

# Factors Affecting Sales in Exclusive Brand Outlets

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## Abstract

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The apparel retail industry is undergoing a drastic transformation in India; converting from an unorganized to organized sector. About 50 years ago, majority of the retail stores were either owned by businessmen who purchased garments from vendors across the country to display the exquisite products in their store and sold these goods with a margin of about 300% or these stores were run directly by the manufacturers. Consumers did not have much choice and usually bought all their garments from one store only. However, the tides have turned, now customers have myriad choice when selecting garments, customers usually purchase garments after visiting two to three stores. Under this immense competition it has become crucial for retail stores to understand the factors that affect customer behavior. The study conducted aims to detect the influences which attract customer to one store more than another. In order to realize these influences, 400 customers of different age groups, gender and income groups were surveyed in order to rate the factors that affect consumer behavior in exclusive brand outlets through factor analysis. The retail stores studied include Indian Terrain, Sting, Biba and Color Plus. The factors affecting consumer behavior were found to be product, pricing and promotion, visual merchandising, convenience and staff.

## Aim

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The aim of this research is to identify factors that affect sales in exclusive brand outlets.

## Introduction

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India has the fifth largest retail industry in the world, growing steadily, accounting for 10% of the Gross Domestic Product in 2019 (according to India Brand Equity Foundation). Further, the apparel retail industry is expected to grow drastically with the entry of several new domestic and international players. Moreover, with the predicted increase in disposable income and increase in the working population, the retail industry is sure to grow in the coming years.

Customer expectations have raised with the seamless services provided by technological leaders such as Amazon, Netflix, Uber and so on. Additionally, with technological advancements the ways in which customers find what they want has changed. Previously, customers would purchase apparel based on the suggestions provided by store assistants, in contrast, now customers choose their garments based on inspirations from social media or celebrities. As a result, people now search for the garment they like in a plethora brands rather than selecting a garment from the store. Being able to attract the customer to their store has become a competition among the apparel retailers. The manifold nature of influences can often create confusion.

In India, since there is no standard size set, some retailers follow the US sizing whereas others follow UK sizing, this creates obscurity about the size that would fit the customer. Consequently, Indian customers are not comfortable purchasing garments through virtual trial rooms. In the absence of seamless return service, the mindset of most customers is to try on garments before purchasing them. This makes it clear that the apparel retail industry is bound to grow in the coming years.

In this paper, various factors that affect customer buying behavior have been studied in order to provide a clearer picture to apparel stores on what makes customers choose one store over another. These factors have also been rated from the most important to least important. Without a knowledge of these factors, efforts made by the retail stores to attract more customers might go in vain. It is essential to know whether it is beneficial to invest on better staff or visual merchandising or product or promotions or convenience with the limited budgets of apparel retailers. Though numerous studies have been conducted on customer behavior in retail stores, none of them are focused on exclusive brand outlets. This study will provide an insight on what customers expect when they visit an EBO.

## Objectives

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The following are the objectives of this research study

1. To find factors that influence customer to purchase from one store more than another through a survey followed by factor analysis
2. To find factors that impact the sales trend of retail stores through the analysis of monthly sales data of seven retail stores

## Limitations of Study

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Firstly, one limitation of this study is that even though 8 exclusive brand outlets of four brands have been studied, these outlets are present in South India and the sample does not represent all customers.

Secondly, due to the non-probability nature of sampling and its inherent limitations in terms of size of sample, the findings cannot be generalized.

## Research Methodology

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Factor analysis was used to condense the copious variables into 5 prominent factors by detecting a structure in the relation between the variables. Retail stores that were studied include Color Plus (T. Nagar), Color Plus (Velachery), Indian Terrain (Pondy Bazaar), Indian Terrain (Chrompet), Biba (T. Nagar), Biba (Chrompet), Basics (T. Nagar), Sting (Chrompet).

First, a questionnaire consisting of 20 questions was prepared after a comprehensive review of previous research in the field and discussion with the store managers of the stores where the survey was conducted. Each variable was analyzed based on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. The questionnaire consisted of two parts; part 1 included questions regarding the demographic characteristics of the customers and the part 2 consisted of variable related to shopping behavior of customers at apparel retail outlets.

Second, 480 customers were surveyed, 80 customers from each retail store being studied were provided with the questionnaire. The participation in the survey was voluntary in order to ensure reliability.

Third, the accuracy of the data was increased. This was done by eliminating the data rows with missing values. Further, the rows with a standard deviation of 0 were identified and removed in order to eliminate outliers. This led to the elimination of 80 data rows.

