

Comparative Study of Customer Preference with Respect to Two Fashion Brands H&M versus Forever 21

by

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Abstract

It is important to understand consumer preferences as this understanding could help companies in shaping their product offering. This understanding gains even more importance when the product is a fashion brand where preferences can change rapidly and the product is highly personal. Given that India is a key market for several International brands, it is crucial to understand the consumer preferences in the Indian context. Towards this objective the present study aims to; find out the preference level of consumers with respect to the H&M and Forever 21 clothing brands in the Delhi/NCR(National Capital Region); to compare customer preference with respect to factors such as quality and price of products, availability and convenience of buying products, advertising, customer service, brand image, social media presence of products and social status attached to the products of the brand.

The study finds that the difference is significant with respect to factors such as price, advertisements and the convenience of buying, while there is no significant difference with respect to other factors. Price, brand image, social status attached to the products are factors that have been ranked higher in preference.

Introduction

The issue of customer preference is of keen interest to the researchers, policy makers and practitioners dealing with the issues related to marketing and consumer behaviour. Customers are central to the process of sales and marketing of any product and service and their preferences can impact companies. Therefore, satisfying customers' needs becomes the primary goal for a marketer to work toward. The role of customer preferences is very prominent in the overall buying behaviour of customers. Customer preference is primarily concerned with selecting various alternatives available to them based on the expected value which they can derive in terms of fulfilment of their needs and desires along with overall satisfaction.

The study conducted by Shendge (2012) defines customer preference as a social science concept that tries to develop choice between different alternatives based on factors such as quality of product or services offered, overall happiness generated from products and services, the level of satisfac-

tion achieved, and the total utility derived from availing the product or services. Thus the concept of customer preference can be treated as the source of motivation for helping customers to make their choices clear amongst the various alternatives available to them. The issues related with awareness and customer preference were discussed by Thomas and Housden (2002). The factors which affect the preference level of customers are quality, price, availability, convenience of buying, advertisements made by marketer in print, electronic and social media, customer service, brand image, social media presence and social status attached to the products and services offered by the marketer. The evaluation made by customers with respect to these factors will determine whether they will buy the product or services or search for additional products and services.

The Indian retail fashion market has witnessed numerous fascinating changes and challenges over the past few years, which are indicators of the changing retail fashion market. The challenges linked to these changes must be addressed in the

most effective and prudent concomitant manner of reaping the benefits (Gugnani & Brahma, 2014).

The Indian retail fashion market is marked by the presence of numerous domestic and foreign players. As the Indian economy is witnessing a higher degree of demographic dividend in comparison to the world market, there are increasing trends in the overall consumption within the Indian economy. This is also drawing the attention of several good brands that do not currently have a presence in India. Some domestic brands in the Indian market are Allen Solly, Park Avenue, Peter England, Flying Machine and Louis Philippe while some of the international brands are H&M, Forever 21, Tommy Hilfiger, Mango, Gap and Aeropostale.

Fast fashion is a business strategy which aims to reduce the processes involved in the buying cycle and lead times for getting the latest fashion products into stores, in order to satisfy consumer demand at its peak (Barnes & Lea-Greenwood, 2010). Even though clothing industry players are enjoying high demands for their products (the sector is expected to grow with a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 13% in the coming years) from all three types of consumers; men, women and children, it has become equally challenging for the marketer to cater to the needs of customers. The scenario becomes more important for foreign brands such as H&M and Forever 21 because these brands are operating in a different country which presents its own challenges and it becomes difficult to understand the true expectations of customers and serve them accordingly. Thus for brands like H&M and Forever 21, the true evaluation of the preference level of customers and the factors affecting such preference level has become highly important.

This evaluation could help the decision makers of H&M and Forever 21 to make appropriate choices related to products or services they are offering, their market strategies and overall value delivery to the customers in order to attract more and more customers and finally enhance the bottom line of their firm.

