

# A Study to Explore Fit Perceptions and Satisfaction with Apparel Fit in Ready-To-Wear Garments amongst Young Adults

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## 1. Abstract

*The study was undertaken to enhance understanding of general satisfaction amongst young adult consumers aged between 20 to 30 years with 'Ready-to-Wear' apparel fit. The respondents were limited to 100 females and 100 males, belonging to the city of Kolkata and were subjected to a structured questionnaire for their responses. This study seeks to refine the concept of apparel fit and satisfaction with fit in general, to qualitatively investigate consumers' perceptions of apparel fit and the factors that may affect fit satisfaction, and to develop an understanding of consumers' overall satisfaction with fit. The general perceptions of clothing fit satisfaction may be affected by a multitude of factors which come into play when consumers evaluate whether or not garment fit meets their expectations, both during and after purchasing garments.*

*The study also concentrates on respondents' demographic characteristics, such as age (for example, young adults), gender and body size. Chi-Square test was done to show that fit satisfaction did not have any association with body shape of the consumer. Findings on*

*differences in fit satisfaction between genders indicated no distinguishable differences in satisfaction with fit regarding 'Ready-to-Wear' garments. A good fit resulted both in, and from, a comfortable feeling. Results showed that physical comfort related to fit was achieved when the consumer was satisfied with physical and functional fit, including aspects such as tightness, length, size, and freedom of movement. Psychological fit was achieved when the consumer was satisfied with aesthetic fit. The study provides a theoretical basis for future consumer behaviour research, by conceptualizing consumers' definition of apparel fit, and by identifying and quantifying key drivers of apparel fit satisfaction in general.*

**Keywords:** Ready-to-Wear, Fit satisfaction, Physical fit, Functional fit, Psychological fit.

## 2. Introduction

A positive attitude and a personal desire to achieve an excellent custom fitting, when coupled with dependable methods of selecting, fitting, adjusting the pattern, and altering

clothing, are key in realizing a fabulous fit. Learning to fit is a never-ending lesson in recognizing figure and body types and how they change over time. <sup>[4,6,7]</sup> As the understanding develops with time and experience, and as one refines their ability to accommodate and counterbalance, they will be able to learn that there are more options for any figure type than one might have realized before. <sup>[3, 5]</sup> Clothing must lie smooth, without wrinkling, pulling, or sagging while camouflaging figure variations that would otherwise be emphasized by the wrinkling, pulling or sagging. <sup>[1,2]</sup> Socio-cultural factors influence fit. Factors such as culture, ethnicity, gender, age, religion, occupation, fashion trends are some important factors that might affect fit preferences. <sup>[4, 7]</sup>

### **3. Methodology**

#### **3.1 Collection of Data**

The study was undertaken with a purposive sample of 100 males and 100 females between the age group of 20 years and 30 years. The respondents were restricted to the city of Kolkata and were subjected to a structured questionnaire. A questionnaire was prepared which was divided into five sections, so that the analysis could be done systematically.

The first section included the respondents' general background information. This section

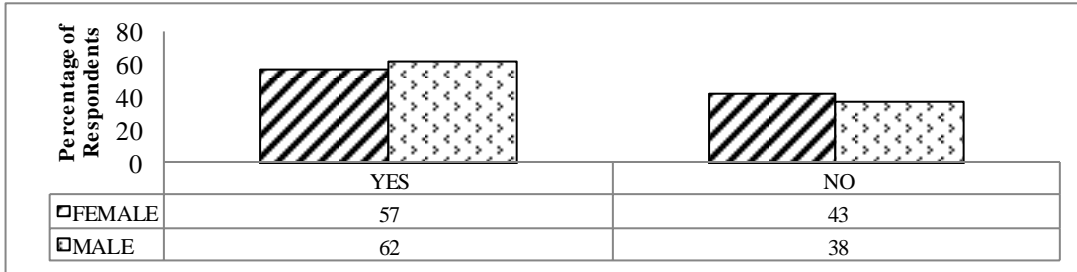
provided respondent's age, gender, height, weight and profession. The second section, which helped to assess consumers' overall satisfaction with apparel fit, included questions about their frequency in buying ready to wear garments, their body type and areas of fit problems and whether or not they required any alternations in their ready to wear apparels. The third section included open-ended questions and the level of overall satisfaction with apparel fit. The fourth section, asked them to rank the factors affecting fit satisfaction/dissatisfaction for ready to wear apparel. The factors included brands, price, fabric, physical comfort and fit alteration, to name a few. Lastly, the fifth section sought to assess the consequences of dissatisfaction with apparel fit in cases where the respondents had knowingly bought an ill-fitting garment due to other factors such as brand loyalty, colour preferences, design or style being in the season, or even during sale or discount season while the price factor favoured them.