Fourth, the data was entered in SPSS and factor analysis was carried out. The KMO value was observed to be above 80% and significance value of Bartlett's Test of Sphericity was less than 5% which proved that the survey was valid. Further, the rows with values greater than 60% on the diagonal of anti-image correlation matrix were removed. This led to the elimination of two questions. Next, inverse relationships were checked through the identification of negative values in the rotated component matrix. The 18 variables were grouped under 5 factors through factor analysis.

Fifth, the reliability of the factor analysis was checked by analyzing whether Cronbach's  $\alpha > 0.7$ , AVE  $> 0.5$  and Cronbach's  $\alpha > \text{AVE}$ . The result showed that the factor analysis was reliable.

Lastly, the sales data of the stores being studied was analyzed in order to understand the fluctuation of sales throughout the year and provide reasons for the same. This analysis revealed several trends related to festivals and discounts.

## Literature Review

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Retailing has been defined in numerous ways. Berman and Evans (2001) defined retailing as business activities involved in selling goods and services to consumers for their personal, family or household use.

Gagliano and Hathkote (1994) suggested that the perception of the quality of service strongly influences customer preferences.

Jackson Donald (1999) identified factors that improve customer satisfaction.

Johnson Kurt (1999) performed an elaborative study on making loyalty programs more rewarding in order to increase customer retention.

Mattila and Wirtz (2001) showed the importance of enhancing store environment through music and scent to boost impulse buying behavior and satisfaction.

Summers and Hebert (2001) studied the influence of lighting on customer behavior. The findings of the research showed that lighting could help attract and retain customers.

Baker, Parasuraman, Grewal and Voss (2002) proposed that factors such as music, layout, crowd and convenience affected sales.

Solgaard and Hansen (2003) proved that location, quality, clean surroundings, variety, layout and sales assistants were the most important factors.

Fox, Montgomery and Lodish (2004) proposed customers are more influenced by variety and advertisement than to prices.

Radha Krishna and Shylajan (2007) studied the influences of marketing and demographic factors on consumers' buying behavior towards branded articles. However, factors that attract customers to one exclusive brand outlet more than another remain uncovered.

Aamir Hasan and Subhash Mishra (2014) state that shopping experience, store image and value for money are the prominent factors influencing customer shopping behavior.

Vijay Victor 1, Jose Joy Thoppan, Robert Jeyakumar Nathan and Fekete Farkas Maria (2018) defined seven factors that affect customer behavior, namely, experience, privacy, pricing, strategy, perception, reprisal and self-protection.

## Result

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### Demographics

The demographic characteristics of the respondents are illustrated in table 1

Variable	Category	N	n	%
Gender	Male	193	400	48.2
	Female	207	400	51.8
Age Group	20-24	104	400	26.0
	25-29	108	400	27.0
	30-34	98	400	24.5
	Above 35	90	400	22.5
Monthly Income	Less than 50,000	64	400	16.0
	50,000 - 1,00,000	95	400	23.8
	1,00,001 - 1,50,000	79	400	19.8
	1,50,001 - 2,00,000	91	400	22.8
	Above 2,00,000	71	400	17.8

The above information shows that there were approximately equal number of male and female respondents. Moreover, there were almost equal number of respondents from every age group, that is, 20-24, 25-29, 30-34 and above 35. Lastly, most respondents were from the income category 50,000 – 1,00,000 and 1,50,001 – 2,00,000, followed by 1,00,001 – 1,50,000, above 2,00,000 and less than 50,000.

### **Validity and Reliability**

Initially, the questionnaire was prepared after an elaborate review of literature. Second, the questionnaire was reviewed by managers of the stores studied and the questionnaire was altered according to the recommendations. The questionnaire was tested with 40 respondents and minor changes were made in the framing of variables after feedback from the experts and survey data.

### **Eliminating Missing Values & Outliers**

First, the survey responses with missing data were removed. Second, the standard deviation between the responses of each person surveyed were checked. If the responses has a standard deviation of 0, the response was eliminated from the dataset.

### **Kaiser-Meyer-Oklin Test**

Kaiser-Meyer-Oklin Measure of Sampling Adequacy	0.815
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To ascertain the appropriateness of factor analysis Kaiser-Mayer-Oklin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy (MSA) was performed. In this study the KMO was found to be 0.815, which indicates that the proportion of variance in the variables might be caused by underlying factors.

