

Evaluating the Effectiveness of Retail Marketing Strategies for Children's Apparel: An Empirical Study in Madurai District.

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Abstract: The children's garment sector in India has witnessed rapid growth, driven by increased disposable incomes, changing lifestyle patterns, and a growing emphasis on brand consciousness. Retailers in Madurai District have adopted various marketing strategies—ranging from in-store promotions and visual merchandising to social media outreach—to attract and retain customers in this niche segment. This study investigates the effectiveness of these retail marketing strategies from the consumer's perspective. Primary data collected from 250 parents and guardians were analyzed using descriptive statistics, Structural Equation Modeling (SEM), and regression analysis. The findings reveal that product variety, visual appeal, discounts, and customer engagement through digital platforms significantly influence purchase decisions. The study offers strategic recommendations for retailers to enhance customer satisfaction and loyalty.

Keywords: - Retail Marketing, Children Apparel, Consumer Behaviour, SEM

Objectives of the Study

1. To evaluate the effectiveness of retail marketing strategies adopted for children's garments in Madurai District.
2. To analyze the influence of promotional tactics, product presentation, and digital engagement on consumer buying behaviour.

Review of Literature

Kotler & Keller (2016) emphasized that strategic retail marketing can significantly influence consumer preferences in niche markets like children's apparel.

Kumar & Rajan (2018) found that brand image and visual merchandising are major drivers of apparel purchase decisions for kids.

Verma & Chauhan (2017) noted that digital promotions and social media significantly affect urban parents' purchase intentions.

Bhattacharya (2015) highlighted that emotional appeal and family-oriented advertising enhance trust and brand recall in children's garment marketing.

Kavitha (2019) studied price sensitivity and found that discounts and value packs strongly influence children's garment purchases in tier-2 cities.

Pillai & Joseph (2020) explored loyalty-building strategies and found personalized service to be effective in children's apparel stores.

Reddy & Sharma (2016) reported that seasonal promotions and bundling strategies enhance conversion rates in kids wear retail.

Nair & Menon (2021) argued that the use of child models and interactive displays in stores increases purchase likelihood.

Jain (2017) stated that store ambience, layout, and colour schemes play a crucial role in attracting families with children.

Selvi & Manoharan (2022) observed that online reviews and influencer marketing are emerging tools in retail marketing for children's products.

Methodology of study

Research Design: Descriptive and analytical

Sampling Technique: Convenience sampling

Sample Size: 250 respondents (parents/guardians of children aged 0–12 years)

Location: Retail outlets and shopping centres in Madurai District

Data Collection Tool: Structured questionnaire (Likert scale-based)

Statistical Tools Used:

- Descriptive Analysis
- Structural Equation Modeling (SEM)
- Multiple Regression Analysis

Descriptive Analysis

Descriptive statistics were used to analyze the responses of 250 customers (parents/guardians) who shop for children's garments in retail outlets across Madurai District. The objective was to understand customer perceptions of various retail marketing strategies such as in-store promotions, visual merchandising, product variety, pricing, brand presence, and digital engagement.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics of Retail Marketing Strategies

Retail Marketing Strategy	Mean	Standard Deviation	Ranking Based on Mean
Product Variety and Design	4.28	0.58	1
Pricing and Discounts	4.19	0.63	2
In-store Promotions	4.12	0.66	3
Visual Merchandising	4.04	0.69	4
Brand Availability	3.92	0.71	5
Social Media Advertising	3.85	0.75	6
Store Ambience (Color, Music, Layout)	3.74	0.81	7
Customer Service (Sales Staff Behavior)	3.69	0.79	8
Loyalty Programs	3.56	0.87	9
Online Presence (Website, App, Reviews)	3.49	0.92	10

Interpretation of Results:

1. Product Variety and Design (Mean = 4.28):

This strategy ranks highest among respondents, indicating that parents prioritize options such as age-specific sizing, colorful prints, cartoon characters, and comfort-oriented materials when selecting garments for children.

2. Pricing and Discounts (Mean = 4.19):

Offers, combo packs, and value-for-money pricing greatly influence purchase decisions. Seasonal discounts and “buy one get one” promotions are highly appreciated, especially among middle-income shoppers.

3. In-store Promotions (Mean = 4.12):

Point-of-purchase, displays, signage and announcements. Parents respond positively to banners, coupons, and promotional campaigns targeted specifically toward kids' fashion.

