

Exploring Online Apparel Rental Behaviour of Consumers as a Sustainable Method

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Abstract: Clothing and textile industry produces huge amount of pollution and creates pile of landfills because of improper disposal of the textile products. There is a need to devise some system which will not only reduce the pollution but also bring sustainability in the textile industry. One of such alternates is Renting apparels or Sharing or Collaborative approach. The present study deals with the fast growing online rental apparel business in India. The objective of the study is to find the inclination of consumers towards renting apparels online and to explore the demographic profile of the consumers who have rented apparels online in Delhi-NCR. The results show that consumers have used various online apparel rental websites for different occasion but there is need to popularise renting apparels for sustainability and pollution control.

Keywords: Online Apparel on Rent, Consumers, Sustainability, Demographics

1.Introduction

In today's world with the increment of clothing and textile industries which causes rapid expansion of apparel products leads to serious pollution. There is a huge municipal textile waste in form of disposed and discarded clothing through apparels, footwears, upholstery and nondurable goods. During textile processing and clothing manufacturing the environment gets polluted and resources are exploited. Most of the fashion products have low utility. They are used only few times then stored in chests and then throw away. There is a need to evolve some novel approaches other than apparel recycling to achieve greater sustainability and reduce pollution. High fashion garments tend to have shorter lifecycle but the cost of these products is higher. If the fashion garments are consumed by rental services they can be utilised more and improve the sustainability of the garment. Consumers are increasingly interested in non-ownership consumption approaches such as renting, sharing and collaborative consumption. This trend is called sharing economy (Elks, 2014). There are two commonalities in these sharing and collaborative

consumption practices: 1) temporary access, non-ownership model of utilizing goods and services and 2) reliance on the internet that allows users to contribute content and connect with each other (**Carroll, 2011**).

Clothes on rent is not a new concept but fashion online on rent is the next big thing in the fashion industry in India. Websites like “Flyrobe” and “Stage 3” are giving this option to rent apparel and accessories on a day to day basis. Websites provide filters so that a consumer can quickly find the required size, length and color, and select the favourite piece.

According to report published by **Allied Market Research** last year, the global online clothing rental market was valued at \$1,1013 million in 2017. It is estimated to reach \$1,856 million by 2023, registering a compound annual growth rate of 10.6% from 2017 to 2023. Asia pacific anticipated to grow at highest CAGR, at 11.4% during this period. The market is increasing in the developing economies because of the need of economical alternative to purchasing, a gradual increase in social acceptance of rental clothes, and an overall increase in sales in online clothing industry. In India, the online rental fashion market is growing. There is already a dozen successful startups in India with good growth. Rental businesses are prevalent in practice, but the literature on rental inventory model is comparatively limited. **Griffith (2014)** reported on Rent the Runaway, which rents designer dresses. The company offers a subscription-based pricing option that allows a customer to rent and use a limited number of items at a time. It is reported to have a customer base of five million with a variety of preferences on how much they use the service from special-occasion wear to regular wear.

Renting is a transaction in which one party offers an item to another party for a fixed period of time in exchange for money and in which there is no change of ownership (**Durgee, 1995**)

The **Collaborative Economy** is an economic model where ownership and access are shared between corporations, startups, and people. This results in market efficiencies that bear new products, services, and business growth, sometimes called the sharing economy or collaborative consumption (**Owyang, 2013**).

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The sharing economy has found its place online as well. Apart from brick and mortar stores for renting, the various online websites have come up with the idea of renting

apparels. The studies deal with various criteria consumers evaluate before renting and the behaviour of consumers associated with renting. The current study tends to explore the rental website familiarity among the working population of Delhi-NCR.

2. Review of literature

Mc Kinney et al. (2016) researched on “Exploring Criteria Consumers Use in Evaluating Their Online Formal Wear Rental Experience: A Content Analysis of Online Reviews”. The objective of the study was to develop an understanding of consumers evaluation of their Rent the Runway(RTR) experiences, their online reviews were systematically sampled and saved as screen shots. Content analysis was conducted in two stages: a) analysis of 201 reviews to develop the coding system and b) data collection and analysis from an additional 600 reviews. Insights into RTR strategy for overcoming challenges associated with online apparel sale were yielded. These may provide direction for other companies. When planning their product offerings, online apparel rental companies should consider the most important apparel evaluative criteria found for RTR reviewers: a) fit, b) garment style and design element, c) social feedback and d) appropriateness. Companies may a) adopt RTR’s unique e-service, shipping two sizes of the same dress; and b) encourage reviewers to include more self- descriptive and dress descriptive information.