## Anti-Image Matrix

	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5	Q6	Q7	Q8	Q9	Q10	Q11	Q12	Q13	Q14	Q15	Q16	Q17	Q18
Q1	.869a	-.443	0.038	-.211	0.088	-.021	-.190	-.140	0.005	-.059	0.163	-.094	-.073	0.114	0.078	-.198	-.046	0.084
Q2	-.443	.852a	-.423	-.128	0.116	0.088	-.084	-.020	0.191	-.057	-.080	0.036	-.114	0.080	-.005	-.089	-.189	0.127
Q3	0.038	-.423	.881a	-.380	-.172	0.001	0.123	0.007	-.215	0.042	0.048	-.020	-.006	-.084	-.007	0.093	0.037	-.031
Q4	-.211	-.128	-.380	.897a	-.193	-.108	0.115	0.058	-.272	0.139	-.066	-.003	-.042	-.076	0.035	0.076	-.039	-.009
Q5	0.088	0.116	-.172	-.193	.840a	0.182	-.243	-.231	0.130	-.250	-.028	0.055	-.110	0.092	-.064	-.051	-.220	0.242
Q6	-.021	0.088	0.001	-.108	0.182	.416a	-.122	0.016	0.046	-.014	0.049	-.025	-.171	0.027	-.068	0.043	-.281	0.295
Q7	-.190	-.084	0.123	0.115	-.243	-.122	.339a	0.139	-.185	0.098	0.064	-.114	0.038	-.191	0.035	0.194	0.114	-.087
Q8	-.140	-.020	0.007	0.058	-.231	0.016	0.139	.832a	-.241	-.549	0.059	0.028	-.016	0.098	-.084	-.077	0.111	-.058
Q9	0.005	0.191	-.215	-.272	0.130	0.046	-.185	-.241	.881a	-.259	0.056	-.041	-.044	0.053	-.002	-.047	-.051	0.049
Q10	-.059	-.057	0.042	0.139	-.250	-.014	0.098	-.549	-.259	.836a	-.081	-.022	-.014	-.152	0.045	0.164	-.091	0.041
Q11	0.163	-.080	0.048	-.066	-.028	0.049	0.064	0.059	0.056	-.081	.749a	-.739	-.313	-.154	0.113	0.020	0.054	0.012
Q12	-.094	0.036	-.020	-.003	0.055	-.025	-.114	0.028	-.041	-.022	-.739	.758a	-.168	0.234	-.281	0.054	-.051	0.050
Q13	-.073	-.114	-.006	-.042	-.110	-.171	0.038	-.016	-.044	-.014	-.313	-.168	.898a	-.090	0.267	-.141	0.105	-.152
Q14	0.114	0.080	-.084	-.076	0.092	0.027	-.191	0.098	0.053	-.152	-.154	0.234	-.090	.706a	-.613	-.425	-.038	0.099
Q15	0.078	-.005	-.007	0.035	-.064	-.068	0.035	-.084	-.002	0.045	0.113	-.281	0.267	-.613	.725a	-.387	-.074	-.016
Q16	-.198	-.089	0.093	0.076	-.051	0.043	0.194	-.077	-.047	0.164	0.020	0.054	-.141	-.425	-.387	.779a	0.068	-.080
Q17	-.046	-.189	0.037	-.039	-.220	-.281	0.114	0.111	-.051	-.091	0.054	-.051	0.105	-.038	-.074	0.068	.627a	-.857
Q18	0.084	0.127	-.031	-.009	0.242	0.295	-.087	-.058	0.049	0.041	0.012	0.050	-.152	0.099	-.016	-.080	-.857	.758a

As the values on the diagonal for questions 6 and 7 were above 0.600, these questions were

eliminated from the dataset.

## Rotated Component Matrix

Q1	I prefer stores with larger collection	.854				
Q2	I prefer stores where collection is in par with latest fashion	.801				
Q3	I prefer stores that provide high quality garments	.800				
Q4	I prefer stores that corroborate their clothes with the weather	.791				
Q5	I prefer stores that advertise through blogs, social media, newspaper or TV		.885			



Q8	I prefer stores that send regular updates of new arrivals and discounts		.881			
Q9	I prefer stores with easy exchange or return policy		.727			
Q10	I prefer shopping during sales and discounts		.705			
Q14	I prefer stores where garments are arranged in a color coordinated manner			.969		
Q15	I prefer stores with customer friendly layout (where I can find what I need)			.963		
Q16	I prefer stores with attractive in store display			.959		
Q11	I prefer shopping during festivals or holidays				.936	
Q12	I prefer stores that stay open till midnight				.910	
Q13	I prefer stores that provide car park				.757	
Q17	I prefer stores where has knowledge about the garments and latest fashion trends					.959
Q18	I prefer stores where the salesperson is helping, patient and amiable					.929

The first factor, product, consisted of variables related to the variety, latest fashion, quality and corroboration with weather. The second factor, pricing and promotion, includes influences such as advertisements, updates, exchange policy and discounts. The third factor, visual merchandising, consists of arrangement of clothes, customer friendly layout and in-store display. The fourth factor, personal preferences, consist of festive shopping, extended operating hours and car park. The last factor, sales assistance is influenced by knowledge of the instore personnel and their attitude such as patience and amiability.