In India, H&M and Forever 21 are the major competitors in the high-end fashion retailing sector and are holding strong positions in the fast-fashion retail market. The domain of marketing and con-

sumer behaviour has witnessed immense changes in India. Previously, customers were more concerned with the price and availability of products, but now customer preferences differ with respect to products and services (Rajput, Kesharwani & Khanna, 2012a). In this background, the understanding of the preference level of customers becomes highly important for the two retail clothing brands, H&M and Forever 21. So the present study is designed to find out the preference level of consumers for H&M and Forever 21 brands. The study also compares the preference level of consumers for both H&M and Forever 21 with respect to their demographic factors (Rajput, Kesharwani & Khanna, 2012b).

The changing dynamics in the fashion industry, such as the fading of mass production, modified structural features in the supply chain, demand for lower cost, and flexibility in design, logistics, and distribution (Doyle, Moore & Morgan, 2016) have resulted in companies reassessing their outlook. Some fashion retailers have adopted a “Quick Response” concept (Franks, 2010). Such a strategy can be characterized as gaining competitive advantages through reducing time gaps between designing and consumption on a seasonal basis. Based on the model of “Quick Response”, “fast fashion” has been defined as “a business strategy that aims to shrink the processes involved in the buying cycle and lead times for getting new fashion products into stores, in order to satisfy consumer demand at its peak” (Barnes & Lea-Greenwood, 2016, p. 259). The business model of these retailers such as H&M, Benetton and Forever 21, is categorized by three components: short production and distribution lead times (quick response production competences); highly fashionable product design (improved product design competences); and reasonable prices for the middle market-between “Prada-Primark” segments (Cachon & Swinney, 2011).

Another important reason for the changing dynamics of the fashion industry is the internationalization process of fast fashion retailers (Bhardwaj & Fairhurst, 2010). The first step to the internationalization of many fashion retailers is often through their buying decisions, enabling modified structural characteristics in the supply chain. One leading debate is where to source products (domestic versus offshore) and whether to manage the process of end-to-end supply chain coordination

internally or to outsource part or all of the logistics functions (Fernie & Perry, 2011). These challenges are especially important in a market like India where the concept of fashion brands is a recent phenomenon compared to the western world.

Overview of H&M and Forever 21

Hennes & Mauritz AB (also known as H&M) is a fashion clothing-retail company which was founded by Erling Persson in 1947, in Sweden. H&M offers fast-fashion clothing for all segments of customers; men, women, teenagers and children. The company has a presence in 62 countries worldwide with approximately 4000 stores. H&M took the route of entering as a wholly-owned subsidiary in the Indian market. The company opened its first store in India on 2 October 2015 (H&M, 2016b).

Factors that make H&M different from the rest of the players in the market are its responsible utilization of natural resources, reducing consumption of electricity in stores, collaborating with high-end designers and celebrities, providing exclusive collections and offering garment recycling across the globe (H&M, 2016a).

For its product distribution channel the company has followed the policy of direct purchase of raw materials from the suppliers and selling the finished items directly to the retail outlets, with a wide network for online sales. The products are produced in nearly eight hundred factories that are situated in Asia and Europe. The market strategies of H&M include making customer's aware of the latest fashionable company products through digital platforms. It has its own YouTube channel where it introduces unique ad campaigns to engage with customers and to promote the latest, and seasonal, products for particular and peak seasons (H&M, 2016a).

Forever 21 is an American fast-fashion retailer, which was founded in 1984 by Do Won and Jin Sook Chang in Highland Park, California. According to their website, they have a men's wear line, several women's wear lines (including a plus-sized range), and girls' clothing collections. Apart from apparel, it sells accessories, footwear and beauty products. They sell through over 600 stores in America, Asia, the Middle East, and the United Kingdom. Aditya Birla Fashion and Retail (AB-FRL) acquired the global clothing brand Forever 21 in the Indian market for 26 million USD in 2016.

