

Moderating Effects of Education, Gender, and Occupation on Brand Attachment and Online Purchase Intention in Apparel: A PLS-SEM Approach

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Abstract

Brand Attachment is a crucial factor in developing and maintaining customer-brand relationships. It creates an attachment with the brand and leads to gaining customers' trust to retain them. The study examined the relationship between brand attachment and customers' online purchase intention across diverse socio-economic and demographic settings. Data were collected from 252 respondents in Delhi-NCR who were active customers of online stores selling branded apparel. The PLS-SEM techniques were employed to analyse the data. Additionally, the moderating influence of demographics, such as education, gender, and occupation level, was tested on the relationship between brand attachment and online purchase intention. The study's findings revealed critical insights into the field of knowledge on how different SEED groups explain brand attachment and the different roles of demographics in online purchase intention. There is a significant

positive moderation interaction between education and occupation for customers, and a negative interaction between gender.

Keywords: Brand Attachment, Online Purchase Intention, Apparel, Internet, Shopping, and Clothes.

JEL: M31, D12, L67, L81

1. Introduction

The apparel industry has been evolving and revolutionising for many decades, with changes in trends, patterns and the manufacturing of different clothing styles. It accounts for about 13% of the country's total production and 2.3% of the GDP (India - Knitting the Future, 2024). Further, this sector is the second most important sector after agriculture in terms of employment generation (Chaudhary et. al., 2020). India is among the top garment manufacturing industries across the world. Over the past few decades, rapid population growth, rising global incomes, and higher living standards have contributed to a steady increase in clothing production and consumption (Shirvanimoghaddam et al., 2020).

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The textile and apparel market is growing at a CAGR of 14.59%, rising from US\$ 172.3 billion in 2022 to US\$ 387.3 billion by 2028. This industry is one of the prominent contributors to economic growth, accounting for 2.3% of gross domestic product (Apparel and Garment Industry and Exports, 2024). The apparel industry is one of the fastest-growing sectors of the economy. In the year 2023, about 300 million Indians made online purchases of their favourite apparel, food, and other goods. Within the next ten years, this number is predicted to surpass 500 million (*India's Rapidly Growing and Changing e-Commerce Landscape*, 2024).

According to prior studies, the rising number of internet connections and the availability of customers are leading to physical shopping through online websites (Mouratidis & Papagiannakis, 2021). It offers features such as price comparison, shopping carts, and online payments. Additionally, the number of internet retailers is rising rapidly in the Indian economy, contributing 2.3% to the country's GDP, and it is expected to contribute approximately 20% by 2026. With the aid of ICT, customers can shop online via websites, which offer advantages over stores, such as lower travel costs and time (Bourg et al., 2023). So, it is expected that retailers on the web must be trustworthy and able to fulfil their commitments to their customers (Mukherjee & Nath, 2007). This creates the need of the hour to focus on the customer-brand relationships by enhancing brand attachment and trust. People purchase apparel deliberately for occasions and events, and sometimes they do so driven by obsessive-compulsive behaviour (Gohar et al., 2023). The reason for their strong intent to purchase is their attachment to a specific brand or trust. Since attachment is an emotional connection

formed via familiarity and physical contact, it is the bond between the customers and the brand. The elements of the bond between customers and brands are self-connection and prominence. Brand attachment is also defined by many researchers, like Aureliano-Silva et al. (2018), Shimul (2022), and Shimul, A. & Phau, I. (2023). Organisations nowadays try their best to implement strategies to connect emotionally with their customers (Malär et al., 2011), which has a high likelihood of leading to purchase decisions, positive word-of-mouth, etc. Customers who have a strong emotional connection to a brand are generally acknowledged as premium price payers, and they can be driven to become "brand evangelists" by their desire to promote the brand (Pourazad et al., 2019).

Various researchers have focused on customer-brand relationships to drive sales, reputation, profitability, and customer satisfaction (Levy & Hino, 2016; Khan et al., 2016). The study emphasises the moderating effects of gender, level of education, and occupation. The work done in past studies did not include the moderation effect of occupation in the relationship between brand attachment and online purchase intention. The present study tries to bridge the gap in the relationship.

The rest of the paper is structured as follows: Section 1 is about the introduction and scope of the study. The subsequent section 2 reviews related work on brand attachment and online purchase intention and identifies relevant mediators from prior findings. Section 3 presents the methodology, sample size, and measurement items of our questionnaire. Section 4 outlines the evaluation of the measurement and structural model. Section 5 discusses the results and the author's contribution to the literature. Section

6 covers theoretical and practical implications. Moreover, Section 7 enumerates the research limitations and outlines a future research path.