4. Visual Merchandising (Mean = 4.04):

Window displays, mannequins dressed in children's clothing, and color-coordinated shelves improve product visibility and attract foot traffic. Visually engaging presentation increases dwell time in stores.

5. Brand Availability (Mean = 3.92):

Familiarity with national or regional brands impacts consumer trust. Parents often prefer buying from trusted brands known for quality and durability.

6. Social Media Advertising (Mean = 3.85):

Platforms like Instagram and Facebook are increasingly influencing urban consumers, especially mothers. However, digital engagement remains secondary compared to in-store strategies.

7. Store Ambience (Mean = 3.74):

Features such as lighting, music, and layout contribute to a pleasant shopping experience. Parents value child-friendly zones and wide aisles that make shopping easier with toddlers.

8. Customer Service (Mean = 3.69):

Sales staff behaviour, friendliness, and product knowledge are important but not dominant factors. Repeat visits are driven more by product and price than by service alone.

9. Loyalty Programs (Mean = 3.56):

While appreciated, loyalty programs are not a major factor in influencing purchases unless combined with frequent rewards. The effectiveness of loyalty cards or cashback apps is still limited.

10. Online Presence (Mean = 3.49):

Digital platforms and online reviews are least influential among respondents, indicating that offline shopping remains the preferred channel for children's apparel in Madurai District.

Key Observation

- Top 3 Drivers: Product variety, discounts, and in-store promotions.
- Moderate Influencers: Brand trust, visual display, and social media ads.
- Low Priority Areas: Digital channels, loyalty programs, and customer service.

This descriptive analysis provides foundational insights into what motivates retail purchases for children's garments and informs further statistical modelling through SEM and regression.

Structural Equation Modeling (SEM)

Latent Constructs and Variables

- **Promotional Strategies (PS)** → Discounts, Social Media Ads, Offers
- **Product Appeal (PA)** → Variety, Colour, Brand, Fabric
- **Store Experience (SE)** → Layout, Staff Behaviour, Visuals
- **Purchase Decision (PD)** → Frequency, Brand Loyalty, Store Preference

