The Impact of Gender, Income and Occupation on Fashion Consciousness

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The term Fashion has always been under lime light by researchers of every era and by the professionals associated with the fashion industry. It is believed that an intense liking towards fashion products is able to influence human behavior and consumer consciousness. The objective of this study is to find out the relationship between demographic factors and the fashion consciousness of consumers. The variables selected were: income, occupation and gender (as predictors) and fashion consciousness, as dependent variable. Hypotheses were developed for each independent variable linking it with fashion consciousness. Data was collected from 250 respondents inside university campuses and other places on a convenience based sampling frame. A structured questionnaire consisting of 15 items was used. Results obtained from statistical analysis using the chi-square test as a statistical tool, show that while income and occupation level of consumers do not have a significant influence on their fashion consciousness, gender difference does appear to have substantial enough influence in this regard. In terms of significance this study adds value to the field of consumer research by exploring the connection between personal (demographic) characteristics and fashion consciousness.

Field of Research: Marketing

Keywords: Fashion, Consciousness, Demographics

1. Introduction

1.1 Overview

The contemporary world has made us witness a fast paced growth, development and prosperity in all walks of life. This rapid progress has resulted in inclusion of new facets in our life, increasing the complexities in the ways we think, decide and act. One of the attributes of this 'new world' is the phenomenon called 'Fashion'.

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The word Fashion is a general term for the prevailing style or trend, which is often accepted by large number of people at a time. It includes components like clothing, accessories, cosmetics, shoes, hair and even cell phones and other gadgets; but the most common usage refers to clothing and accessories. Fashion usually describes a person's taste or his/her own way of styling. The need for fashion arises from the desire to look socially acceptable and attractive.

Considering fashion to be a necessary part of our lives today, its awareness and adaptability is subject to our understanding and prevailing opinions in our minds. The word consciousness means awareness, realization, alertness or responsiveness towards a certain change. In other words when a person is conscious it means he or she is mentally alert about a particular situation or a change. So Fashion Consciousness describes ability to understand fashion, its need and importance, its attributes, its application and the values / positive outcomes that we try to acquire in daily lives. Fashion consciousness can thus be defined as involvement in fashion. Fashion involvement or concern about fashion is synonymous with fashion consciousness and refers to the degree to which an individual is aware of and concerned for appearing fashionable.

Today, our lifestyle is governed by a combination of factors like economic, financial and psychological etc. There is definitely a need to determine how these factors influence our capabilities to pursue and adopt a certain fashion. The concept of economics and marketing bring us to a term called 'Demographics' which can be defined as characteristics of a human population such as gender, race, occupation, income, age etc.

In this research three important variables from demographics have been taken, which are Gender, Income and Occupation, to study their relationship with fashion consciousness.

1.2 Problem Statement

To study the possibility of a relationship between three demographic variables: gender, income level and occupation, on the fashion consciousness of consumers. The basic proposition in the case of each demographic variable has been developed by assuming that no relationship exists between gender, income, and occupation of consumers, and their fashion consciousness, consistent with the philosophy of "healthy skepticism" in research.

1.3 Background, Motivation and Significance

Fashion industry is one of the growing segments of economy in Pakistan. A very high number of designer brands have mushroomed in the last 10 years, leading to a consequent growth in retail outlets selling designer wear. A number of fashion design and textile institutes have also been established, and a keen interest in fashion and designer wear seems to define the consumption pattern – particularly for youth. While this trend can be very clearly observed by anyone, what is not quite so evident, is the question whether this trend is prevalent only in the higher income groups or is it to be found irrespective of differences in wealth. Another important research question was concerned with the life style of the consumers: would individuals who are into occupations that require constant interaction with customers be more

fashion conscious than those in more reclusive professions? And then, last but not least, the role of gender: whether women are more sensitive to fashion then men, or vice versa.

It was in this context that a justification for this study came about, to study the possibility of a connection between these demographic characteristics and fashion consciousness of consumers.

In terms of findings, this study becomes significant in concluding that income and occupation of consumers do not play a vital role in affecting their fashion consciousness. While this may appear contrary to some of the existing literature as well as conventional wisdom, it is actually an understandable conclusion: fashion consciousness of individuals is satisfied within their own income levels, compatible to what they can afford. So a person with a moderate income can be as fashion conscious as a wealthy individual. By the same regard, occupation fails to moderate this perception as the desire to look good is an innate phenomenon, not dictated by demands of work. In terms of gender, however, this study ends up complementing the previous research, as women were shown to be more fashion conscious than male consumers.