2. Literature Review

This section provides an in-depth overview of the relationship between brand attachment and other demographics and online purchase intention. Past studies have shown the positive impact of trust on word of mouth and customer purchase intentions across several sectors, such as footwear (Wong and Haque, 2021). The study by Khan et al. (2024) revealed that brand communication (BC) on SNS (Social Networking Sites) had a significant positive impact on brand attachment and OPI (Online Purchase Intention). Park & Lee (2013) found that purchase intention and product evaluation are negatively moderated by brand attachment. Considering brand connection, this is an intriguing finding: when a brand crisis arises, customers who are emotionally invested in the brand can feel more let down and betrayed. This implies that brand attachment may have a greater detrimental impact during the brand crisis than other reasons. It is clear that one of a company's most precious assets is brand attachment. The study's findings provided crucial information on how a company's response strategy affects a brand crisis. Khan et al. (2020) aimed to examine the effect of online store brand experience on online brand trust and online repurchase intention. Additionally, they investigated the influence of online brand attachment as a moderator. The study confirmed that online brand attachment and online brand experience had direct relationships with online repurchase intention and online brand trust. Various studies have also revealed the crucial precursor to brand attachment, whereas Hongsuchon et al. (2023) revealed the positive effect on brand

experience, and in turn, brand experience has a positive and subsequent impact on brand attachment; also, it mediated the relationship between value co-creation and brand attachment.

2.1. Brand Attachment and Online Purchase Intention

Past research and experiments have shown that brand attachment is an important construct in marketing. It is studied as a crucial factor in a strong consumer-brand relationship, as it affects the behaviour that fosters profitability and customers' lifetime value with the brand. Research by Petraviciute et al. (2021) revealed that deeper brand attachment leads to higher purchase intentions among consumers. It refers to a psychological and emotional characteristic of the person that connects them with the brand (Marsasi & Yuanita, 2023). Whereas Li et al. (2019) explained brand attachment as a factor in recalling a brand or service and the consumer's high willingness to pay for it. The attachment variable is particularly concerning for fashion brands with hedonic positioning. Since the hedonic value of any product is positively related to the affection that we feel for it, it gives rise to attachment (Ygalde et al., 2023). Moreover, the study by Nashtae et al. (2017) found that brand attachment leads to emotional consequences for people.

H1: Brand attachment positively influences the customer's online purchase intention.

2.2. Education

The level of education significantly influences the consumer-brand relationship through the crucial purchase journey factors: brand attachment, brand trust, and online purchase intention. Kim & Kim (2003) investigated the online purchase intentions of consumers in the context of clothing,

focusing on education level, and collected data from 303 internet users in the USA. The study's results were consistent with those of various studies, such as Donthu & Garcia (1999), which explained that internet users' demographic factors, such as gender, education level, and occupational status, are directly related to online purchase behaviour.

H2: The level of education moderates the relationship between brand attachment and online purchase intention.

2.3. Gender

The study by Handa & Khare (2011) investigated the moderating role of gender in the relationship between materialism and customers' involvement in fashion clothing. The findings suggested that both young men and women differ in their levels of involvement in purchasing fashion clothing. Women were found to be more involved than men, with a high level of involvement. On the other hand, O'Casey (2004) surprisingly found a negative impact of gender and age on customers' fashion involvement. The study by Chiu et al. (2005) investigated the influence of security's personal awareness on both variables, i.e., attitude and online purchase intentions, and found that this personal awareness is stronger for males, whereas no such effects exist for females. On the other hand, the influence of perceived ease of purchasing on both attitudes and online purchase intentions is stronger for females than for males, underscoring the importance and diversity of the results by gender.

H3: Gender moderates the relationship between brand attachment and online purchase intention.

2.4. Occupation

The work by Landrum et al. (2010) validated that people's occupational level significantly moderates service quality in information services. Whereas Snell et al. (2000) found that different job characteristics moderate the relationship between staff training & manufacturing processes. Additionally, the results of Miana et al. (2011) did not show the moderating role of occupational group in the relationship between job insecurity and organisational commitment.

H2: The level of occupation moderates the relationship between brand attachment and online purchase intention.

3. Research Methodology

The study has been conducted in the Delhi region and some NCR areas, including Faridabad, Gurugram, Noida, and Rewari, to depict the respondents' diversity in terms of socio-economic and educational backgrounds. The selected area also offers a high level of occupational, residential, and educational diversity. Data were collected through a primary survey using a purposive random sampling technique. The customers who are actively engaged in online shopping were selected as the sample unit.

