STORE AMBIENCE, LOCATION, AND STAFF BEHAVIOUR: THEIR ROLE IN JEWELLERY STORE SELECTION

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Abstract: The jewellery sector is highly competitive, with customer shopping choices influenced by product quality, pricing, and experiential elements, including atmosphere, location, and staff behaviour. This study examines the impact of these critical criteria on consumers' choices when selecting jewellery retailers. Employing a well-organised questionnaire and a convenience sampling technique, data were obtained from 225 respondents. The statistical methods for data analysis include Percentage Analysis, Descriptive statistics, Independent sample t-test to ascertain differences between Males and Females for Factors influencing Jewellery Store Selection, One-way ANOVA for significant difference among Age groups with respect to the Factors, and the Kruskal-Wallis test for significant difference among the Mean rank of Occupation with respect to the Factors of Jewellery store selection. The study concludes that jewellery merchants must implement a comprehensive strategy that combines beautiful ambience, optimal location, and proficient personnel to attract and sustain consumers. This study has profound effects for jewellery retailers seeking to enhance the in-store experience and improve their brand's value in a changing retail landscape.

Keywords: *Store ambience, Staff behaviour, Location, Consumer Preference, Store Selection.*

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I. INTRODUCTION:

The jewellery retail industry is peculiar within the consumer sector, since jewellery is acquired not just as a commodity but as a symbol of investment, prestige, and personal identity. The acquisition of jewellery is a notably high-involvement purchasing category, whereby consumers evaluate both the product and the whole retail experience. The selection of a jewellery shop is influenced by several factors that extend beyond product quality and cost. Among them, shop ambience, location and personnel conduct were significant determinants of consumer impressions and preferences. An appealing retail environment created by way of interior decoration, layout, and comfort enhances the shopping experience and fosters confidence and a sense of elegance, particularly pertinent for high-value products like jewellery. Similarly, the convenience of a store's location influences its accessibility and visibility. The impact of staff behaviour is significant, since purchasing jewellery requires expert guidance, trust, and personalised treatment, making human connection a crucial factor in the selection of a shop.

Understanding these characteristics is particularly advantageous in the highly competitive jewellery retail sector, where customers have an abundance of choices among branded showrooms and family-owned traditional jewellers. This research study aimed to address the impact of ambience, location, and staff behaviour in influencing customer decision-making while selecting a jewellery store. This study will benefit jewellery retailers and marketers in developing ways to enhance consumer service, augment shop appeal, and secure a competitive edge in the jewellery industry.

REVIEW OF RELATED STUDIES

Ahmad & Dixit (2024) analysed 100 grocery consumers to ascertain store layout preferences. The study uncovered significant demographic and retail attributes influencing layout choice, with regression analysis demonstrating relevance for shopping websites, supermarkets, and Kirana shops. The most essential shop attributes were product quality, promotions/discounts, product display, online buying capability, and possibilities for digital payment. The study provided grocery merchants with specific insights to develop targeted marketing tactics in an exceedingly dynamic Indian market.

Barreto & Silveira (2023) examined the factors influencing retail outlet selection in Goa, India. The primary results identified accessibility from residence as the foremost influence, followed by quality, variety, atmosphere, offers, and attentive personnel. The correlation investigation between shop digitalisation and customer happiness revealed a weak association. Conversely, customer purchasing habits and loyalty had a strong association. The study recommended that businesses establish outlets in extremely urbanised regions and provide ongoing employee training.

Singh & Sandhu (2021) investigated 700 customer shop selections across five establishments: "Easy Day, the Big Bazaar, More, Reliance Fresh, Fresh Mart". The findings showed that atmosphere, the variety of products, customer happiness, and pricing significantly impact retail shop selection. Conversely, accessibility and quality factors do not influence customers' selection of stores. The study suggested that store managers must prioritise improving shop atmospherics and choices of products, augmenting consumer contentment, and offering reasonable prices to secure an edge over their competitors.

