

The Role Of Gender In Shaping Clothing And Brand Preferences Of Youth

¹ Mrs. Manasi Chandra Nayak, ² Dr. Sasmita Behera

¹ PhD Scholar, Ramadevi Women's University, Bhubaneswar, Odisha, India

² Associate Professor in Home Science, Berhampur University, Bhubaneswar, Odisha, India

Email id: ¹mnayak24@gmail.com / manasi.nayak@kiss.ac.in, ²sasmita1965@gmail.com

Abstract: This study investigates the role of gender in shaping clothing and brand preferences among youth in the rural (Kandhamal) and urban (Khurda) districts of Odisha. It collects primary data. The objectives of the study are to find out the role of gender on clothing and brand preferences among youth. Social media emerges as a powerful tool for influencing brand choices among youth in both areas. Understanding these dynamics can help clothing and fashion brands tailor their digital strategies to resonate with the preferences of youth in Kandhamal and Khurda districts, ultimately enhancing brand visibility and consumer engagement in the competitive fashion market.

Keywords: Gender role, Brand preferences, Fashion Market, Youth, Social media.

1. INTRODUCTION:

Clothing and brand preferences among youth are shaped not only by fashion trends, cultural norms, and personal identity but also deeply by gender, which plays a significant role in influencing how young people perceive and engage with fashion, often dictating their preferred styles, colours, and brands. In modern society, clothing serves as a medium for self-expression, social identity, and status, and for youth at a formative stage, these choices often reflect evolving identities. Historically, the relationship between gender and fashion has been bound by binary norms, with distinctly masculine and feminine styles, colours, and cuts; however, as gender roles become more fluid and non-binary perspectives gain acceptance, traditional preferences are also shifting. In response, the fashion industry has increasingly adopted gender-neutral and inclusive lines, yet gender remains a powerful force in guiding clothing and brand preferences among young people. This study delves into how gender dynamics influence these preferences, considering both conventional norms and emerging trends toward gender fluidity. By examining the intersections of gender identity, social expectations, and consumer behavior, the research aims to deepen our understanding of how gender continues to shape youth fashion choices in a changing cultural landscape.

Gender plays a crucial role in shaping both clothing and brand preferences, traditionally influencing how individuals express themselves through fashion. Historically, clothing choices have been aligned with binary gender norms, where men were encouraged to wear darker, more structured garments, while women were drawn to softer, colourful, form-fitting styles. These distinctions in style, fabric, and colour have guided how brands market their products, often offering distinct collections to appeal to conventional ideas of masculinity and femininity. However, as awareness of gender fluidity grows, these rigid norms are beginning to blur, with many youth-particularly those identifying as non-binary or rejecting traditional gender roles-choosing clothing and brands that transcend gender-specific categories. Despite these shifts, traditional gender expectations still shape fashion choices, especially in cultures where gender conformity remains strong. Brands that embrace inclusivity and challenge outdated stereotypes increasingly resonate with young consumers, who value diversity, authenticity, and self-expression over conventional norms. While gender continues to influence youth preferences, the rising demand for fluid and inclusive offerings is reshaping how brands approach this demographic, responding to a landscape where individuality and social identity take precedence.

2. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This study is significant because it addresses the complex and evolving relationship between gender and consumer behaviour, specifically within the context of youth fashion and brand preferences. Understanding how gender influences these preferences is crucial for several reasons like Cultural Insights, Marketing and Business Strategy, Gender Inclusivity and Social Change, Psychological and Social Development.

In sum, this research is essential for fashion marketers, sociologists, and educators looking to understand the intersections of gender, youth identity, and consumer behaviour in a rapidly changing cultural landscape. It highlights the need for greater inclusivity and challenges traditional gender marketing, offering pathways for more authentic and inclusive fashion experiences.

3. OBJECTIVES:

- To know the role of gender on clothing preferences.
- To know the role of gender on brand preferences of youth.

4. MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study investigates the role of gender on clothing and brand preferences among Youth in Odisha. These regions provide a diverse demographic backdrop, offering insights into urban and rural contrasts.

Data collection: Keeping in view the problem and scope of the study, random and purposive sampling method of choosing buyers have been adopted to select the respondent of rural and urban youth. The sample was collected from both rural (Kandhamal) and urban (Khurdha) area of Odisha. The sample size was 300 from which 150 for each district. The data were collected through questionnaire survey method. The collected data were analysed using statistical methods.