During the research journey, potential respondents were actively approached to collect the essential primary data needed to achieve the study's goals. A structured questionnaire was used and distributed online and offline to maximise the reach and have diverse responses. In total, we have circulated 350 questionnaires among the targeted audience using a mixed-mode method. Online platforms, such as email and WhatsApp groups, were used to distribute digital copies. At the same time, offline distribution was carried out in person at malls, colleges, and

other key locations relevant to my research context. Further, due to time limits or privacy concerns, many people chose not to participate in the study. Consequently, we have had 289 completed questionnaires. After a thorough review of the responses, 37 were deemed invalid, inconsistent, or incomplete and were not included in the study analysis. The study's final dataset consisted of 252 responses that were ultimately usable. This dual data collection approach helped connect with a broader demographic audience, ensuring inclusivity of different age groups, professions, and locations, providing a strong foundation for the robustness, reliability, and validity. To maintain the quality and relevance of the data collected for this research, specific inclusion and exclusion criteria were established during respondent selection. Individuals aged 18 years and above with prior experience purchasing clothing online were contacted. Participants from urban and semi-urban locations who agreed to take part and provide answers via online or offline questionnaires were included. Conversely, individuals under 18 years of age and those with no experience in purchasing apparel online were excluded. Responses that were incomplete or filled with bias, were discarded. These criteria were put in place to ensure that the data collected is accurate and

truly represents the behaviours of the target consumer segment relevant to the study's objectives.

3.1. Sample Size

For the present study, the quantitative correlational design was implemented. The convenience sampling technique was chosen to collect data from respondents who actively purchase apparel online. The G^* formula and the thumb rule method are used for calculating an appropriate sample size. The thumb rule method assumes a sample size of 10 times the number of constructs, which is appropriate for the study. Here, the total number of items is 11, so the required sample size for this study is $11 \times 10 = 110$. This study has been conducted on 252 customers, which exceeds the required sample size as suggested by the thumb rule method, and thus it meets the required threshold criteria. Secondly, the G^* power calculation method was used to determine the required sample size at a 95% confidence level, 95% power (0.95), and an effect size of 0.05, as shown in Figure 1. Using the criteria, a sample of 210 respondents was obtained using G^* power, and to meet the required sample size for this study, the work was conducted on 252 customers.

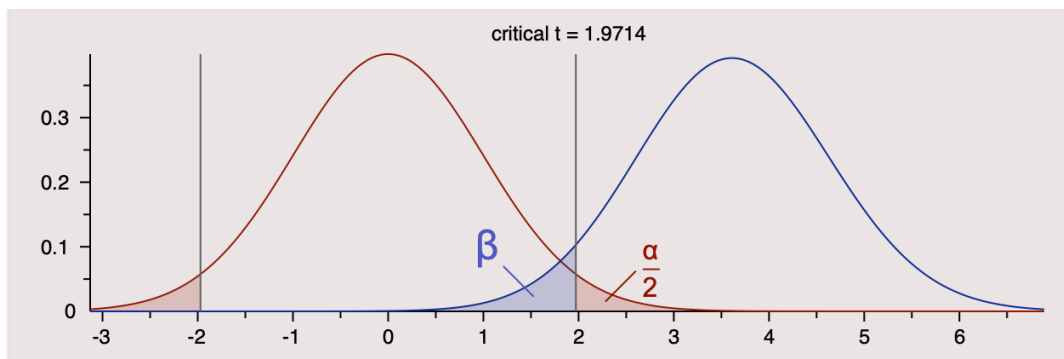


Figure 1. Sample Size

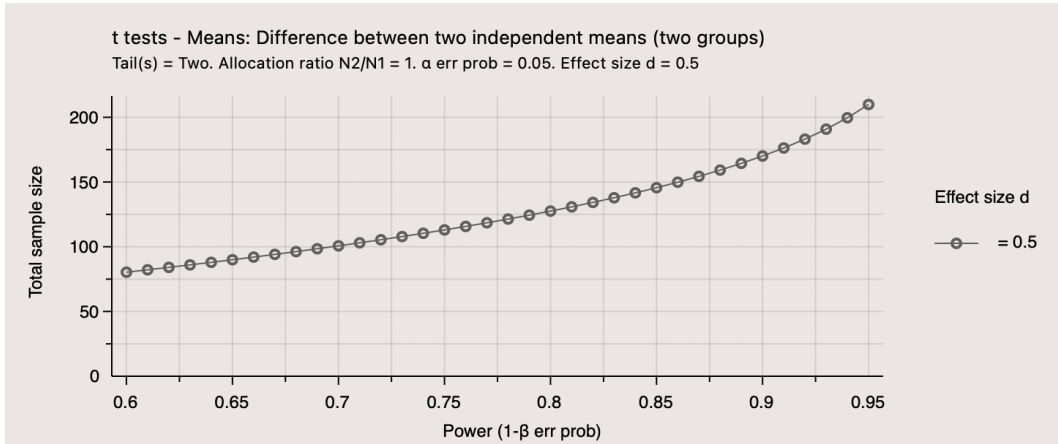


Figure 2. Sample Size Plot

3.2. Measures

The questionnaire used to collect information from respondents was divided into subparts. Among them, the first part provided an overview of the research, assuring that the respondents' information would be utilised solely for academic purposes. In that part, the brand attachment and online purchase intention were defined to the respondents, along with the demographic factors. The other subpart contained the socioeconomic, demographic, and educational information of respondents, and the remaining part was based on the measurement scales utilised in the study.