Rao (2016) studied on” Borrowed Vogue” brings out the briefs of Indian online rental market. The fashion rental market in India including western and ethnic wear to be worth of US\$ 4-5 billion. The study discusses the working of online rental stores such as Liberent, Swishlist, Candidknots.com and the various challenges faced by these websites for customer satisfaction.

A study by **Jain et al. (2015)** on “Priority Allocation in a Rental Model with Decreasing Demand,” analyses a model of rental and return process where limited inventory of a product is rented to two customer classes that differ in their return behaviour and penalty costs. The rental demand is a decreasing function of time. The researchers consider two cases: where a demand that is not met is lost and where an unmet demand returns and show that to minimize penalty cost, the optimal allocation policy may give priority to different classes at different points in time and may decline lower-class demand for some time. Computational results show the benefit of the optimal allocation policy over a priority scheme reportedly used in practice.

A study by **Belk (2014)**, on “You are What You can access: Sharing and Collaborative Consumption Online” described collaborative consumption and the sharing economy are the phenomenon of internet age. The paper compares sharing and collaborative

consumption and finds that both are growing in popularity today. Examples of eBay and other websites are given and an assessment is made of the reasons for the current growth in these practices and their implications for business still using traditional models of sales and ownership.

Durgee (1995) studied “An Exploration into Renting as Consumption Behaviour”. This article describes an initial, exploratory look at a quickly growing new type of consumption behaviour, renting. Insights about renting are generated from a small, qualitative study of rental behaviour and motives. As an initial cut at conceptualizing and understanding rental consumption, a wide range of topics are considered, including instant gratification, post-purchase dissonance, self-exploration, cultivation of rental items, and some implications of renting regarding materialism. In order to explore people’s feelings about renting, a study was conducted among a convenience sample of 113 adults. Respondents consisted of male and female graduate management students, professors, undergraduates, and randomly selected adults. The purpose of the research was to assess items people had rented in the past, why they rented, how they felt about renting versus owning, and how they would feel about renting items that are new to the rental market, such as paintings and mink coats.

A study by **Poggi (2015)** on “FIT Temporary Trend Clothes. Service for Renting Clothes Through a Physical Space” is inspired by the rental model of goods, in particular in the clothing field: a trend already explored in USA and UK and that is growing in Italy with a good response. FIT is a service for renting clothes through a physical shop. The idea is to translate the already existing on-line model to an off-line place, amplifying the user experience. The purpose is to let clothes become a channel, that enables to enter in a bigger world, that is able to communicate values, stories and information about the fashion world, and worlds not strictly related to it, as music and art. The project focuses on reconsidering the interaction between the user and the process of buying clothes, designing a space where people can access to clothes in a different way: renting an item and the related connection with style, music and art. The aim is to spread the rental model of clothes not just related to a special occasion, but also as a real support in changing and renewing the closet.

3. Objectives

1. To study the demographic profile of consumers renting apparels online.
2. To explore the various online renting sites used by consumers.

4. Research Methodology

The present study aims at examining the demographics of consumers who are renting apparels online. The demographics taken for the study are, Gender, Marital Status, Family status, Age, Occupation and Monthly income. The various online rental websites were also evaluated to find the experience, amount and occasions of renting apparels.

4.1 Tools used for Study

This study used the interview schedule for primary data collection. The research questions were according to the objectives to find the online apparel renting behaviour of consumers. The secondary data were journals, international publications, books, newspapers, books and internet. The literature review was the basis for the framing and development of the questionnaire.

4.2 Sample size

The sample size of 389 respondents were taken using the sample size calculator. The respondents were the working persons of Delhi NCR.

4.3 Statistical tool used for the study

The data collected was analysed using the SPSS software. The frequency, percentages were calculated.

5. Results and Analysis

The first data required was if the respondents have even the heard the term such as online apparel on rent or any rental websites operating in India. Table 1 depicts the number of respondents familiar with the term as online rental apparel.