Bhatti et.al (2015) analysed factors affecting customer shop

selection decisions in Rawalpindi, Pakistan, focusing on the impact of location, children's play space, and parking facilities. A study of 322 customers indicated that the shop's location, children's play space, and parking facilities significantly influenced and were associated with consumer purchasing decisions. The shop's location highly impacted customers' choice of retailer.

Zulqarnain, Zafar, & Shahzad (2015) explored the factors influencing customer selection of grocery retail establishments, with convenience, variety, product quality, pricing, and shop loyalty identified as the most important influencers. Data from 150 respondents in Lahore revealed that variety was the primary factor of choice overall, with shopping occurring mostly in their local neighbourhoods. The findings of the Correlation test revealed that income level was favourably associated with a preference for contemporary shops. The affluent demographic emphasised quality and availability, mostly favouring major corporate retailers regularly. The study determined that recognising these elements was essential for shops to execute efficient promotional campaigns.

II.RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Primary data was collected with the help of a questionnaire. Convenience sampling was used, owing to the accessibility and availability of respondents at the selected research location. 225 responses were obtained in total. In addition to this, secondary data was used to support the study.

Further references were also acquired from published journals, publications, and credible web sources, providing a theoretical basis for the study. The statistical techniques were used to identify patterns, assess the significance of variables and draw valid conclusions about consumer preferences in jewellery store selection.

The statistical tools used for analysis are:

1. Percentage analysis
2. Descriptive Statistics
3. Independent sample t-test
4. One-way ANOVA
5. Kruskal-Wallis test.

ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

Particulars	Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)
Gender		
Male	83	36.9
Female	142	63.1
Total	**225**	**100.0**

Age		
Below 20	3	1.3
21 – 30	19	8.4
31 – 40	72	32.0
41 – 50	68	30.2
Above 50	63	28.0
Total	**225**	**100.0**
Occupation		
Private	98	43.6
Public	31	13.8
Self-Employed	83	36.9
Homemaker	13	5.8
Total	**225**	**100.0**
Monthly Income		
Up to 40,000/-	4	1.8
40,001/- to 70,000/-	21	9.3
70,001/- to 1,00,000/-	67	29.8
1,00,001/- and above	133	59.1
Total	**225**	**100.0**
Frequency of Purchase		
Once in 2 years	18	8.0
Once a year	67	29.8
2 times a year	115	51.1
More than 2 times a year	25	11.1
Total	**225**	**100.0**

The table above illustrates the frequency distribution of demographic categories. The majority are females (N=142). The maximum number of customers were in the age category of 31-40 (N=72), followed by 41-50. A significant number were those working in private enterprises (N=98) and self-employed professions. A vast portion of customers (N=133) make over a monthly income of Rs. 1,00,000. The predominant number of customers acquire jewellery twice a year (N=115).

The table showing the Descriptive Statistics of the Factors involved in Jewellery Store Selection

Factors		Mean	SD
Store Ambience			
SA1	The store's interior design and layout influence the selection of the jewellery store	3.87	.859
SA2	The lighting and display of jewellery need to be visually appealing.	4.32	.466
SA3	When choosing an outlet, the store's cleanliness and hygiene are very important.	4.45	.499
SA4	The store should provide a peaceful and relaxing atmosphere.	4.11	.315
SA5	Air conditioning, music, and aromas all contribute to a more enjoyable shopping experience	4.00	.000
Location			
L1	The jewellery shop must be convenient for easy access	4.21	.411
L2	The availability of parking space influences me to a great extent while choosing a jewellery store.	3.34	.992
L3	Convenience to other shopping outlets enhances the location's significance.	4.27	.443
L4	I prefer stores located in prominent commercial areas.	4.47	.500
L5	I prefer jewellery stores that are located in popular malls or commercial complexes.	1.99	.601
Staff Behaviour			
SB1	When interacting with customers, the sales personnel should always be kind and attentive.	4.07	.272
SB2	The choice of a store is affected by the capacity of the salesman in providing information about the products.	4.14	.345
SB3	The cordiality of the staff influences my decision to revisit the store.	3.52	.856
SB4	Honesty and openness of the staff make me feel better about buying jewellery.	4.08	.265
SB5	The politeness and respect shown by the staff play a crucial role in my selection of a jewellery store.	4.14	.345