All the data on the measurement scale was collected on a five-point scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The results of the questionnaire data were analysed in three stages: descriptive, measurement, and structural model. The descriptive analysis checked the frequency and percentage of respondents in the dataset using SPSS. The measurement and structural models were assessed using PLS-

SEM. Secondly, the measurement model is used to assess how observed variables are measured, using Cronbach's alpha, factor loadings, composite reliability, AVE, etc. Path coefficients, R2 and Q2 were used to calculate the structural model.

4. Results

This section of the paper illustrates the findings in several parts. First, the demographic profile of respondents has been presented by setting, and then the assessment of the measurement and structural models has been conducted.

4.1. Demographics

The sample of the study consists of the people engaged in purchasing apparel online who are residents of Delhi NCR, as depicted in Table 1. Firstly, the customer group was classified by the level of education attained. Respondents, including males and females of the age below 35 years, are considered young, and those above that age are considered mature.

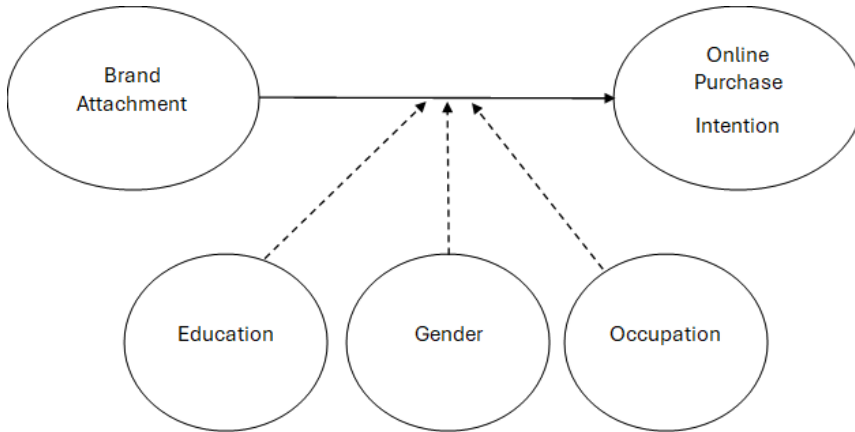


Figure 3. Conceptual Framework

Source: Created by author's

Table 1. Respondents' Profile

	Group	Frequency (N = 252)	%
Gender	Male	134	53
	Female	118	47
Education	Low	119	47
	High	133	53
Occupation	Low	142	56
	High	110	44

Source: Data collected through primary survey

4.2. Evaluation of Measurement Model

This point consists of evaluating the reliability and validity of all items using criteria such as loadings, Rho, VIF, and AVE.

Firstly, the confirmatory factor analysis was used to measure the measurement model, as illustrated in Figure 4. The model created is reflective, so the loadings were initially used. The outcomes are reported in Table 2, which explains the reliability and validity of the constructs, along with Cronbach's alpha, loadings, AVE, etc. Cronbach's alpha measures the internal consistency of the data obtained from a primary survey. The value above 0.7 satisfies its threshold criteria. On

the other hand, factor loading represents the strength of the relationship among the items of the construct. The higher the loading, the better the item's representation of the construct it belongs to. Additionally, no issue of multicollinearity was found. The AVE of both the underlying constructs surpassed the threshold of 0.5, which established the trustworthiness and effectiveness of the model. To establish the internal consistency and reliability, the value for Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability (CR) should be more than the threshold of 0.7 (Corboş et al., 2024). The average variance extracted (AVE), which should be larger than 0.5 (Rasoolimanesh et al., 2018), is reported above in the table.

Table 2: Model Evaluation using reliability and validity criteria

Constructs	Items	Loadings	Mean	SD	Cronbach alpha	CR (rho_a)	CR (rho_c)	AVE
Brand Attachment	BA1	0.757	3.159	1.234	0.932	0.933	0.945	0.711
	BA2	0.797	3.266	1.164				
	BA3	0.881	3.302	1.213				
	BA4	0.858	3.290	1.237				
	BA5	0.849	3.361	1.077				
	BA6	0.861	3.091	1.170				
	BA7	0.890	3.194	1.224				
Online Purchase Intention	OPI1	0.881	3.786	1.081	0.920	0.922	0.944	0.807
	OPI2	0.911	3.885	0.983				
	OPI3	0.910	3.869	1.036				
	OPI4	0.892	3.921	1.017				

Source: Results from Data Processing

“Note: CA = Cronbach Alpha; CR = Composite Reliability; SD = Standard Deviation; AVE = Average Variance Extracted.”