Forever 21 has adopted an economic pricing policy. It caters to the needs of its esteemed customers by supplying quality products at reasonable prices. The company's success lies in its ability to challenge top design houses in the rapidly developing ready-to-wear trends while maintaining some of the most competitive prices in the market with more than 60% of its apparel being made in Asia (Forever 21, 2016).

The marketing strategies of Forever 21 include utilization of social media to create brand awareness through platforms like Instagram, Pinterest, Twitter, Facebook, Snapchat, and blogs. It has an active official website and a significant proportion of its sales come from its website as it is able to reach a broader geography of consumers (Forever 21, 2016).

Literature Review

Fernandez (2009) tested the impact of brand on customers and the findings revealed that customers create an image of a clothing brand and give preference to those brands about which they hold positive opinions. The study also found that the role of a peer group cannot be ignored during the process of selecting, developing opinions and making their purchase decision about any particular brand. The role of advertising also helps to build the customers' awareness, knowledge and perception about the clothing brands, ultimately leading to preference towards specific clothing brands.

In the context of developing countries, the study conducted by Khare and Rakesh (2010) investigated the brand consciousness of customers for fashion brands. The main focus of this study was to explore the factors which determine the customer preference for fashion clothing, the sample being college-going youth in an Indian context. The findings showed that Indian college-going youth is brand conscious when it comes to selecting fashion clothing, the brand of fashion clothes being their first priority. The research compared and found that there is no significant difference between gender preferences.

The study conducted by Verma and Tiwari (2011) compared preferences of customers towards Indian versus international brands. The researchers adopted the segmentation approach and studied the role of customers falling in different categories per their demographic profile and preference for

national and international brands. The results of the study show that Indian consumers in the higher income categories are more brand conscious than those falling in low income brackets, and buy more international brands than Indian brands. Similarly, a study by Jung and Sung (2008) investigated customer preference towards international and national branded apparel and found that customer preference towards international brands is highly linked to the level of a customer's purchasing power while the role of other demographic variables such as gender, age, or education level is not significant. The results of the study also indicated that approximately 58% of the respondents - college students - preferred international brands of apparel over national brands. The study found that the higher the customer's exposure to the media (print, electronic and social media), the stronger the influence of media on the customer preference towards clothing brands. Ismail, Masood and Mehmood (2012) explored factors affecting customer preference for global clothing brands in Pakistan and found that customer preference was driven mainly by price and quality of clothing brands. Gharleghi (2013) also tried to document the factors to predict the consumer preferences for choosing fashion clothes among Malaysian consumers.

The factors responsible for predicting the customer preference were perceived quality of clothes, the sale and promotional strategies adopted by brands, lifestyle of customers and the country of origin of the clothing brands.

The study conducted by Mittal and Aggarwal (2012) explored the role of customer preference and consumer behaviour and found that the customer's individual characteristics such as physical strength, mental strength and emotional quotient played a very important role in affecting customer preference and buying behaviour. Anderson, Fell, Smith, Handen and Gomon (2005) and Dölekoğlu, Albayrak, Kara and Keskin (2008) have made attempts to investigate the factors responsible for customer preference towards products and services. The results indicated that customer preferences are largely sensitive to the various product related tangible and intangible factors and the other demographic factors of the customers. The various tangible factors associated with clothing products are the looks of the clothes, the quality of fabrics, and the ambience of the stores while the other, intangible features, associated with the apparel are

product price, the responsiveness of the sales person, the social status attached to the products, ease of product availability and ease of payment for products and services.

The relationship between customer awareness and customer preference was investigated by Thomas and Housden (2002) and Alamro and Rowley (2011). Both these studies indicate that the brand awareness serves as a key influencer on customer preference about products and services. The higher the brand awareness the higher the preference of customers for the particular product and services. Additionally, the researchers listed eleven factors which are key influencers of customer preference for products and services. These factors are; awareness of customer, modes of communication (advertisements in print, electronic, social media, word-of-mouth publicity) related to products/services, price and quality of products, brand personality, country of product/service origin, service quality of the organization, goodwill and reputation of the organization, customer's satisfaction level and perceived risk levels. Narang (2006) mentioned that due to the repetitive nature of advertising in print, electronic and social media, consumers are able to recall the brands and various attributes associated with the products and services.