From the above table, it is evident that consumers are more cautious about the store's cleanliness and hygiene, and the display of jewellery significantly influences consumer behaviour. Consumers do not prioritise the interior design and layout of the jewellery store. Consumers choose stores situated in prominent locations, which include other outlets, since this facilitates easy purchasing and exploration of different jewellery. Jewellery shops located in malls and commercial complexes do not significantly influence customers' preferences for store selection. The staff's amicable approach, transparency, integrity, and expertise in the product make consumers feel delighted about the store. Though staff behaviour is of paramount importance, it does not significantly influence the customers in their purchase decisions, as the mean score (3.52) is found to be comparatively less than other factors of staff behaviour.

The table presents the most predominant Factor in the Jewellery Store Selection

Factor	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	SD
Store Ambience Total	18.00	22.00	20.7511	1.00903
Location Total	15.00	22.00	18.2756	1.32442
Staff Behaviour Total	18.00	22.00	19.9511	1.06583
Overall Factors	**54.00**	**63.00**	**58.9778**	**1.80140**

From the above table, it is clear that shop ambience (Mean=20.75), which includes cleanliness, interior design, lighting, air conditioning, etc, enhances the store's choice. This is followed by the next factor, staff behaviour, considering the mean score of 19.95 and location, with the average score of 18.27, play the least role in the selection of jewellery retailers.

Table indicating an Independent sample t-test for significant difference in Gender with respect to Factors of Jewellery Store Selection.

Null Hypothesis: There is no significant difference between Male and Female with respect to the Factors of Jewellery Store Seection.

Note: ** denotes significant at 1% level

Factors of Jewellery Store Selection	Gender				t value	P value
	Male		Female			
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
Store Ambience	20.3614	1.19530	20.9789	.80308	4.186	<0.001 **
Location	17.9157	1.32706	18.4859	1.28127	3.179	.495
Staff Behaviour	20.3614	.83488	19.7113	1.1148	4.965	.004**
Overall Store Selection	58.6386	1.91641	59.1761	1.70647	2.112	.103

Since the P-value is less than 0.01, the null hypothesis is rejected at 1% level concerning the factors of Store Ambience and Staff behaviour. Hence, it can be inferred that there is a significant difference between male and female with regard to the factors of Jewellery store selection.

Further to this, from the mean value scores, it is proven that female consumers have a more favourable opinion of store ambience compared to males. With regard to staff behaviour, male consumers exhibited a better opinion than female consumers.

However, there was no significant difference between male and female concerning Location, since the P-value is greater than 0.05. Hence, the null hypothesis is accepted at 5% level of significance.

One-way ANOVA for significant difference among Age groups with respect to the Factors.

Alternative Hypothesis: There is a significant difference among the Age groups with respect to the factors.

Factors of Jewellery Store Selection	Age Group					F value	P value
	Below 20	21-30	31-40	41-50	Above 50		
Store Ambience	22.00[b] (.00)	20.37[a] (1.49)	21.20[a] (.90)	20.48[a] (1.01)	20.57[a] (.711)	8.124	<.001**
Location	19.00[a] (.00)	17.95[a] (1.17)	18.26[a] (1.38)	18.72[a] (1.11)	17.87[a] (1.39)	4.108	.003**
Staff Behaviour	20.00[bc] (.00)	18.37[a] (.95)	19.58[b] (1.25)	20.41[c] (.67)	20.35[c] (.48)	26.035	<.001**
Overall Store Selection	61.00[c] (.00)	56.68[a] (1.38)	59.05[b] (1.98)	59.61[b] (1.35)	58.79[b] (1.55)	13.427	<.001**

Note: 1. Value within bracket refers to SD

2. ** denotes significance at 1% level

3. Different alphabet among Age Groups denotes a significant at 5% level using the Duncan Multiple Range Test (DMRT).

Since the P-value is less than 0.01, the alternative hypothesis is accepted with regard to Factors of Store Ambience, Location, Staff Behaviour and Overall store selection. Hence, there is a notable difference among Age groups of consumers concerning the factors of store ambience, location, staff behaviour, and overall store selection. Based on (DMRT), the age group of 21 to above 50 substantially vary from the age group of below 20 at 5% level of significance, but there is no significant difference existing between the age groups of 21-30, 31-40, 41-50, and above 50 with respect to store ambience.