Kandhamal District Population, Caste, Religion Data (Odisha) - Census 2011

Kandhamal District in Odisha, as per the 2011 Census, had a population of 733,110, with 359,945 males and 373,165 females, residing in 172,022 families. The district's average sex ratio is 1,037. Administratively, it's divided into 17 Blocks. Urban areas constitute 9.9% of the population, with an average literacy rate of 86.8%, while rural areas make up 90.1%, with a literacy rate of 61.5%. The sex ratio in urban areas is 984, and in rural areas, it's 1,043. Children aged 0-6 make up 15% of the population, with a child sex ratio of 962, lower than the district's average sex ratio. Overall, the district's literacy rate stands at 64.13%, with males at 64.98% and females at 44.45%. This data provides a snapshot of demographic and literacy trends in Kandhamal District as of 2011.

Khurdha District in Odisha, according to the 2011 Census, had a population of 2,251,673, with 1,147,568 males and 1,104,105 females, residing in 496,244 families. The district's average sex ratio was 963. Urban areas constituted 27.89% of the population, with an average literacy rate of 88.58%, while rural areas comprised 72.11%, with a literacy rate of 80.64%. The child sex ratio was 948, slightly lower than the district's average sex ratio. The total literacy rate stood at 85.37%, with males at 90.44% and females at 79.97%. Additionally, the district is divided into 16 Blocks for administrative purposes. Scheduled Castes accounted for 166,219 individuals and Scheduled Tribes for 23,658. The data provides essential insights into Khurdha District's demographic composition and literacy levels as of 2011.

5. RESULT & DISCUSSION:

Demographic Information of the respondent

Table: A - Demographic information						
	Component	Item	Unit	Rural	Urban	Total
1	Age Group	15 to 20 years	No. (%)	38(25.3)	43(28.7)	81(27)
		21 to 25 years	No. (%)	65(43.3)	66(44)	131(43.7)
		26 to 32 years	No. (%)	47(31.3)	41(27.3)	88(29.3)
2	Education	Primary	No. (%)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)
		Highschool	No. (%)	6(4)	3(2)	9(3)
		college	No. (%)	144(96)	147(98)	291(97)
3	Gender	Male	No. (%)	73(48.7)	77(51.3)	150(50)
		Female	No. (%)	77(51.3)	73(48.7)	150(50)

4	Religion	Hindu	No. (%)	93(62)	112(74.7)	205(68.3)
		Christian	No. (%)	52(34.7)	29(19.3)	81(27)
		Muslim	No. (%)	5(3.3)	9(6)	14(4.7)
5	Monthly income	Up to 25,000	No. (%)	14(9.3)	9(6)	23(7.7)
		26000 to 50000	No. (%)	10(6.7)	1(0.7)	11(3.7)
		50000 to 75000	No. (%)	44(29.3)	68(45.3)	112(37.3)
		75000 to 100000	No. (%)	82(54.7)	72(48)	154(51.3)
6	Occupation	Student	No. (%)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)
		Employed	No. (%)	6(4)	3(2)	9(3)
		Self-Employed	No. (%)	144(96)	147(98)	291(97)
		Unemployed	No. (%)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)

Table A reveals the demographic information of the respondents, the age distribution reveals that 43.7% of the population is between 21 to 25 years old, with a relatively even spread across rural and urban areas. The next largest group is 26 to 32 years old, making up 29.3% of the population, with a slightly higher proportion in rural areas (31.3%) compared to urban areas (27.3%). The youngest group, aged 15 to 20 years, represents 27.0% of the sample, showing a slight urban predominance. Our study-maintained gender balance by including equal percentages of male and female respondents. In terms of education, 97.0% of respondents have attended college, with no representation of primary education. Religiously, Hinduism is the predominant faith at 68.3%, especially in urban areas, while Christianity is more significant in rural areas (34.7%) compared to urban areas (19.3%). Muslim representation is relatively low at 4.7%, with a higher presence in urban areas. The majority of respondents fall into the income category of 75,000 to 100,000 (51.3%), with a notable concentration in rural areas, whereas urban areas show a higher proportion in the 50,000 to 75,000 range. In regards the occupation it reveals that self-employment is dominant, with 97.0% of respondents identifying as self-employed and minimal representation in other occupations.