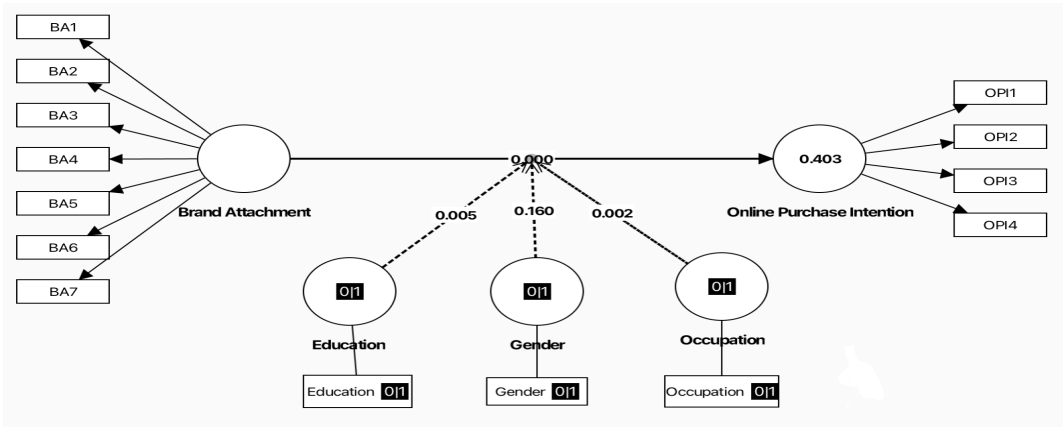


Figure 4. Measurement Model

Table 3. Discriminant Validity: HTMT

	Brand Attachment	Education	Gender	Occupation	Online Purchase Intention
Brand Attachment	0.843				
Education	-0.032	1.000			
Gender	-0.089	0.059	1.000		
Occupation	0.005	0.111	-0.136	1.000	
Online Purchase Intention	0.582	-0.023	-0.007	-0.013	0.898

Source: Results from Data Processing

Table 4. Cross-Loadings

	BA	OPI
BA1	0.757	0.482
BA2	0.797	0.462
BA3	0.881	0.492
BA4	0.858	0.507
BA5	0.849	0.542
BA6	0.861	0.468
BA7	0.890	0.468
OPI1	0.496	0.881
OPI2	0.539	0.911
OPI3	0.552	0.910
OPI4	0.502	0.892

Source: Results based on data collected through primary survey

Cross-loadings were calculated to assess the construct's discriminant validity. It shows how well each item has been loaded into each construct. The results are shown in Table 4. This ensures the measurement model has discriminant validity.

4.3. Evaluation of Structural Model

Structural model measurement has been conducted using PLS path analysis to assess the direct influence and the moderating effect.

4.3.1. Direct Influence

PLS bootstrapping at 500 was used to test the structural model. The results of the direct impact are indicated in Table 5 below. It is reported that brand attachment has a direct, positive, and significant influence on customers' online purchase intention. The path coefficient β indicated the strength of the antecedents' influence on their subsequent endogenous construct. The β coefficient of 0.403 indicates a moderate association between attachment and online

