highlight the areas which have not given due importance in the past by the jeans manufacturers, retailers and the brands. As one of the most significant outcomes it was observed that fit is the most important criteria while selecting the pair of jeans by male as well as female consumers. It was also observed that fit related issues are very much prevalently faced by the consumers even after paying a decent amount for the pair of jeans. It is also observed that there are a significant number of consumers which may opt not buying the pair of jeans if it doesn't fit to them or needs alteration. This is a crucial indicator for customer dissatisfaction and may cause sales loss to the retailers as well as brands.

The study revealed that tight fit jeans which are having tapered leg and low waistline are in demand of Indian youth. Some of the fit options were straight forward discarded by the respondents like baggy/loose fit jeans and high waist jeans because these are out of fashion. These findings may be considered by the fashion designers and brands while



developing the strategy, this may provided them edge in the competitive business environment of jeans.

The last but not the least one of the important outcome of the study is that today's Indian youth is well aware of brands and latest fashion trends and is willing to pay for the product with expectation of perfect fit of the product without any compromise to it.

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