The individual's attitude, perception, past and existing experiences and other personality related factors significantly affect the buying behaviour of consumers. The role of personality was examined by Albanese (1989) and clearly documented that the customer preference and consumer behaviour are largely driven by the personality of consumers while Sproles and Kendall (1986) established the relationship between the consumer decision making process and the factors associated with the mental factors of individual consumers.

Another study conducted by Kubendran and Vanniarajan (2005) assessed the location (urban versus rural) of respondents and its impact on their preference and buying behaviour. In general, people in urban areas preferred to buy more branded products as that gave them an assurance of quality and other product attributes along with a sense of security. Rural consumers preferred to purchase more non-branded products as these are relatively cheaper yet provided adequate quality.

The literature survey highlights that the factors important in determining consumer preferences are quality, price, the availability of products, buying convenience, advertisements, customer service, brand image, social media and social status. Therefore, these factors have been incorporated into the research study undertaken.

Research Problem

The role of customer preference has remained a key area of concern for the marketer. The customer is central in the process of sales and marketing of any products and services and the customer's taste and preferences can impact companies. Therefore, satisfying a customer's need becomes the prime goal for a marketer to work towards. Customer preference is primarily concerned with selecting various alternatives available to the customer based on the expected value which they can derive in terms of fulfilment of their needs and desires along with overall satisfaction.

In the modern fashion clothing industry, the two brands H&M and Forever 21 are close competitors. These two brands are looking to increasing their sales level by satisfying their customers. In this process, the following research questions related to customer preference towards H&M and Forever 21 brands are relevant to answer in the Delhi/NCR region;

What are the factors which influence the preferences of customers towards H&M and Forever 21 brands in Delhi/NCR region?

Which of these factors influencing customer preference towards these two brands H&M and Forever 21 are ranked as more important, and why?

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study are;

1. to find out the factors which influence the preference of customers towards H&M and Forever 21 brands in Delhi/NCR region.
2. to conduct a comparative analysis between the preference level of consumers with respect to H&M and Forever 21.

With respect to the objectives listed above, the following hypotheses are formed to test and compare the preference level of consumers with

respect to H&M and Forever 21 in Delhi/NCR region. These hypotheses are listed below:

Hypotheses

Based on the literature review the following set of hypotheses were developed for finding and comparing the preference level of consumers.

- H_{01} : There is no significant difference in the preference of customers towards H&M versus Forever 21 brands with respect to quality of products.
- H_{a1} : There is a significant difference in the preference of customers towards H&M versus Forever 21 brands with respect to quality of products.
- H_{02} : There is no significant difference in the preference of customers towards H&M versus Forever 21 brands with respect to price of products.
- H_{a2} : There is a significant difference in the preference of customers towards H&M versus Forever 21 brands with respect to price of products.
- H_{03} : There is no significant difference in the preference of customers towards H&M versus Forever 21 brands with respect to availability of products.
- H_{a3} : There is a significant difference in the preference of customers towards H&M versus Forever 21 brands with respect to availability of products.
- H_{04} : There is no significant difference in the preference of customers towards H&M versus Forever 21 brands with respect to convenience of buying of products.
- H_{a4} : There is a significant difference in the preference of customers towards H&M versus Forever 21 brands with respect to convenience of buying of products.
- H_{05} : There is no significant difference in the preference of customers towards H&M versus Forever 21 brands in with respect to advertisements.
- H_{a5} : There is a significant difference in the preference of customers towards H&M versus

Forever 21 brands with respect to advertisements.