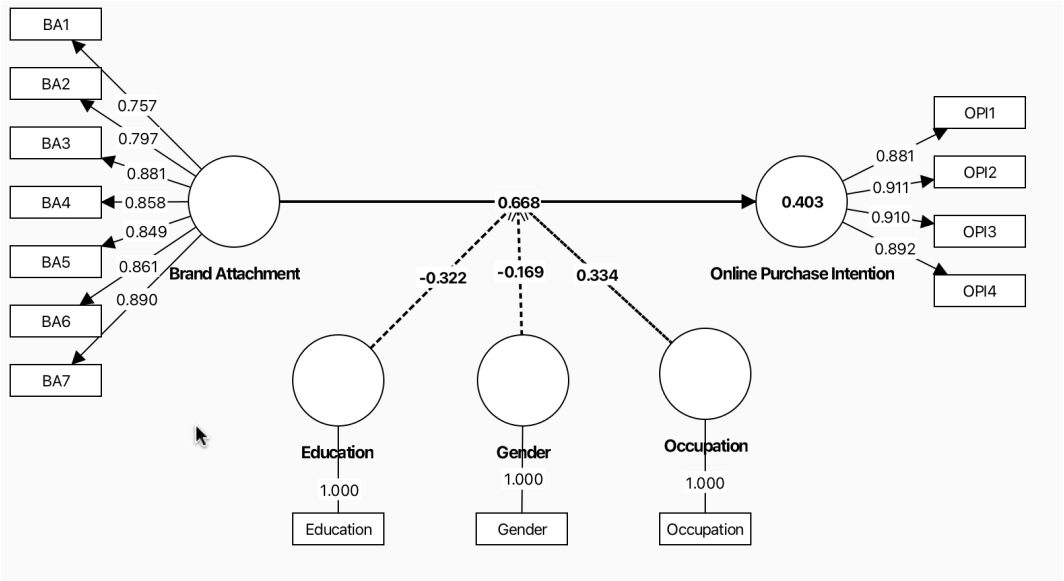


Figure 5. Structural Model

Table 5. Direct Effect Bootstrapping Results

Hypothesis	Path	Beta	Sample Mean	S.D.	T statistics	P value	F2	Decision
H1	BA - > OPI	0.403	0.666	0.109	6.147	0.000	0.211	Accepted

purchase intention. The effect is significant, as indicated by the p-value, which is less than 0.05 and > 1.96.

R² is a statistical measure that assesses how well the antecedent variable explains variance in the endogenous construct. Table 6 depicts that the antecedent factor of brand attachment explains 40.3% of the variance in online purchase intention. At the same time, adjusted R² is the modified R² that accounts for the number of predictors in the model. These measures are used to determine how well the model fits the data. The higher value indicates the better predictive accuracy of the model. The Q² value of 0.362 is meaningful (Aburumman et al., 2023) as Table 6 infers

that this model adequately predicts online purchase intention. With an R² of 0.403, the model has a decent fit and accounts for 40.3% of the variance in purchase intention, according to the latent-variable regression analysis. Additionally, the model is suitably described with few superfluous predictors, as evidenced by the slightly lower adjusted R² of 0.386. Furthermore, the model's Q² score of 0.362 indicates strong predictive relevance, suggesting it performs well at forecasting data not in the sample. Considering all factors, the model appears to successfully identify the main variables affecting the intention to make an online purchase.

Table 6. Predictive Power and Relevance

Latent	Q2	R2	Adjusted R2
OPI	0.362	0.403	0.386

Table 7. Moderation Effect of Demographics on BA > OPI

Hypothesis	Demographic Factors	Groups	Sample Size	Regression Weight	S.D.	T statistics	P value	Decision on moderation
H2	Education	Low	119	-0.322	0.115	2.789	0.005	Accepted
		High	133					
H3	Gender	Male	134	-0.169	0.120	1.404	0.160	Rejected
		Female	118					
H4	Occupation	Low	142	0.334	0.109	3.072	0.002	Accepted
		High	110					

4.3.2. Moderation Influence

Table 7 illustrates the moderating effects of various socio-economic and demographic factors on the relationship between brand attachment and online purchase intention. Results indicate that gender has no moderating influence on the relationship between the two constructs (where $t > 1.96$ but $p > 0.05$). Brand attachment significantly influences online purchase intention among customers with different education levels ($t > 1.96$; $p = 0.05$) and occupations ($t > 1.96$; $p < 0.05$).

5. Discussion

The results of the direct impact indicate that brand attachment has a significant positive effect on online purchase intention among customers purchasing apparel online, supporting H1. This clearly indicates that greater brand attachment leads to stronger purchase intentions. By strengthening brand attachment, marketers and brand managers can attract and retain customers, with a direct impact on brand equity, brand loyalty, and the

company's overall profitability. The findings of the study align with the research by Reitsamer & Brunner-Sperdin (2021) and Hasbullah et al. (2022). The findings on the moderating effect of education on the relationship between brand attachment and online purchase intention are significant, with t-statistics greater than 1.96 and p-values less than 0.05; hence, H2 is accepted. Similarly, H4 is supported, indicating that the customer's occupational level influences the relationship between brand attachment and purchase intention. However, our study found it contradictory in the context of gender classification, where it does not have a significant influence on the purchase intention. For both of the groups, it did not create a difference.