1.4 Hypotheses

H1: Fashion consciousness is independent of Gender
H2: Fashion consciousness is independent of Income level
H3: Fashion consciousness is independent of Occupation

1.5 Definitions

- **Consciousness**: Consciousness is simply awareness or alertness or responsiveness, of something with-in or relating to someone.
- **Fashion:** The prevailing style or trend in clothing, attire, dress, outfit and garments.
- **Demographics**: Refers to personal attributes of an individual like age, gender, income, occupation, culture.

1.6 Outline of the Study

This paper is divided into five main sections. The first section provides an introduction, along with motivation behind the research, its significance and contribution to the overall body of research, and the hypotheses. The second section reviews the literature related to the related to the phenomena being studied in this paper, while the third section lays down the application of research methods. Section 4 presents data processing tables and statistical findings, whereas the last section explains the conclusions drawn from the results and possibilities for further research.

2. Literature Review

According to research carried out on the subject, fashion awareness is considered as an individual's attachment to the fashion related products: clothes and fashion accessories. It is also said that individuals who are always abreast of the fashion scene, are very particular about their attire and appearance. It has also been argued that females who are more fashion conscious visualize themselves as more youthful (Weissman, 1967). Fashion clothing is described as different ways of styling and presenting oneself. It includes the different trends and styles which people follows according to their taste and utility. Fashion not only relates itself to dressing up properly but, in a wider sense, it changes its trends from time to time. From older times to recent;, fashion comes in many ways and educates people of every era with different etiquettes of styling. It is also said that the different trends of fashion cannot exist if the innovative people of every age do not come up with diverse ideas and various methods of styling (Weissman, 1967).

According to another research study, fashion consciousness is simply an individual's perception and behavior towards fashion in which an individual can also sometimes fantasize himself or herself in different ways of styling. Such imaginations can, at times, give a lot of self-satisfaction (Thompson & Haytko, 1997). It has also been said that fashion is only the domain of women, but in recent times it has been seen that men have also adopted a good sense of style towards their dressing and personal look (Thompson & Haytko, 1997). In some research studies it was theorized that fashion is an uncontrollable chain which keeps changing periodically. It can stay for some months and sometimes it takes a larger span of time to change, but ultimately change always occurs, depending on people's perceptions and their behaviors, which change from time to time (Sproles, 1981).

As stated in another research study, mostly women (of different age groups) are the ones who seem to be more interested in fashion and its current styles and trends, much more so than their male counterparts. It was also observed that mostly the young, career oriented women, with higher incomes and good social status are more inclined towards fashion clothing and accessories. It is also seen that the inclination of women towards fashion clothing is because of their high exposure towards diverse mediums like television, internet and fashion magazines (Summers, 1970).

In the contemporary world, the younger generation seems to be much more interested in adopting unusual, new styles as they are more exposed to both print and electronic media. That is why their approach and behaviors towards fashion are different from previous generations. Today's youth is more independent, creative, and bold; they are also more socialized, which is one reason they are more aware of changing trends in fashion. They are also ready to spend their incomes on latest trends in fashion (Parker, Hermans & Schaefer, 2004; Xu, 2008).

The fashion industry has always had a great potential to generate high profits. Also, because of globalization, people have become more socialized and their behaviors towards fashion clothing have changed a lot. As compared to previous generations, much spending is now made on fashion products. Also, men have become more concerned about their appearance

and attire, therefore, they also started spending on clothing and fashion accessories. Overall, both men and women, have become more brand conscious as well (Pentecost & Andrews, 2010).

Fashion does not pertain only to clothing, but it also includes accessories, ornaments etc, according to individual taste and preference. It is important for fashion marketers to keep track of the changing tastes of individuals to cater to their desires more accurately. A person's involvement in fashion is sometimes a result of individual sentiments and emotions, which do not stay constant at all times (Pentecost & Andrews, 2010). Selection of fashion apparel mostly depends on the personal liking and cognition of an individual (Hilton, Choi & Chen, 2004). A person's involvement towards fashion also affects his or her spending patterns. Younger consumers are more likely to sustain or even raise their expenditures towards fashion related items as they are more involved and concerned about their appearance.