#### **3.2 Analysis of the Data**

The data collected was subjected to statistical analysis. Ranking, bar diagram, average, percentage was used as methods to analyse the data. Certain data was also subjected to frequency, mean and standard deviation analysis along with Chi-square testing.

### **4. Results and Discussion**

**Figure 1 Bar Diagram showing percentage of respondents facing difficulty in finding clothing they like that fits properly.**



It is usually seen that people do not find fitting garments as per their requirements or body structure/shape. From figure 1, it is observed

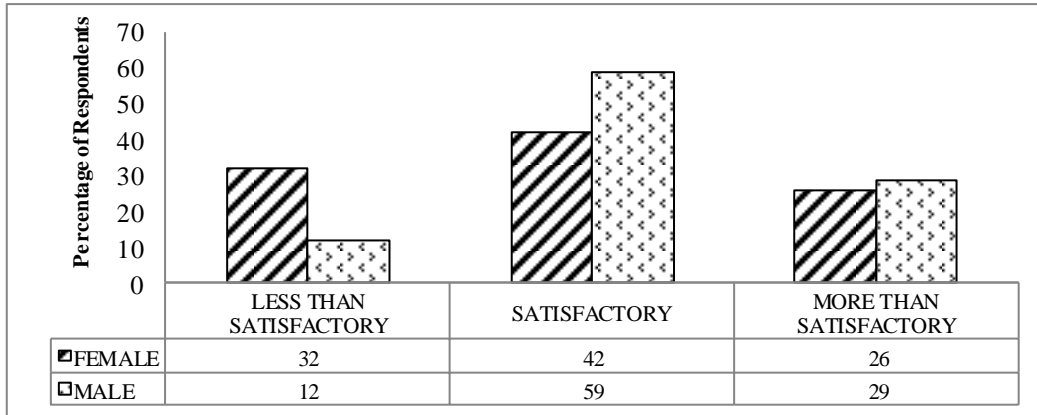
that 57 percent females find it difficult to get garment which fit properly, whereas, 62 percent male feels the same.

**Table 1 Table showing percentage of respondents with fit problem areas.**

Problem Areas	Female	Male
	In Percentage%	
Neck	7	0
Bust	42	0
Waist	49	6
Abdomen	10	32
Hip	12	16
Thigh	14	4
Upper arm	0	0
Back Width	0	0
Armhole	9	0
Crotch	2	15
Sleeve Length	3	20
Shoulder Length	0	0
Dress Length	7	0
Pant Length	19	29

As per the above table, females encounter fit problems mainly in the waist and bust. Men face greater fit problem in abdomen and pant length.

**Figure 2 Bar Diagram showing percentage of respondents having the level of satisfaction in terms of fit and sizing of a ‘Ready-to-Wear’ garment.**



The above diagram shows that higher percentages of people are generally satisfied with the fit of ready-to-wear garments. However, while only 12 per cent of males are satisfied with the fit of ready-to-wear clothing, nearly one-third of females find the fit less than satisfactory. Tabulated value for 6 degree of freedom at 5 percent level of significance is 12.59. Therefore, the calculated value is much

lesser than tabulated value, the  $H_0$  is accepted. Thus, Chi Square test reveals apparel fit satisfaction and body shapes are independent which means they are not associated with each other in reference to the female body shapes. Therefore, it can be inferred that irrespective of the body shape, respondents are not satisfied with apparel fit of ready to wear garments.

**Table 2 Frequency of ratings of respondents’ fit satisfaction in general.**

OVERALL FIT SATISFACTION IN GENERAL	Frequency (f)							TOTAL
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
(FEMALE)								
1. Overall, the experience that you have had with clothing fit has been satisfactory	0	0	4	52	39	5	0	100
2. Overall, you are pleased with how the clothing you find in stores fit	0	6	17	41	34	2	0	100
3. Overall, you are satisfied with apparel fit.	0	6	23	30	23	13	5	100
4. Overall, in purchasing clothing, you experience with apparel fit is positive.	0	2	8	7	48	29	6	100
OVERALL FIT SATISFACTION IN GENERAL	Frequency (f)							TOTAL
(MALE)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	