The figure above depicts the interaction between two levels of education (below graduation vs. above graduation) and brand attachment on online purchase intention. The two lines in the graph represent two groups based on the level of education attained: graduation (education at zero, red line) and

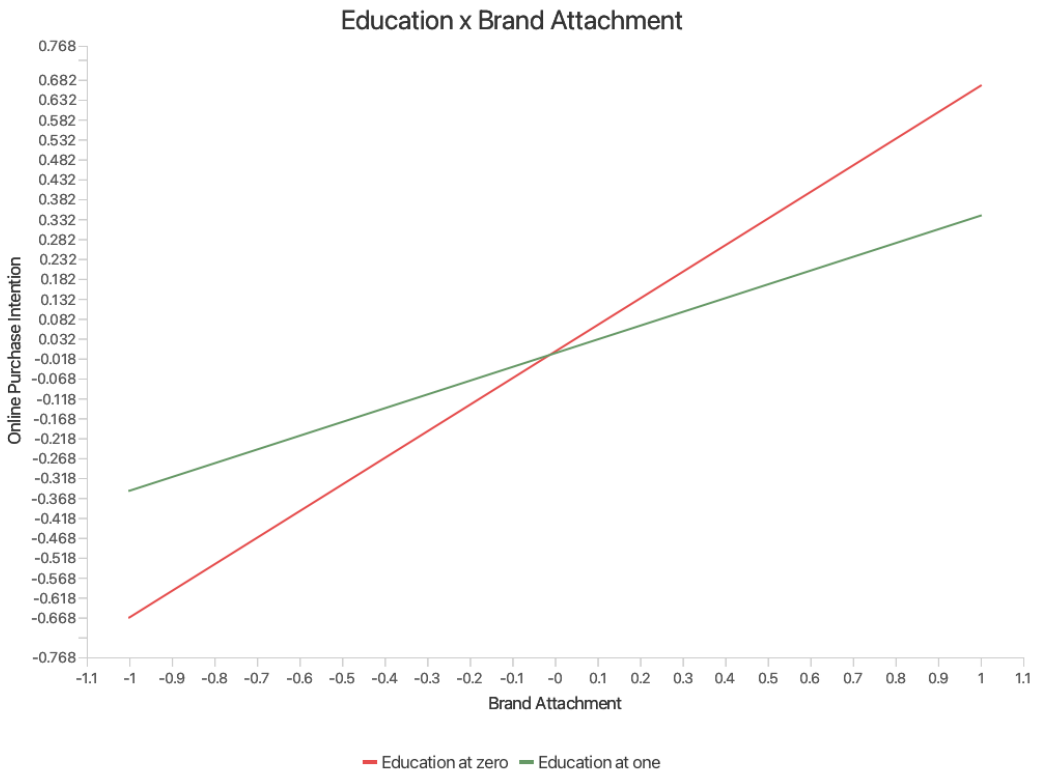


Figure 6. Slope Analysis of Education * Brand Attachment

above graduation (education at one, green line). The results indicated that, at higher levels of brand attachment, individuals with lower education (red line) show a greater increase in purchase intention than those with higher education (green line). The interaction effect in the figure shown above suggests that education level moderates the relationship between brand attachment and online purchase intention. Specifically, lower levels of education intensify the effect of brand attachment on online purchase intention, whereas higher levels somewhat dampen it. This result implies that marketing strategies that focus on enhancing brand attachment might be more effective for consumers with

lower levels of education, as they rely more on attachment when making their final purchase decisions. The reason for this interaction is a lack of awareness of the factors that contribute to purchase decisions. Additionally, for higher-educated consumers, other factors need to be considered in marketing strategies to drive online purchase intentions.