Generally, men are found to be less concerned about clothing and apparel while females display more vanity about their clothes. Moreover, men spend less or buy inexpensive clothes if they have to cut down expenditures, while women less likely to do so (Pentecost & Andrews, 2010). Some individuals are highly conscious of their appearance, and they always purchase clothes and accessories which, in their opinion, suit them. Furthermore, individuals who socialize more are found to be more apprehensive about their appearance and style which includes everything from their outfits to their makeup, accessories and shoes. Such individuals tend to choose fashion products which are socially acceptable and are in-style. These individuals can also become imaginative and sometimes they create their own styles which may even be admired in their social circles (Xu , 2008).

Clothing is considered an individual's personal style representative of his or her personality. Individuals style themselves differently to look unique and stand out in a crowd. Thus, fashion is used as a symbol of representing oneself. This symbolic value of fashion varies in different cultures and with the passage of time (O' Cass, 2004). The way a person dresses up, reflects his or her ideas, thought process, moods and behaviors.

Fashion designs and styles change because of the different trends which are introduced yearly or even seasonally. According to one study, individuals who have a more optimistic approach, always adopt different ways of styling themselves. By dressing up properly they sometimes want to please their own selves, create their self value and good admiration in a particular social group - such individuals are considered as fashion conscious (Banister & Hogg, 2004).

Another name used for the word fashion is style; which changes from time to time and may even vary from individual to individual (Redlich, 1963). Although a rare phenomenon, but sometimes a fashion may stay for a decade or longer: such styles are then termed as classics (Reynolds, 1968). It is no secret that planned obsolescence exists in the fashion industry, but sometimes it is difficult to change the opinion of people. Some individuals feel comfortable following the same fashion for years, and it becomes increasingly difficult for fashion marketers and designers to convince them to adopt new styles. Some consumers do not adopt change easily. Their limited income may also play a role in determining this behavior (Miller, McIntyre & Mantrala, 1993). It is said that fashion trends have an effect on consumer spending and

savings. An individual's savings can be reduced because of high fashion utilization. Particularly, when fashion changes within short time spans, it has a greater effect on the spending and savings pattern. Short life cycles in fashion not only disturb the wealth of individuals but also reduce the utilization of fashion which can ultimately limit the fashion consumption (Shi, 1999).

Personal appearance has always been considered as an important factor in all ages. Fashion attire fulfills the social desires of human beings. Changes in fashion are designed to meet the psychological and emotional motives of consumers. As individuals want to associate themselves with prestige and power, new designs and forms of fashion are created to satisfy these social needs of every group and class (Pesendorfer, 1995). Clothing is even symbolic in workplaces as it is indicative of a workers status. People feel superior and confident in their work places if they wear good quality clothes. Wearing impressive attire in work places is helpful in encouraging a constructive and optimistic approach in employees, improving their productivity. However, it is seen that in firms and offices mostly female employees are more inclined towards wearing fashionable and trendy outfits, while men perceive good dressing as a bothersome but necessary element in workplaces (Peluchette, Karl & Rust, 2006).

Selection of work place attire also depends on the number of people an individual is engaged with. Employees who have to interact with customers are more concerned about choosing and selecting clothes and accessories for themselves. While selecting clothes for workplace most of the individuals, both men and women, focus on their designations and status within the organization (Peluchette, Karl & Rust, 2006).

From an overall review of the literature it can be seen that while fashion consciousness as a research phenomenon has attracted a substantial amount of research already, relatively insignificant research material exists to relate this phenomenon to the demographic characteristics of fashion consumers. This discrepancy in literature served as the rationale behind this study.

3. Research Methods

3.1 Method of Data Collection

Data was collected through a survey involving respondents from a cross section of the target population, which consisted of fashion consumers belonging to different income groups, age brackets, and occupations. Due diligence was given to make sure that the sample represented all strata of the target population.

3.2 Sampling Technique

Convenience sampling, a non-probability method, was used to draw a sample. Since the exact size of the target population was unknown to the researchers, the unrestricted non-probabilistic approach to sampling was deemed appropriate.

3.3 Sample Size

Data was collected from 250 sampling units.

3.4 Instrument of Data Collection

A questionnaire was designed to collect responses from sampling units on 10 multichotomous questions to measure fashion consciousness, in addition to four questions related to demographics.