1. Overall, the experience that you have had with clothing fit has been satisfactory	0	5	8	60	13	14	0	100
2. Overall, you are pleased with how the clothing you find in stores fit	0	19	12	21	46	1	0	100
3. Overall, you are satisfied with apparel fit.	0	2	9	20	60	9	0	100
4. Overall, in purchasing clothing, you experience with apparel fit is positive.	0	1	15	32	48	4	0	100

The mean scores of females and male respondents' overall satisfaction with fit in general is 4.3025 and 4.4875 respectively. Majority of the participants were neutral in satisfaction with fit, as their responses fell in a cluster of scale rating from 4 to 6 across items. Respondents in general were neutral to slightly satisfy with fit in general. Comparing mean

scores of overall fit satisfaction between genders, female respondents ( $M = 4.3025$ ;  $S.D = 4.3535$ ) were slightly less satisfied than were male respondents ( $M = 4.4875$ ;  $S.D = 4.35747$ ). But differences in fit satisfaction between genders indicated no distinguishable differences in satisfaction with fit regarding 'Ready-to-Wear' garments.

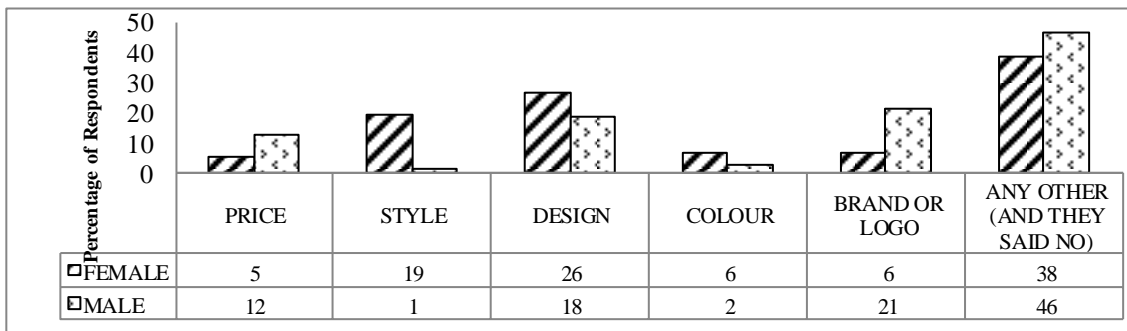
**Table 3 Table showing ranking of factors affecting fit satisfaction or dissatisfaction in 'Ready-to-Wear' garments.**

Factors	Ranking	
	Males	Females
Inconsistent size	9	8
Physical fit (length and width)	3	3
Aesthetic feel (overall appeal)	2	2
Physical comfort related to fit	1	1
Psychological comfort related to fit	4	4
Fit alteration	8	9
Brand	7	5
Price	6	6
Fabric	5	7

When asked to rank the factors affecting fit satisfaction or dissatisfaction for ‘Ready-to-Wear’ garments, the charts above show that both male and female respondents placed an emphasis

on physical fit, comfort, aesthetic feel and fabric. Comparatively, the least ranked factors were inconsistent size, price, brand name and fit alterations required.

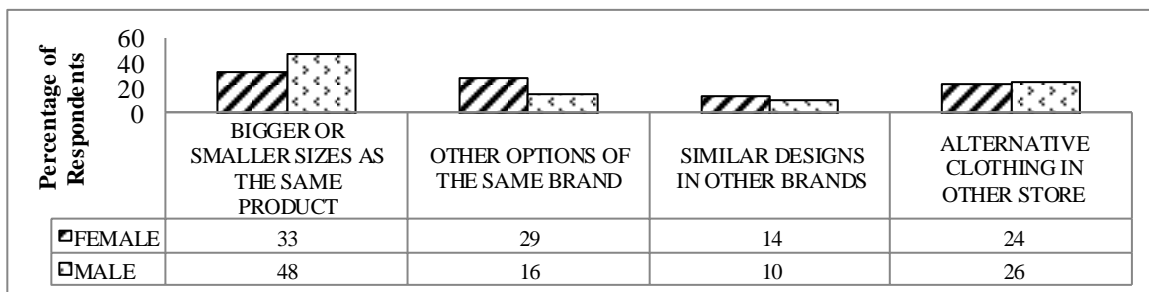
**Figure 3 Bar Graph showing factors for buying ill-fitting clothes by percentage of respondents.**



In the above graph, the respondents had various reasons for being willing to purchase ill-fitting clothes. 21 per cent male respondents stated they would buy ill-fitted clothing because of the brand name or logo, while 18 per cent said

they would do so because of the design of the garment. Female respondents gave similar reasons, but were less likely than men to purchase ill-fitted clothing for any of the stated reasons.