- H_{06} : There is no significant difference in the preference of customers towards H&M versus Forever 21 brands with respect to customer service.
- H_{a6} : There is a significant difference in the preference of customers towards H&M versus Forever 21 brands in with respect to customer service.
- H_{07} : There is no significant difference in the preference of customers towards H&M versus Forever 21 brands with respect to brand image in Delhi/NCR region.
- H_{a7} : There is a significant difference in the preference of customers towards H&M versus Forever 21 brands with respect to brand image.
- H_{08} : There is no significant difference in the preference of customers towards H&M versus Forever 21 brands with respect to social media presence of the brand.
- H_{a8} : There is significant difference in the preference of customers towards H&M versus Forever 21 brands with respect to social media presence of the brand.
- H_{09} : There is no significant difference in the preference of customers towards H&M versus Forever 21 brands with respect to social status attached to the brand.
- H_{a9} : There is significant difference in the preference of customers towards H&M versus Forever 21 brands with respect to social status attached to the brand.

Limitations of the Study

The findings of the study are limited to the analysis of a sample size of 50 respondents selected from the Delhi/NCR region on the basis of convenient sampling. The results can't be generalized for the entire population of the study. As recommended by Central Limit Theorem, to get a better estimation for the entire population from the sample, the sample size should be large. Considering the paucity of time, we selected convenient random sampling methods for selecting the sample. We have used both a rating and ranking scale to assess

the preference level of consumers for H&M versus Forever 21 products in Delhi/NCR and treated the same as proxy for a continuous variable of consumer's preference. There is past evidence indicating that the same can be considered for generating proxy of an attitudinal variable. The findings of the study are based on the opinions expressed by the respondents during the questionnaire survey so there are changes of responses biasness in the findings. The data collection of a questionnaire survey always carries some common errors i.e. hurried filling of the questionnaire, misunderstanding of the instrument/concept and the influence of others.

Research Design -Methodology

The study is based on the descriptive research design formed to meet the objectives of the study. The selection of descriptive research design is in line with the studies conducted in the past in the area of consumer behaviour.

Design of the Research Instrument

The researchers have developed a detailed questionnaire considering the role of all the factors affecting the preference level of customers. These factors were identified in the literature review of the study in both the Indian and global context and concluded that the factors such as quality, price, availability, convenience of buying, advertisements made by marketer in print, electronic and social media, customer service, brand image, social media presence and social status attached to the products and services offered by the marketer play a very important role in affecting the preference level of consumers. The rating scale of 1-5 was selected for the study to assess the preference level of consumers with respect to various factors affecting the same. A sample of 50 respondents was selected as a sample for the study. The sample was selected using convenient sampling method. The fieldwork was executed in February 2017.

Findings and Discussion

The paired sample t-test is used to compare the preference level of consumers with respect to quality, price, availability, convenience of buying, advertisements made by marketer (print or electronic), customer service, brand image, social media presence and social status attached to the products and services offered by the marketer of the products offered by H&M versus Forever 21.

Profile of Respondents

The demographic profiles of respondents selected as the sample of the study are discussed in this section. The number of male respondents was 16 and female respondents numbered 34 out of a total of 50, the percentage being 32% and 68% respectively. The number of respondents below the age of 35 was 20, or 40 % of the total size, while the remaining 60 % of the respondents, numbering 30, were above the age of 35 years. The distribution of the sample across the education level was fairly even with 26 % of the respondents being graduates, 36 post graduates and 38 % who were neither. The spread of the sample across NCR(National Capital Region) was even, with 28% of the respondents from Gurgaon, 34% from Delhi and the remaining 38% from Ghaziabad. In terms of the household income, a total of 22% respondents had a household monthly income less than 50 thousand, another 32% respondents' monthly income was between 50 thousand and 100 thousand rupees while 28% respondents had a monthly household income between 100 thousand to 500 thousand rupees. The percentage of respondents having monthly household income above 500 thousand rupees was 18% in the selected sample.

Analysis of Responses

The respondents were also asked to rank the various factors of product quality, price, availability, buying convenience, advertisements, customer service, brand image, social media and social status.