3.4.1 Validity and Reliability Test

Scale: All Variables

Table 1: Test of validity and reliability

Case Processing Summary

		N	%
Cases	Valid	250	100.0
	Excluded[a]	0	.0
	Total	250	100.0

a. List-wise deletion based on all variables in the procedure.

Table 2: Reliability Statistics

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.685	14

Table 3: Case Processing Summary of Gender, Occupation and Monthly House Hold Income Level

Case Processing Summary

	Cases					
	Valid		Missing		Total	
	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent
Gender * Fashion Consciousness	250	100.0%	0	.0%	250	100.0%
Occupation * Fashion Consciousness	250	100.0%	0	.0%	250	100.0%
Monthly House hold income level * Fashion Consciousness	250	100.0%	0	.0%	250	100.0%

The above table shows case processing summary for all 250 cases. The value 100% shows that the test is valid if the same study is to be carried out using the same instrument. This table depicts the impact of gender, income and occupation on fashion consciousness.

3.5 Empirical Research Model

Figure 1: Research Model
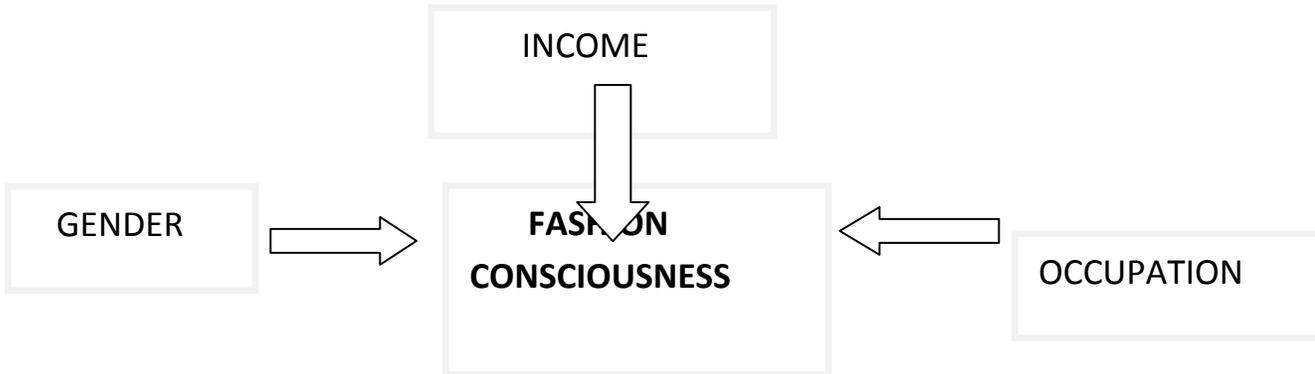
3.6 Statistical Technique

As the research is based on dependence between fashion consciousness with three other variables: income, gender and occupation; the chi-square test is used.

4. Results

4.1 Findings and Interpretation of Results

To test the hypotheses, chi-square technique was used. Here fashion consciousness is the dependent variable and demographic variables, which include income, occupation

and gender, are the independent variables. A significance of β <o.o5 was used to determine the impact of income, gender and occupation on fashion consciousness.

Table 4: Cross tabulation test on Gender

		Fashion Consciousness			
		No	Some Time	Yes	Total
	Male	32	70	38	140
	Female	10	44	56	110
Gender					
Total		42	114	94	250

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As shown in the table above, out of total 140 cases of male gender, only 38 males are following latest fashions /trends in clothing and accessories as represented in the YES column of the table. Whereas the number of females who are following latest fashion and trends in clothing and accessories, is 56 out of 110 cases, represented by YES column in female gender category. The total cases in all are 250.

Table 5: Chi-square test on Gender

Chi-Square Test

	Value	Df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	17.553[a]	2	.000
Likelihood Ratio	17.961	2	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	17.321	1	.000
N of Valid Cases	250		

a. 0 cells (.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 18.48.

In the above table the Pearson value of chi-square is 0.000 sig. (2-sided) which is < 0.05 and it is not in the acceptance region, which means that there is dependency between the variables and fashion consciousness depends on gender.