Table 1: Rental sites respondents have heard

S.no	Websites	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Swishlist	96	24.7
2.	Stage 3	103	26.5
3.	Flyrobe	114	29.3
4.	Wrapd	69	17.7
5.	The Clothing Rental	45	11.6
6.	Rent It Bae	90	23.2
7.	Rent A closet	64	16.4
8.	Liberent	60	15.4
9.	None	128	32.9

The above table shows that 32.9% of respondents have not heard of rental apparel sites. Flyrobe, a rental site for apparel is Known to the maximum number of respondents followed by Stage 3 with 26.5% and then Swishlist with 24.7%. The clothing rental has the least number of respondents (11.6%).

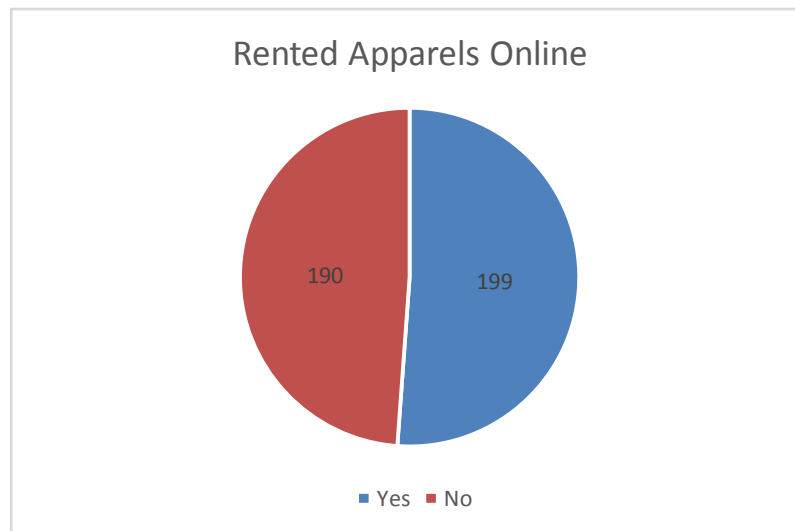


Figure 1: The number of respondents rented apparel online

The pie chart shows the percentage of respondents who have rented apparels online for any occasion. 51% of the respondents have tried renting apparels online.

Demographic Profile of the Consumers Renting Apparel Online.

The Socio-economic demographic profiles taken for the study are Gender, Marital status, Family Status, Age, Occupation, Income.

Table 2: Demographic Variation of Respondents

S. No	Demographic	Category	Frequency	Percentage
1	Gender	Male	65	32.7
		Female	134	67.3
2	Marital Status	Married	81	40.7
		Unmarried	116	58.3
		Separated	2	1.0
3	Family Status	Joint	85	42.7
		Nuclear	114	57.3

4	Age	21-30	99	49.7
		31-40	82	41.2
		41-50	18	9.0
5	Occupation	Private service	90	45.2
		Government Service	46	23.1
		Business	26	13.1
		Self Employed	36	18.1
		Research Scholar	1	.5
6	Income	Less than 40,000	84	42.2
		40k-60k	45	22.6
		60k-80k	44	22.1
		80k-100k	9	4.5
		More than 1 Lac	17	8.5

The above table depicts the demographic profile of the consumers who have rented apparels online for different purposes. Female consumers (67.3%) are more inclined for renting apparels. Unmarried and consumers belonging to nuclear family are using online sites for renting apparels. 45.2% who are employed in private sector followed by government employees 23.1% are renting apparels online. 42.2% respondents who are earning less than 40,000 a month are following sharing economy and only 4.5 % belonging to income group of 80,000- 1 lac are using rental sites for apparels.