In short, the variables and factors can be summarized as,

Factors	Factor Interpretation (% variance explained)	Variables Included in the Factor
Product	Eigenvalue (37.704)	Variety (0.801)
		Latest Fashion (0.854)
		Quality (0.800)
		Corroboration with weather (0.791)
Pricing & Promotion	Eigenvalue (19.054)	Advertisement (0.885)
		Updates of new arrival and discounts (0.881)
		Easy exchange or return policy (0.727)
		Sales and discounts (0.705)
Visual Merchandising	Eigenvalue (10.901)	Arrangement in a color coordinated manner (0.969)
		Customer friendly layout (0.963)
		Attractive in-store display (0.959)
Preferences	Eigenvalue (9.955)	Shopping during festivals or holidays (0.936)
		Extended working hours (0.910)

		Car park (0.757)
Staff	Eigenvalue (6.535)	Knowledge of garments and trends (0.959)
		Helping, patient and amiable nature (0.929)

### Ranking of Factors

Rank	Factor	Mean Values
1	Pricing & Promotion	4.79
2	Personal Preferences	4.70
3	Sales Assistants	4.69
4	Product	4.31
5	Visual Merchandising	4.14

From the above table, it is clear that pricing & promotion is the most influential factor, that is, most people are attracted through advertisements, personalized messages, easy returns & exchange and discounts. Second most important factor is personal preferences, people prefer shopping during festivals, shops that work extended hours and provide car park. Third most dominant factor is sales assistants, people prefer in store staff that can explain about garments and latest fashion. Surprisingly, product is the fourth most influential, the variety, latest fashion, quality and collaboration with weather does not persuade customer as much as pricing, personal preference and sales assistants. The least significant factor is visual merchandising, arranging garments in a color coordinated manner, having a customer friendly layout and attractive in store displays are not much influential to the customers in South India.

### Reliability Test

Factor	Question	R	R <sup>2</sup>	$\alpha$	AVE
Product	Variety	0.854	0.729		
	Latest Fashion	0.801	0.641		
	Quality	0.800	0.640		

	Corroboration with weather	0.791	0.625	0.910	0.659
Pricing & Promotion	Advertisement	0.885	0.783		
	Updates of new arrival and discounts	0.881	0.776		
	Easy exchange or return policy	0.727	0.529		
	Sales and discounts	0.705	0.497	0.877	0.646
Visual Merchandising	Color coordinated arrangement	0.969	0.939		
	Customer friendly layout	0.963	0.928		
	Attractive in-store display	0.959	0.919	0.969	0.929
Personal Preferences	Shopping during festivals or holidays	0.936	0.876		
	Extended working hours	0.910	0.828		
	Car park	0.757	0.574	0.911	0.759
Staff	Knowledge of garments and trends	0.959	0.919		
	Helping, patient and amiable nature	0.929	0.863	0.902	0.891

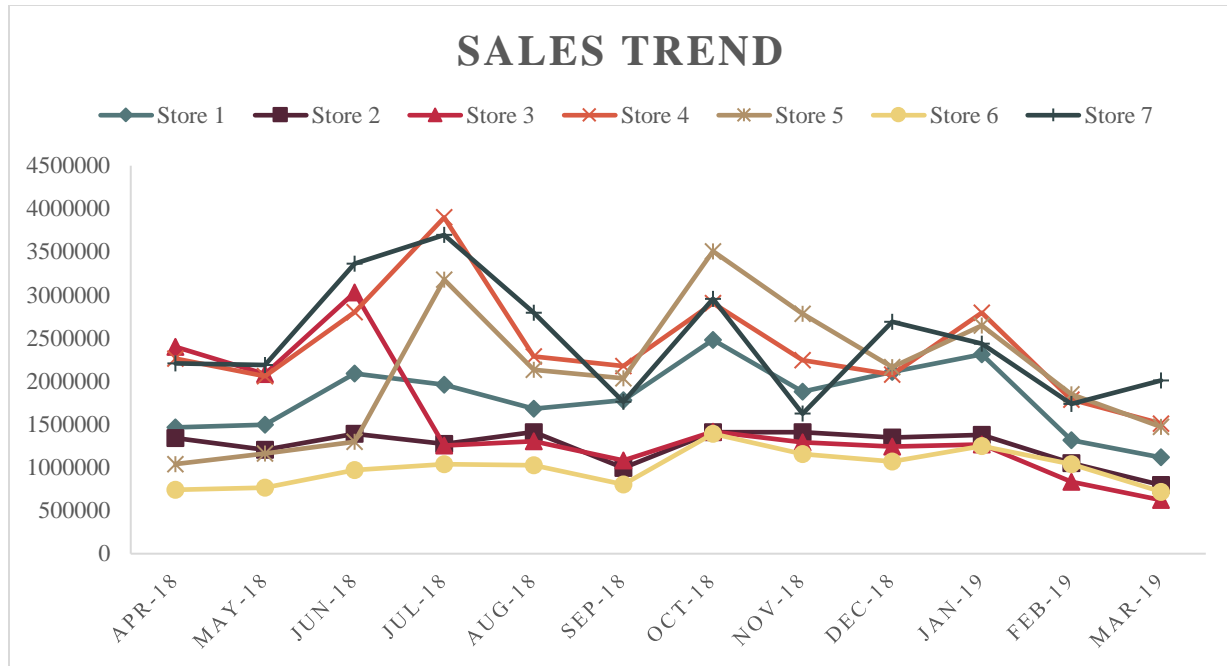
The conditions for reliability were satisfied as follows:

1.  $\alpha > 0.7$
2.  $AVE > 0.5$
3.  $\alpha > AVE$

### Studying Sales Data of Retail Stores

	Store 1	Store 2	Store 3	Store 4	Store 5	Store 6	Store 7
April 18	1466090	1340414	2398626	2260956	1039660	742781	2205780
May 18	1496907	1204603	2080455	2061366	1160663	765962	2187007
June 18	2090018	1388768	3027808	2799012	1297569	967145	3365795
July 18	1958380	1274480	1251509	3899045	3176369	1037744	3696531
August 18	1680658	1411480	1301607	2287479	2134439	1023312	2797538
September 18	1781136	996595	1081712	2174263	2034221	804875	1763588
October 18	2480569	1410560	1413727	2907965	3508228	1390516	2956476
November 18	1880284	1408760	1293590	2243713	2782911	1153145	1623432
December 18	2110573	1347726	1244125	2074344	2166021	1070608	2690259
January 19	2314375	1380998	1265021	2797402	2643546	1246197	2434775
February 19	1313747	1049095	834394	1783861	1845840	1041040	1734716
March 19	1116485	796515	621965	1510187	1472852	719347	2010966

Stores 1 to 7 are outlets of brands, Color Plus, Indian Terrain, Biba and Basics.



First, from the graph, the trend of festive shopping becomes distinct. It is a tradition in India to not only purchase new garments for oneself, but to also gift new clothes to the loved ones.

Diwali (5 November 2019) is one such festival due to which the sales hike can be seen in October. Another festival with a similar tradition is Pongal (January 14) which caused the increase in sales in January.

Second, the trend of shopping during discounts, especially during end of season sales can be seen in June – July and December – January. Further, the increase in sales during these months is supported by the holiday shopping trend. For instance, from April to June, children have vacations and thus the number of tourists increase which results in the boost in sales. Similarly, during December and January, children and working professionals have holidays because of Christmas and New Year which escalates the sales.

Additionally, during the holiday and festive season most stores were kept open till midnight which also contributed to the hike in sales.

In contrast, children have exams in February and March and the end of season sales gets over the previous month which results in the drop in sales.

Finally, the drop in sales during November is due to the rainy weather during the month. The roads tend to be flooded, consequently, it is difficult to commute which results in the fall in sales.

In conclusion, sales of stores is affected by holiday shopping, festive shopping and discounts.

These observations support the findings of the factor analysis.

## **Result**

The purpose of the study was to identify factors affecting the sales in exclusive brand outlets.

The findings of this study revealed that there are 5 key components that play a crucial role in sales of a retail store as well as selection of one retail store over another. These are product, pricing and promotion, visual merchandising, personal preferences and sales assistants. Pricing and promotion proved to be the most influential factors through factor analysis. Further, this was supported by the findings of analyzing the sales trends of 7 retail stores which showed that the sales increased considerably, also, almost doubled in few stores during the end of season sale.

The second most influential factor was personal preferences which included variables such as extended working hours and festive or holiday shopping. A similar trend is seen the analysis of sales data of retail stores where there is hike in sales during the festive and holiday months. The next most important factor was found to be sales assistance, followed by product, followed by visual merchandising. Understanding of these factors is crucial for apparel retailers as the competition is increasing rapidly along with an increase in customer expectations.

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