Factors like social status associated with product, buying convenience and brand image of the product were ranked as important for the customers while other factors like quality of products, availability of products, advertisements, customer service and social media were not ranked as important. (Table 1 in Annexures)

Hypothesis Testing

To test the following hypothesis of comparing the preference of consumers with respect to H&M versus Forever 21 in Delhi/NCR region, paired sample t-test statistics were pressed into service.

- H_{01} : There is no significant difference in the preference of customers towards H&M versus Forever 21 brands with respect to quality of products.

The mean rating of quality of H&M was 3.26 while the same was 3.10 in the case of Forever 21. The value of t-test statistics is 0.513 which is not statistically significant at 5% level of significance. Thus the null hypothesis of no statistical difference in the preference of consumers with respect to quality of products for H&M versus Forever 21 brands will not be rejected and alternate hypothesis of significant statistical differences will be rejected. The researchers can conclude that consumers do not have different preference with respect to quality of the two brands.

- H_{02} : There is no significant difference in the preference of customers towards H&M versus Forever 21 brands with respect to price of products.

The mean value of ratings received by both brands, H&M and Forever 21, with respect to their prices were 1.94 and 3.54 respectively. The value of t-test statistics is -6.946 which is statistically significant at 5% level of significance. Thus the null hypothesis will be rejected and alternate hypothesis of significant statistical differences will not be rejected. Thus the study finds that the price of H&M versus Forever 21 has a significant difference in preference among the end consumers.

- H_{03} : There is no significant difference in the preference of customers towards H&M versus Forever 21 brands with respect to availability of products.

The mean value of ratings received by H&M and Forever 21 with respect to their availability of products were 2.70 and 2.96 respectively. The value of t-test statistics is -0.889 which is statistically significant at 5% level of significance. Thus the null hypothesis of no statistical difference in the preference of consumers with respect to availability of products for H&M versus Forever 21 brands will not be rejected and alternate hypothesis of significant statistical differences will be rejected. We can conclude that there is no difference in consumer preferences regarding product availability.

- H_{04} : There is no significant difference in the preference of customers towards H&M versus Forever 21 brands with respect to convenience of buying of products.

The mean value of ratings received were 3.24 by H&M and 2.68 by Forever 21. The value of t-test

statistics is 2.112 which is statistically significant at 5% level of significance. Thus the null hypothesis of no statistical difference in the preference of consumers with respect to convenience of buying of products for H&M versus Forever 21 brands will be rejected and alternate hypothesis of significant statistical differences will not be rejected. The researchers can conclude that the H&M brand has a higher preference for convenience of buying of products from end consumers than Forever 21 brand.

- H_{05} : There is no significant difference in the preference of customers towards H&M versus Forever 21 brands in with respect to advertisements.

The mean value of ratings of H&M and Forever 21 were 2.48 and 3.36 respectively. From the table the value of t-test statistics is -3.290 which is statistically significant at 5% level of significance. Thus the null hypothesis of no statistical difference in the preference of consumers with respect to advertisements of products for H&M versus Forever 21 brands will be rejected and alternate hypothesis of significant statistical differences will not be rejected.

The mean value of advertisements is higher in the case of Forever 21 and lower in the H&M brand. The researchers can conclude that end consumers of Forever 21 have higher preference for advertisements as compared to the H&M brand.

- H_{06} : There is no significant difference in the preference of customers towards H&M versus Forever 21 brands with respect to customer service.

The mean rating of customer service of products of H&M was 2.88 and 2.92 for Forever 21. The value of t-test statistics is -0.160 which is not statistically insignificant at 5% level of significance Thus the null hypothesis of no statistical difference in the preference of consumers with respect to customer service of products for H&M versus Forever 21 brands will not be rejected and alternate hypothesis of significant statistical differences will be rejected.

Therefore the researchers can conclude that customers do not find any difference in the level of customer service of products offered by H&M versus Forever 21.

- H_{07} : There is no significant difference in the preference of customers towards H&M versus Forever 21 brands with respect to brand image in Delhi/NCR region.