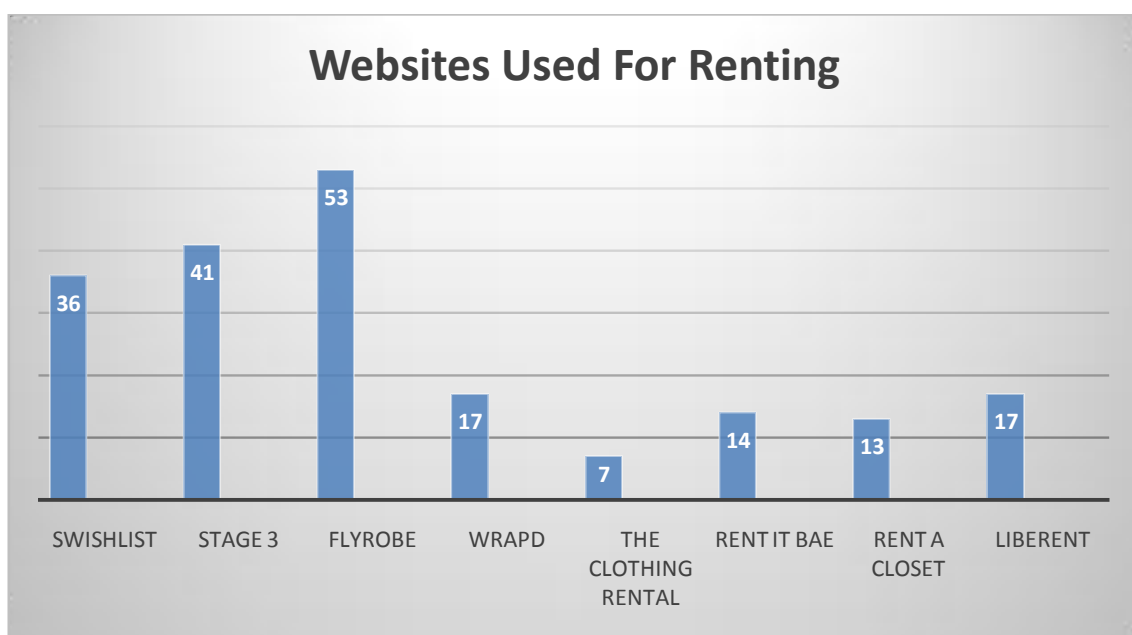


Figure 2: Different websites used for renting

The above graph shows different rental websites used by respondents for apparels. Flyrobe is used by maximum number of respondents followed by Stage 3 and Swishlist with 41 and 36 number of users respectively. The clothing rental website has the least number of respondents (07). Other websites such as Wrapd, rent it Bae, rent a closet, Liberent has around same number of users.

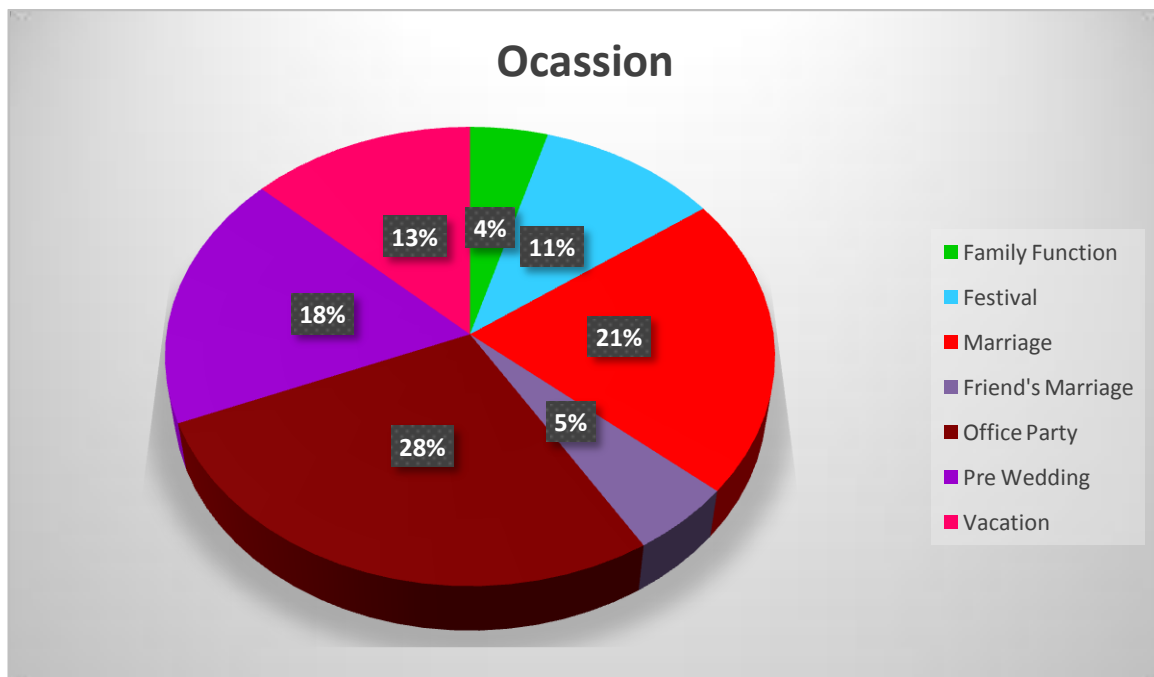


Figure 3: Various occasion for renting apparels

The various occasion for which respondents have rented apparels online are marriage, parties, vacations, festivals, family functions. 28% of working professionals have rented apparel for the office parties, 21% for marriages followed by 18% for pre wedding functions. Respondents even rented apparels for vacations.