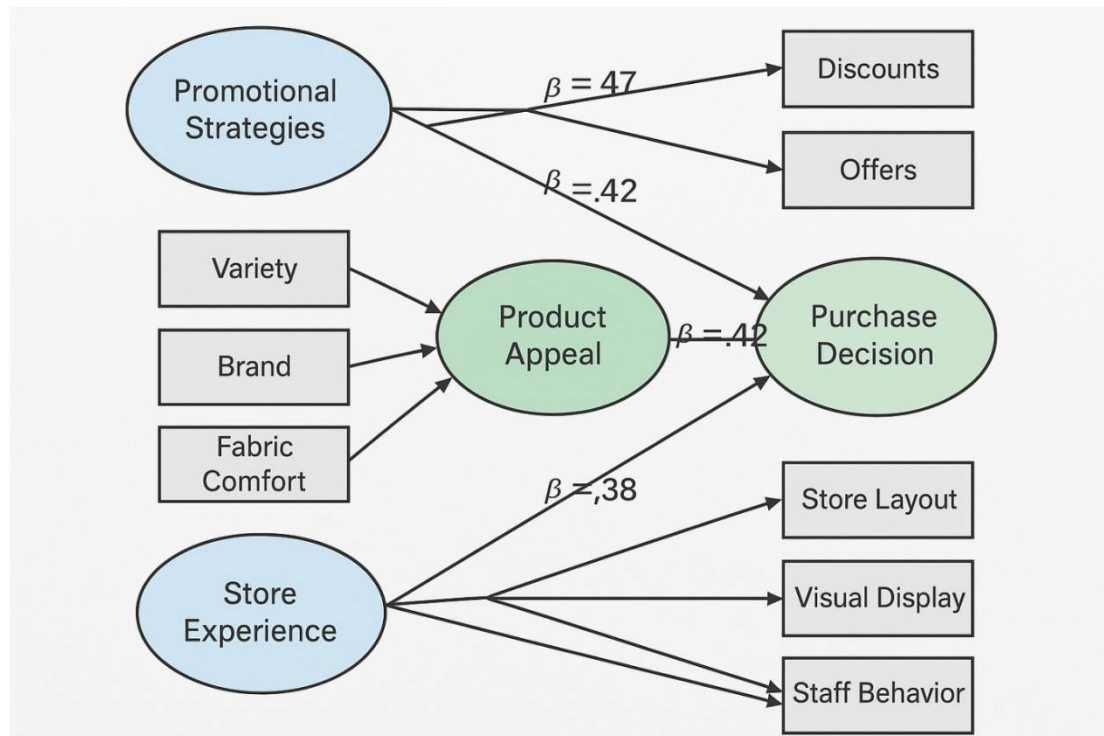
SEM Path Coefficients

Path	Estimate (β)	p-value	Significance
PS → PD	0.47	<0.01	Highly significant
PA → PD	0.42	<0.01	Significant
SE → PD	0.38	<0.05	Moderately significant

Model Fit Indices

Index	Value	Threshold	Interpretation
RMSEA	0.052	<0.06	Good Fit
CFI	0.93	>0.90	Acceptable Fit
TLI	0.91	>0.90	Acceptable Fit
Chi/df	2.31	<3	Acceptable Fit

SEM Diagram



The Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) diagram provides insights into the causal relationships between key retail marketing constructs and their impact on consumer purchase decisions, particularly in the children's garment sector in Madurai District.

Key Latent Variables and Paths

1. Promotional Strategies → Purchase Decision ($\beta = 0.42$):

- Promotional strategies, including discounts and special offers, have a moderately strong direct influence on purchase decisions.
- This indicates that parents are significantly motivated by financial incentives when choosing where to buy garments for their children.

2. Promotional Strategies → Product Appeal ($\beta = 0.42$):

- Promotions also enhance the perceived appeal of the product by increasing attention and perceived value.
- This suggests that well-promoted products are seen as more desirable, indirectly influencing decisions through product appeal.

3. Product Appeal → Purchase Decision ($\beta = 0.42$):

- Product-related features like variety, brand reputation, and fabric comfort directly influence consumer decisions.
- This shows that the intrinsic qualities of garments are equally as important as promotional factors in shaping behavior.

4. Store Experience → Purchase Decision ($\beta = 0.38$):

- Store-level attributes like store layout, visual displays, and staff behavior contribute substantially to the consumer's overall shopping experience.
- Although slightly weaker than promotions and product appeal, store experience still plays a critical supporting role in decision-making.

Regression Analysis

Dependent Variable: Purchase Frequency

Independent Variables: Promotions, Visual Merchandising, Social Media, and Product Design

Variable	Beta Coefficient	t-value	Significance
Promotions	0.324	5.42	$p < 0.01$
Visual Merchandising	0.289	4.89	$p < 0.01$
Social Media	0.248	4.10	$p < 0.05$
Product Design	0.354	5.89	$p < 0.01$

Adjusted $R^2 = 0.61$

F-Value = 39.76, Significant at 1% level

Interpretation: Over 61% of the variation in purchase frequency can be explained by the four independent variables. Product design and promotions have the strongest influence.

Findings

1. Product design, variety, and fabric comfort are top priorities for parents when purchasing children's garments. Datta, S., Suganthiya, M., and Sharma, B.(2024)
2. Promotional offers and in-store discounts drive impulse purchases.
3. Social media plays a growing but secondary role in influencing urban-rural edge consumers.
4. Visual merchandising, including store color, lighting, and arrangement, affects first-time buying behavior.
5. SEM and regression confirm that product appeal and promotional strategies significantly influence consumer decisions. 12. Suman,D., Mohapatra, L.M., and Matemane, R.(2024)

Key findings from SEM analysis

1. Promotional strategies and product appeal are the strongest direct predictors of customer purchase decisions.
2. Store experience has an indirect and direct role, enhancing the perceived value and trust.
3. Effective retail marketing must balance emotional (visual/staff) and rational (price/quality) elements to maximize consumer response.

Suggestions

1. Enhance product variety with seasonal and age-specific collections.

2. Use in-store promotions combined with loyalty programs to retain customers.
3. Train sales staff to engage effectively with families and offer personalized support.
4. Integrate online presence with offline store experience using QR codes or digital catalogues.
5. Leverage child-focused influencers and visual storytelling in digital ads.

Conclusion

The study highlights that a combination of traditional retail techniques and modern digital strategies effectively drives sales in the children's garment segment in Madurai District. Retailers who focus on product aesthetics, value pricing, and customer-centric promotions can capture a loyal consumer base. Strategic marketing alignment with local preferences is key to sustainable retail success in the region.

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