Pearson correlation < 0.05

- **H1 : Fashion consciousness is independent of gender (Rejected)**

Table 6: Cross tabulation test on House Hold Monthly Income Level

		Fashion Consciousness			
		No	Some Time	Yes	Total
Monthly House hold income level	0 to 25000	5	15	14	34
	25000 to 35000	5	12	9	26
	35000 to 45000	4	17	6	27
	45000 to 55000	3	10	10	23
	55000 to 65000	1	10	8	19
	65000 to 75000	3	7	9	19
	75000 to 100000	8	11	9	28
	100000 to 150000	3	15	12	30
	150000 and above	10	17	17	44
Total		42	114	94	250

In the above table different levels of monthly household income are shown and overall 94 cases out of 250 are following latest fashions /trends in clothing and accessories as represented in YES column of the table.

Table 7: Chi-square test on house holds monthly income level

Chi-Square Test

	Value	Df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	12.152^a	16	.733
Likelihood Ratio	12.481	16	.710
Linear-by-Linear Association	.000	1	.988
N of Valid Cases	250		

a. 6 cells (22.2%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 3.19.

In the above table the Pearson value of chi-square is 0.733 which is >0.05 sig.(2-sided). It shows that the Pearson value is in the acceptance region and fashion consciousness is independent of income level.

Pearson correlation >0.05

H2: Fashion consciousness is independent of income level (Accepted)
Occupation * Fashion Consciousness

Table 8: Cross tabulation test on occupation

Crosstab

		Fashion Consciousness			
		No	Some Time	Yes	Total
Occupation	Student	17	45	31	93
	education sector	4	21	12	37
	Media	2	2	6	10
	Law	1	2	2	5
	Business	8	25	28	61
	Fashion	3	2	2	7
	Engineering Sector	1	2	2	5
	Politics	0	0	2	2
	Health Sector	1	1	0	2
	Others	5	14	9	28
Total		42	114	94	250

The above table shows 10 different categories of occupations. Over all 94 cases out of 250 are following latest fashions /trends in clothing and accessories, represented in YES column of the table. By comparing different categories of occupation, it can be inferred that occupation does not affect the fashion consciousness of a group.

Table 9: Chi-square test on occupation

Chi-Square Test

	Value	Df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	16.844ᵃ	18	.534
Likelihood Ratio	17.180	18	.511
Linear-by-Linear Association	.035	1	.851
N of Valid Cases	250		

a. 19 cells (63.3%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .34.

In the above table, the Pearson value of chi-square is 0.534 sig. (2 sided) which is >0.05. It shows that the Pearson value is in the acceptance region and fashion consciousness is independent of occupation
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Pearson correlation > 0.05

H3: Fashion consciousness is independent of occupation (Accepted)

4.2 Hypotheses Assessment Summary

Table 10: Hypotheses assessment table

Hypothesis	Pearson Value	Sig. Value	Conclusion
H1: Fashion Consciousness is independent of Gender	17.553	0.000	Reject
H2: Fashion Consciousness is independent of Income level	12.152	0.733	Accept
H3:Fashion Consciousness is independent of Occupation	16.844	0.534	Accept

5. Conclusion, Implications and Future Research

5.1 Conclusion

This study leads to the conclusion that fashion consciousness of consumers is affected by gender, where female consumers were seen to be more fashion conscious than their male

counterparts; but income and occupation do not play a significant role in affecting the fashion consciousness of individuals.

While variations in occupation do not affect the fashion consciousness of individuals while adopting latest fashion clothing, apparel and accessories, it was seen that increase or decrease in income levels also rarely affect the fashion consciousness of consumers. This could be due to the proliferation of market with all sorts of affordable replicas and low priced budget brands.

The results pertaining to gender were almost stereotypical in nature as the female respondents were shown to be far more fashion conscious than male consumers. While this may contradict, somewhat, the latest trend in male fashion consciousness, it just goes to show that this trend will take time before it becomes strong enough to match the traditional female fashion consciousness.

5.2 Implications

This research is useful from multiple angles. First of all, academics and researchers in the field of marketing and consumer behavior, stand to benefit from the methodology and techniques used in this study. Moreover, professionals in the fashion marketing industry have a lot to gain and apply from the findings of this research.

5.3 Future Research

Further research can be carried out involving more demographic variables in addition to the ones used here, such as age and marital status. Also, values and lifestyle of consumers may also be considered by future researchers to determine whether these have any impact on fashion consciousness of consumers.

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