The mean rating of the brand image of H&M and Forever 21 were 3.08 and 3.00 respectively. The value of t-test statistics is 0.277 which is not statistically significant at 5% level of significance. Thus the null hypothesis of no statistical difference in the preference of consumers with respect to brand image of products for H&M versus Forever 21 brands will not be rejected and alternate hypothesis of significant statistical differences will be rejected.

The researchers can conclude that with respect to the brand image of Forever 21 versus H&M, there is no difference in preference regarding brand image among the end consumers.

- H_{08} : There is no significant difference in the preference of customers towards H&M versus Forever 21 brands with respect to social media presence of the brand.

The mean value of ratings received by both the brands H&M and Forever 21 with respect to their social media presence were 2.82 and 3.06 respectively. The value of t-test statistics is -0.735 which is statistically insignificant at 5% level of significance. Thus the null hypothesis of no statistical difference in the preference of consumers with respect to social media presence of products for H&M versus Forever 21 brands will not be rejected and alternate hypothesis of significant statistical differences will be rejected.

The researchers' conclusion is that consumers are indifferent to both brands in terms of the preference level of consumers with respect to the social media presence.

- H_{09} : There is no significant difference in the preference of customers towards H&M versus Forever 21 brands with respect to social status attached to the brand.

The mean value of rating received by H&M was 3.18 and 2.90 for Forever 21 with respect to their social status. The value of t-test statistics is 0.938 which is statistically insignificant at 5% level of significance, thus the null hypothesis of no statistical difference in the preference of consumers with

respect to social status attached to the brand H&M versus Forever 21 will not be rejected and alternate hypothesis of significant statistical differences will be rejected.

The researchers concluded that the preference level of consumers with respect to the social status attached to both brands are similar.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Out of the nine factors identified from the literature review and researched for this study, it is clearly evident that for consumers in Delhi/NCR product quality, price, availability, customer service and social media presence do not rank high. On the other hand, they rank factors like convenience of buying, social status attached to products and brand image as higher for both brands. It would be worthwhile to carry out further research on why quality as a parameter does not rate high for the respondents surveyed. It could be probable that brand image which is rated highly could be indicative of quality and therefore disregarded as a separate variable.

The study finds that with respect to the quality, availability of products, customer service, brand image, social media presence and social status attached to the two brands, there is no significant difference between the preference of customers towards H&M and Forever 21. The difference is significant between the two brands, H&M and Forever 21, with respect to factors such as price, advertisements made by the two brands and the convenience of buying of the two brands. The difference between the two brands with respect to pricing is especially significant as the Indian consumer is considered to be highly price conscious. The price points of Forever 21 make it more affordable and accessible to the Indian consumer and the consumers are aware of the difference in the price between the two brands. Further research can also be carried out the difference in preferences with respect to convenience of buying of the two brands, given that both the brands occupy similar retail space i.e malls and have an equally strong online presence.

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Annexures

Questionnaire

Gender: Male Female

Age: 35 years Above 35 years

Educational Qualification: Graduatd Post Graduate Others

Location: Delhi Gurgaon Ghaziabad

Occupation: Service Business Others

Monthly Household Income: Upto Rs. 50000 Rs. 50001-100000

Rs. 100001-500000 Above Rs. 500000

Q1 I find the quality of products to be appropriate at H &M.

1. Strongly Disagree 2. Disagree 3. Neutral 4. Agree 5. Strongly Agree

Q2 I find the products at H&M to be priced appropriately.

1. Strongly Disagree 2. Disagree 3. Neutral 4. Agree 5. Strongly Agree

Q3. I find availability of products to be appropriate at H&M.

1. Strongly Disagree 2. Disagree 3. Neutral 4. Agree 5. Strongly Agree

Q4. I find it convenient to buy products at H&M.

1. Strongly Disagree 2. Disagree 3. Neutral 4. Agree 5. Strongly Agree

Q5 I find advertisements of products to be appropriate at H&M.

1. Strongly Disagree 2. Disagree 3. Neutral 4. Agree 5. Strongly Agree

Q6 I find customer service to be appropriate at H&M.