Clothing preferences by gender

Clothing Items	Rural			Urban			Total		
	Total Score	Average Score	Rank	Total Score	Average Score	Rank	Total Score	Average Score	Rank
shirt & pants	132	0.88	1	138	0.92	1	270	0.90	1
t-shirt jeans	143	0.95	2	152	1.01	3	295	0.98	3
kurta pajama	154	1.03	4	163	1.09	4	317	1.06	4
Formal wear	183	1.22	5	196	1.31	5	379	1.26	5
Nehru jackets & coats	146	0.97	3	147	0.98	2	293	0.98	2
Dhoti kurta	442	2.95	6	471	3.14	6	913	3.04	6
Sherwani	479	3.19	7	504	3.36	7	983	3.28	7

*Lowest average score assigned highest rank and vice versa

The choice of dress pattern of male respondents is shown in table B. From the table it is revealed that the Shirt & Pants combination is the most favoured clothing item among male respondents, ranking highest in both rural (average score 0.88) and urban (average score 0.92) areas, with an overall average of 0.90, indicating their fundamental role in male wardrobes. T-shirt & Jeans are the second most popular, with average scores of 0.95 in rural and 1.01 in urban areas, leading to a combined average of 0.98, reflecting a strong trend towards casual wear. The Kurta Pajama ranks fourth overall, showing notable popularity with a rural average score of 1.03 and an urban average score of 1.09, culminating in a total average of 1.06, especially prevalent in rural areas. Formal Wear ranks fifth with an average score of 1.22 in rural and 1.31 in urban areas, and an overall average of 1.26, suggesting a greater emphasis on formal attire in urban settings. Nehru Jackets & Coats are moderately preferred, ranking second in urban (average score 0.98) and third in rural (average score 0.97) areas, with a combined average of 0.98. The Dhoti Kurta ranks sixth overall with an average of 2.95 in rural and 3.14 in urban areas, showing significant preference in rural regions. Lastly, the Sherwani ranks seventh, with average scores of 3.19 in rural and 3.36 in urban areas, totalling 3.28, reflecting a strong preference for formal occasions despite its less frequent use compared to other items.

Table C: Dress pattern of Female respondents

Clothing Items	Rural			Urban			Total		
	Total Score	Average Score	Rank	Total Score	Average Score	Rank	Total Score	Average Score	Rank
Skirts and Tops	133	0.89	1	129	0.86	1	262	0.87	1
Tops And Jeans	148	0.99	3	146	0.97	3	294	0.98	3
Salwar kameez	169	1.13	4	163	1.09	4	332	1.11	4
Lehenga	206	1.37	5	183	1.22	5	389	1.30	5
palazzo suit	137	0.91	2	137	0.91	2	274	0.91	2
Saree	473	3.15	6	438	2.92	6	911	3.04	6
Anarkali set	505	3.37	7	483	3.22	7	988	3.29	7

*Lowest average score assigned highest rank and vice versa

Among female respondents, (Table C) skirts and tops are the most preferred clothing items, with an average score of 0.89 in rural and 0.86 in urban areas, resulting in a combined average of 0.87, indicating a strong preference for this versatile and casual outfit. The palazzo suit, scoring 0.91 in both settings, shows consistent regional preference. Tops and jeans follow closely, with average scores of 0.99 in rural and 0.97 in urban areas, and an overall average of 0.98, reflecting a notable inclination towards casual attire. The salwar kameez, with scores of 1.13 in rural and 1.09 in urban areas (combined average of 1.11), remains popular, especially in rural settings, underscoring its cultural significance. The lehenga ranks fifth, with average scores of 1.37 in rural and 1.22 in urban areas, highlighting its use for special occasions. The saree, with an average score of 3.15 in rural and 2.92 in urban areas (overall average of 3.04), is particularly favoured in rural areas for its traditional and formal use. Lastly, the Anarkali set ranks seventh, with scores of 3.37 in rural and 3.22 in urban areas (combined average of 3.29), indicating its high status for formal occasions. Overall, the patterns reveal a blend of traditional and formal attire, such as the saree and Anarkali set, alongside popular casual options like skirts and tops, palazzo suits and tops with jeans.

Table D : Brand preferences by Male respondents

Male	Rural			Urban			Total		
	Total Score	Average Score	Rank	Total Score	Average Score	Rank	Total Score	Average Score	Rank
Nike	504	3.36	1	489	3.26	1	993	3.31	1
Louis	615	4.10	3	607	4.05	3	1222	4.07	3
Raymond	769	5.13	7	765	5.10	7	1534	5.11	7
Adidas	922	6.15	8	933	6.22	8	1855	6.18	8
Boyanika	725	4.83	6	741	4.94	6	1466	4.89	6
Levis	621	4.14	4	630	4.20	5	1251	4.17	4
pantaloons	600	4.00	2	606	4.04	2	1206	4.02	2
Provogue	644	4.29	5	629	4.19	4	1273	4.24	5