For the location factor, the age groups do not significantly differ at 5% significance level.

In Staff behaviour, the age group of 21-30 indicates differences from the age groups of 31-40, 41-50, above 50, and below 20. The age group below 20 do not differ with 31-40, 41-50, and above 50 at 5% level of significance. In overall store selection, the age group of 21-30 differs from the other age groups, but there is no difference among the age groups of 31-40, 41-50, and above 50.

Kruskal-Wallis test for significant difference among the Mean rank of Occupation with respect to the Factors of Jewellery store selection.

Alternative Hypothesis: There is a significant difference between the Mean Rank of Occupation with respect to the Factors of Jewellery Store selection.

Note: ** Denotes at 1% level

* Denotes at 5 % level of significance

Factors of Jewellery Store Selection	Occupation				Chi-square value	P value
	Private	Public	Self-Employed	Homemaker		
Store Ambience	130.76	97.84	97.43	114.69	15.072	.002**
Location	108.02	127.82	112.90	115.85	2.331	.507
Staff Behaviour	101.58	105.37	129.96	109.04	10.409	.015*
Overall Store Selection	109.36	118.52	113.74	122.54	.841	.840

Considering that the P-value is less than .05, the alternative

hypothesis is accepted. This indicates that a notable difference exists between the Mean rank of Occupation with regard to store ambience and staff behaviour. The null hypothesis is accepted at 5% significance level, stating that there is no variation between the mean rank of occupation and the location component.

III.LIMITATIONS

1. The study is confined to the geographic area of Chennai city; therefore, it might not adequately reflect consumer preferences across many regions or cultures.

2. The study has taken only three factors, namely Store ambience, location, and Staff behaviour. Other significant elements, such as pricing, availability of products, trust, credibility of the brand, and advertising, have not been considered.

3. The study is time-constrained, and consumer preferences may vary according to the evolving market trends and competition.

4. The study focuses only on customer perspectives, excluding the viewpoints of jewellery shop owners and personnel.

IV.SCOPE FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

1. The inclusion of further determinants: Subsequent research could involve additional vital components such as product quality, price, brand image, assurance, advertising incentives, and internet presence to get a more comprehensive knowledge of jewellery shop choices.

2. Comparative studies: The research could be expanded to analyse the difference between branded and unbranded jewellery shops, or urban and rural markets, to examine variations in customer preferences across categories.

3. Cross-Cultural study: Extending the study to many states or nations could uncover cultural differences in connection with the impact of ambience, location, and staff behaviour on consumer preferences.

4. Technology Integration: Considering the emergence of Virtual Reality (VR) and online jewellery retail, future research could examine the influence of online store visibility and digital staff engagement (chatbots, video conferencing) on consumer purchasing choices.

5. Studies over an extended period of time: Executing research over an extended duration might facilitate monitoring of changes in consumer behaviour and preferences attributable to shifting market trends and lifestyle modifications.

6. Psychological and emotional factors: Future research could investigate the emotional attachment, trust, and social impact in jewellery purchasing, which are often intricately linked to culture and individual norms.

7. Employee Perspective: Expanding the research to include staff experiences, training quality, and customer-staff interactions may provide more profound insights into service efficacy.

V.CONCLUSION

The research sought to investigate the role of store ambience, location, and staff behaviour on consumer choices for jewellery stores. A well-designed ambience fosters sensations of comfort, followed by the staff's conduct, since their politeness, product expertise, and honesty significantly influence the selection of the store. Among the factors considered for this study, the location of the jewellery store had the least impact on consumers' opinions. Retailers who prioritise creating an appealing shop atmosphere, investing in professional staff training, and strategically choosing sites are more inclined to retain consumers. The study suggests that jewellery shopping is beyond merely product offers; it is an industry where ambience, accessibility, and interpersonal interactions all influence customer decisions.

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