1. Strongly Disagree 2. Disagree 3. Neutral 4. Agree 5. Strongly Agree

Q7. I find the brand image of products to be appropriate at H&M.

1. Strongly Disagree 2. Disagree 3. Neutral 4. Agree 5. Strongly Agree

Q8. I find social media presence to be appropriate for H&M.

1. Strongly Disagree 2. Disagree 3. Neutral 4. Agree 5. Strongly Agree

Q9. I find social status attached to the brand be appropriate at H&M.

1. Strongly Disagree 2. Disagree 3. Neutral 4. Agree 5. Strongly Agree

Q10. I find the quality of products to be appropriate at Forever 21.

1. Strongly Disagree 2. Disagree 3. Neutral 4. Agree 5. Strongly Agree

Q11. I find the products at Forever 21 to be priced appropriately.

1. Strongly Disagree 2. Disagree 3. Neutral 4. Agree 5. Strongly Agree

Q12. I find availability of products to be appropriate at Forever 21.

1. Strongly Disagree 2. Disagree 3. Neutral 4. Agree 5. Strongly Agree

Q13. I find it convenient to buy products at Forever 21.

1. Strongly Disagree 2. Disagree 3. Neutral 4. Agree 5. Strongly Agree

Q14. I find advertisements of products to be appropriate at Forever 21.

1. Strongly Disagree 2. Disagree 3. Neutral 4. Agree 5. Strongly Agree

Q15. I find customer service to be appropriate at Forever 21.

1. Strongly Disagree 2. Disagree 3. Neutral 4. Agree 5. Strongly Agree

Q16. I find the brand image of products to be appropriate for Forever 21.

1. Strongly Disagree 2. Disagree 3. Neutral 4. Agree 5. Strongly Agree

Q17 I find social media presence to be appropriate at Forever 21.

1. Strongly Disagree 2. Disagree 3. Neutral 4. Agree 5. Strongly Agree

Q18. I find social status attached to the brand be appropriate at Forever 21.

1. Strongly Disagree 2. Disagree 3. Neutral 4. Agree 5. Strongly Agree

Rank the following factors on a scale of 1-9 (1 highly preferred and 9 least preferred) while purchasing the products.		
	Factor	Ranking
19	Quality of products	
20	Price of products	
21	Availability of products	
22	Convenience of buying of products.	
23	Advertisements of products	
24	Customer service of products	
25	Brand image of products	
26	Social Media presence of products	
27	Social status attached to products	

Table 1.

Factors	Cumulative Percentage (Rank 1+2+3)
Preference with respect to quality of H & M and Forever 21 products.	12
Preference with respect to price of H & M and Forever 21 products.	42
Preference with respect to availability of H & M and Forever 21 products.	40
Preference with respect to convenience of H & M and buying of Forever 21 products.	58
Preference with respect to advertisements of H & M and Forever 21 products.	22
Preference with respect to customer service of H & M and Forever 21 products.	22
Preference with respect to brand image of H & M and Forever 21 products.	66
Preference with respect to social media presence of H & M and Forever 21 products.	14
Preference with respect to social status attached to H & M and Forever 21 products.	76

Table 2 and 3

Mean		Paired Differences					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
		Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference					
				Lower	Upper				
Pair 1	Preference with respect to quality	.160	2.207	.312	-.467	.787	.513	49	.611
Pair 2	Preference with respect to price	-1.600	1.629	.230	-2.063	-1.137	-6.946	49	.000
Pair 3	Preference with respect to availability.	-.260	2.068	.293	-.848	.328	-.889	49	.378
Pair 4	Preference with respect to convenience	.560	1.875	.265	.027	1.093	2.112	49	.040
Pair 5	Preference with respect to advertisements.	-.880	1.891	.267	-1.418	-.342	-3.290	49	.002
Pair 6	Preference with respect to customer service	-.040	1.772	.251	-.544	.464	-.160	49	.874