*Lowest average score assigned highest rank and vice versa

Observation of brand preference of male respondents (Table D) shows that Nike emerges as the top brand among male respondents, with the average score of 3.36 in rural areas and 3.26 in urban areas, resulting in a combined average of 3.31. Louis follows in third place, showing notable preference with scores of 4.10 in rural and 4.05 in urban areas, averaging 4.07 overall. Pantaloons, second overall, shows strong preference with average scores of 4.00 in rural and 4.04 in urban areas, averaging 4.02. Raymond, ranked seventh with average scores of 5.13 in rural and 5.10 in urban settings (5.11 overall), reflects consistent preference despite its lower ranking. Adidas holds the eighth position with scores of 6.15 in rural and 6.22 in urban areas, averaging 6.18. Boyanika, sixth overall, has a notable preference with scores of 4.83 in rural and 4.94 in urban areas, averaging 4.89. Levis ranks fourth with scores of 4.14 in rural and 4.20 in urban areas, totaling 4.17. Provogue, ranked fifth, has scores of 4.29 in rural and 4.19 in urban areas, averaging 4.24.

Table E on brand preference of female respondents represents that Boyanika emerges as the most preferred brand among female respondents, with an average score of 3.36 in rural areas and 3.26 in urban areas, resulting in a total average of 3.31. This indicates a strong and consistent preference for Boyanika across both rural and urban settings. Forever 21 ranks third overall with significant scores of 4.10 in rural and 4.05 in urban areas, averaging 4.07. This reflects a notable

preference for Forever 21, especially in rural areas. Aurelia is ranked seventh, showing an average score of 5.13 in rural and 5.10 in urban areas, leading to a combined average of 5.11. Despite its lower rank, it remains a popular choice.

Table E: Brand preferences by Female respondents

Brand name	Rural			Urban			Total		
	Total Score	Average Score	Rank	Total Score	Average Score	Rank	Total Score	Average Score	Rank
Boyanika	504	3.36	1	489	3.26	1	993	3.31	1
Forever 21	615	4.10	3	607	4.05	3	1222	4.07	3
Aurelia	769	5.13	7	765	5.10	7	1534	5.11	7
Pantaloons	922	6.15	8	933	6.22	8	1855	6.18	8
‘W’	725	4.83	6	741	4.94	6	1466	4.89	6
Biba	621	4.14	4	630	4.20	5	1251	4.17	4
Reliance	600	4.00	2	606	4.04	2	1206	4.02	2
Fab India	644	4.29	5	629	4.19	4	1273	4.24	5

*Lowest average score assigned highest rank and vice versa

Pantaloons is positioned eighth overall, with scores of 6.15 in rural and 6.22 in urban areas, totalling an average of 6.18. ‘W’ ranks sixth, with average scores of 4.83 in rural and 4.94 in urban areas, resulting in an overall average of 4.89. Biba holds the fourth position with average scores of 4.14 in rural and 4.20 in urban areas, averaging 4.17 overall. Reliance ranks second with scores of 4.00 in rural and 4.04 in urban areas, leading to a combined average of 4.02 indicating a strong preference among by both rural and urban female youths. Fab India is fifth overall, showing average scores of 4.29 in rural and 4.19 in urban areas, with a total average of 4.24.

6. CONCLUSION

The analysis reveals, the difference in clothing preferences between genders and regions are evident. Clothing preferences and brand choices vary across genders and regions, Men's clothing preferences lean more towards casual, functional outfits (Shirt & Pants, T-shirt & Jeans) for everyday wear, with traditional attire like Kurta Pyjama reserved for formal or cultural events, especially in rural areas.

Women's clothing preferences similarly highlight a mix of casual and versatile outfits (Skirts & Tops, Palazzo Suits, Tops & Jeans) for daily use, with traditional attire (Sarees, Anarkali Sets) being more prominent in formal settings, especially in rural areas. Thus, for both genders, casual clothing dominates everyday wear, while traditional clothing retains importance for formal and cultural occasions, especially in rural settings.

Nike emerges as the clear favourite brand, ranking first among male respondents. This shows a strong preference for a global sportswear brand across both rural and urban areas, suggesting that men value performance, quality, and global appeal in their clothing choice. Pantaloons ranks second indicating a strong inclination toward affordable, fashion-forward retail clothing. Louis ranks third showing a notable preference for luxury brands.

Boyanika emerges as the top brand among female respondents indicating a strong preference in both rural and urban areas. Boyanika is known for offering ethnic and traditional wear, which likely explains its appeal, as many women still prioritize cultural clothing. Reliance ranks second showing a significant preference for affordable, versatile clothing across regions. Forever 21, a popular fast-fashion brand, ranks third, suggesting that female respondents are increasingly interested in trendy, modern styles, even in rural settings.

Thus, while women's brand preferences are a blend of cultural, affordable, and trendy choices, men's preferences are more skewed toward global sports, luxury, and retail fashion. Both genders demonstrate a mix of modern and traditional influences, though women show a stronger attachment to ethnic and cultural brands, while men favour performance and global fashion.

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