**Figure 4 Bar Graph showing alternatives to avoid buying ill-fitted garment by percentage of respondents.**

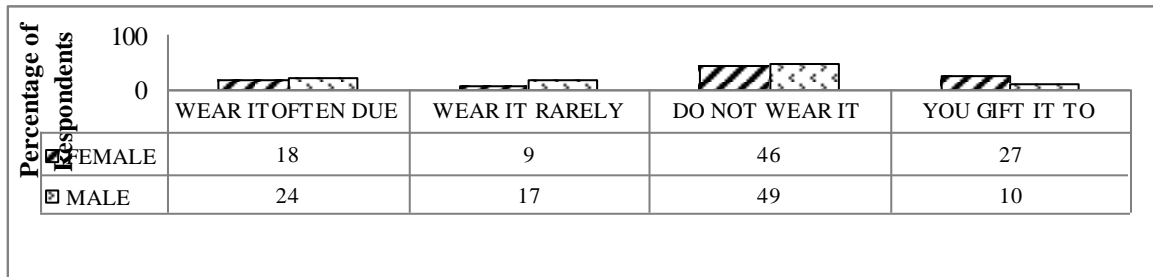


Most of the consumers were not averse to buying a size bigger or smaller than normally

worn in order to obtain a better fit, whereas a moderate number of respondents instead

preferred alternative clothing in their normal size available in other brands and stores.

**Figure 4.5.5 Bar Graph showing end use of ill-fitted garments purchased by percentage of respondents.**



According to the survey, it was concluded that the respondents very rarely bought ill-fitted garments, and when they did, the garments end up being left in the closet unworn, with only a few choosing to wear such garments based on other factors, such as color, brand or fabrics. Some of the ill-fitting clothing was eventually gifted to people who they think it will fit well.

### 5. Conclusion

The results from the quantitative survey indicated that participants are somewhat satisfied with apparel fit in general. Factors of fit perceptions were explored when asked about good or bad fit; concerns, experiences, body area problems with fit. Participants mentioned that good fit in clothing is related to appropriate length (both in sleeves', trousers and dresses' length) and desired fit on their body. Preferences for fitted or looseness of a garment varied with the type of garment they were buying. In

general, physically uncomfortable clothing that impeded movement was linked to perceptions of poor fit, as was clothing that produced a negative visual appearance. According to results of this study, psychological fit was achieved when the consumer was satisfied with aesthetic fit, including aspects such as overall appearance and attractiveness and physical comfort related to fit. Results indicated that participants regarded psychological comfort as a consequence of feeling good or confident, as well as a consequence of well-fitting clothing. The participants expressed that they were likely to spend more money on well-fitting clothing. Lack of persistence of fit had a negative impact on consumer satisfaction with fit. Fit alteration after buying the garment was found to be an antecedent to consumer fit dissatisfaction. Participants had various strategies for achieving a good fit when shopping for clothing. These included buying certain brands, choosing

garments one size bigger than usual or buying clothing only after trying it on. Those strategies were derived from their prior experiences. Participants were likely to be loyal to certain brands which provide them with a perfect or nearly perfect fit.

Majority of consumers would not buy clothing that did not fit well on their body, but that some consumers would buy ill-fitting clothing if they were strongly influenced by other factors. This implied that although clothing fit was the most important single factor influencing clothing purchase decisions, a strong enough combination of other factors could sometimes override a lack of fit.

This research was valuable because it was the first to explore strategies for achieving good fit from young consumers' perspectives. These fit strategies, such as knowledge of how certain brands fit, purchase of one-size-larger clothing, and trying garments on, could be employed as a marketing tactic. For example, retailers and marketers could provide information regarding a garment's degree of fit difference from competing brands and the predicted degree of fit difference after laundering. In addition, e-commerce could provide a virtual model on their websites to enable young consumers to "try on" garments before purchasing. This research also brought increased conceptual clarity to the concepts of "satisfaction" and "fit." Findings on

difference in overall fit satisfaction between genders indicated no distinguishable difference in satisfaction with fit regarding ready-to-wear in general, implying that men today are as satisfied or dissatisfied with clothing fit as are women. Furthermore, results relating to young consumers' overall fit satisfaction implied that there needs to be an improvement of fit in apparel. Considering the multiple factors that affect consumer fit satisfaction, marketers and retailers need to take into account all aspects of perceived fit rather than focusing solely on physical fit. In addition, inconsistent sizing among brands and fit alteration would benefit from targeted marketing strategies in order to maximize consumer fit satisfaction.

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