Table 3: Amount spend for renting apparels

S.no	Amount Paid	Frequency	Percentage
1	2001-3000	93	23.9
2	3001-4000	71	18.3
3	4001-5000	25	6.4
4	5001-10000	10	2.5

93 respondents have paid 2001-3000 Rs per day for renting apparel online followed by 71 respondents who have paid 3000-4000 Rs per day. Only 10 respondents have paid 5000-10000 Rs per day for renting apparel online.

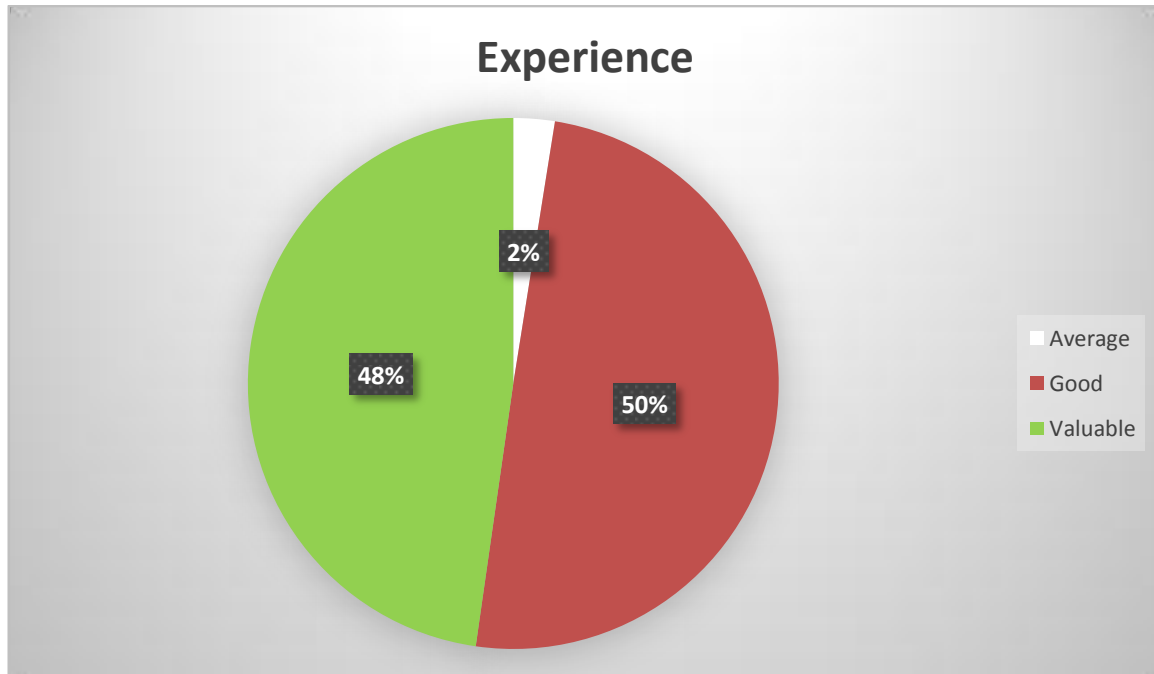


Figure 4: Experience of consumers after renting apparels online

The above pie chart shows the experience of the respondents after renting online apparels. 50% of the total respondents said it was a good experience 48% found it valuable and only 2% felt average while renting apparels online.

6. Conclusions

The study reveals that consumers are not much aware of the total respondents have heard about the different rental online sites available in India. Although people have been renting dresses for different functions since longer time from brick and stores providing rental apparels. There is a need to popularise online rental apparel sites as it will help in sustainable development and reduction in the waste. This study also explores the demographic profile of the consumers renting apparel online in Delhi NCR. Flyrobe has emerged as the most used site for renting apparels followed by Stage 3 and Swishlist. Respondents have rented apparels online for different occasions such as marriage, parties, vacations, festivals, family functions, office parties. The amount paid was ranging from 2000 Rs per day to 10,000 Rs per day and the experience was overall valuable according to the respondents.

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