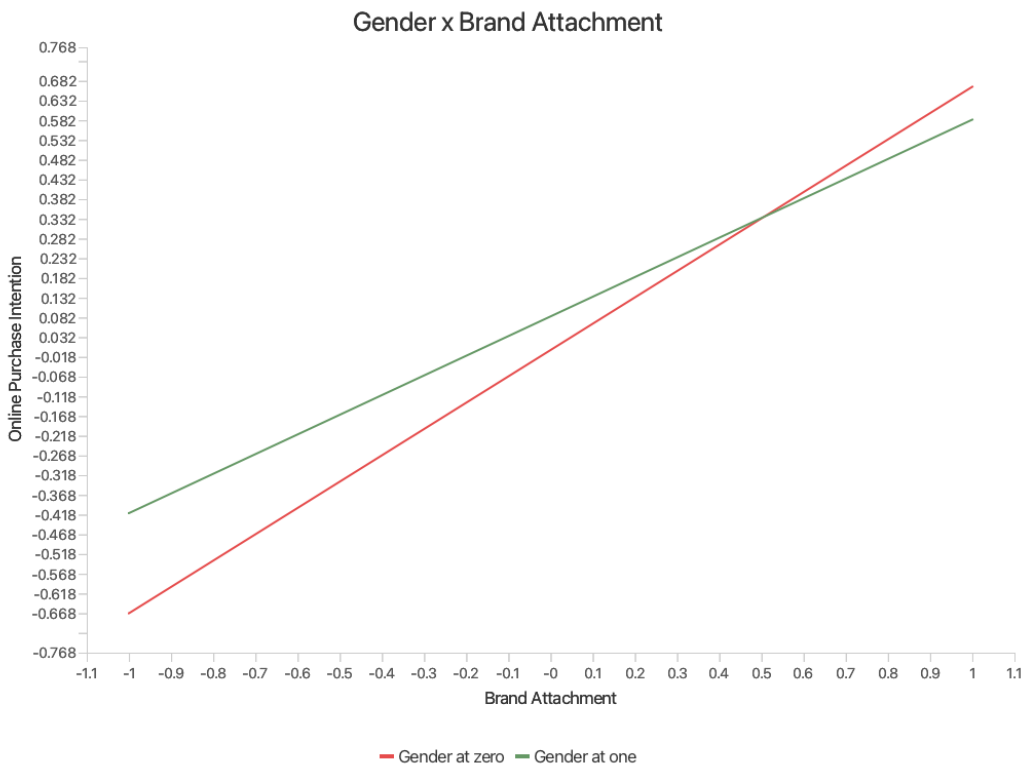


Figure 7. Slope Analysis depicting Gender * Brand Attachment

The figure depicted above represents the interaction between gender (male vs. female) and brand attachment in predicting online purchase intention. The red line represents gender at zero, while the green line represents gender at one. Both lines show a positive slope, indicating that as brand attachment increases, the intention to purchase online also increases for both groups, as classified. The effect of the red line group is slightly weaker than that of the green line. The lines in the figure above start at different levels of the y-axis, indicating that at low levels of brand attachment, one gender group has the lowest online purchase intention. The reason may be factors that directly or indirectly affect the level of trust and loyalty toward brands.

There is also a crossover effect in the slope, where the two lines intersect. At this point, both genders show equal purchase intention, despite differences in brand attachment levels. Consumption patterns by gender have gradually diminished, especially in apparel purchasing and brand engagement. Contrary to other research suggesting that gender may moderate this relationship, our study did not find a significant interaction between brand attachment and purchase intention. The shift in customer behaviour in online apparel marketplaces, where brand loyalty increases with gender-neutral clothing, may account for this disparity.

Firstly, a possible reason for this could be the growing popularity of gender-neutral

apparel in India. Regardless of gender identification or expression, anyone can wear these clothes. It enables individuals to express themselves without being restricted to the conventional gendered fashion. Unisex apparel and gender-neutral styles gained popularity with brands such as Blur by Being Human, H'n M, Zara, Biskit, and Vulgar, etc., reflecting this cultural shift in fashion. These brands, with their bold, gender-neutral designs, are transforming the Indian fashion scene by encouraging inclusivity, questioning conventional gender roles, and offering greater styling options (Poddar, 2025). These collections usually include unisex sweaters, cropped coats, and t-shirts in neutral hues or designs suitable for both men and women. By launching items such as jumpsuits and co-ords, some brands have even gone one step further (Hossain, 2023).

Secondly, the idea that apparel should be limited to strict gender categories is rejected by the concept of 'gender-fluid fashion'. Gender-fluid or genderless fashion breaks the traditional concept by exhibiting that a person possesses both extreme masculinity and femininity, but due to the roles they are given, they are only permitted to exhibit one of them. (Sharma, 2022). Instead, the buzzing fashion in this era accepts a variety of styles, enabling people to express themselves freely despite social norms. The efforts of designers, activists, and influencers have contributed to the general adoption of gender-neutral fashion in the modern era (Shukla, 2024).

The fashion industry has been supporting unisex apparel designs since the 2020s that prioritise comfort and individuality, shattering stereotypes about traditionally gendered apparel (Suradkar & Chanana, 2024). The increasing popularity of unisex apparel reflects a social movement towards equality and openness. India's growing embrace of gender diversity is evident in the rising demand for gender-neutral apparel, especially in urban areas such as Delhi and Noida. Basalma's (2024) findings show that impulsive online buying behaviour is not significantly influenced by age or gender. However, a substantial correlation exists between education level and the likelihood of an online purchase, suggesting that higher levels of education are associated with a greater likelihood of making one. Moreover, McKinsey's "The State of Fashion" Report states that 67% of online buyers (having higher education) of clothing favour brands that provide detailed information about their sustainability policies and product materials through labels (McKinsey & Company, 2023).

On the other hand, emotional storytelling is more favourable for customers with low levels of education and awareness. These customers might better identify with stories that arouse feelings and foster confidence about the clothing brand. A powerful emotional bond can be formed by showcasing the clothing in public spaces with influencers (Yadav, 2024). Gender-fluid fashion is not merely a passing trend but an artistic movement that effortlessly embraces new concepts.

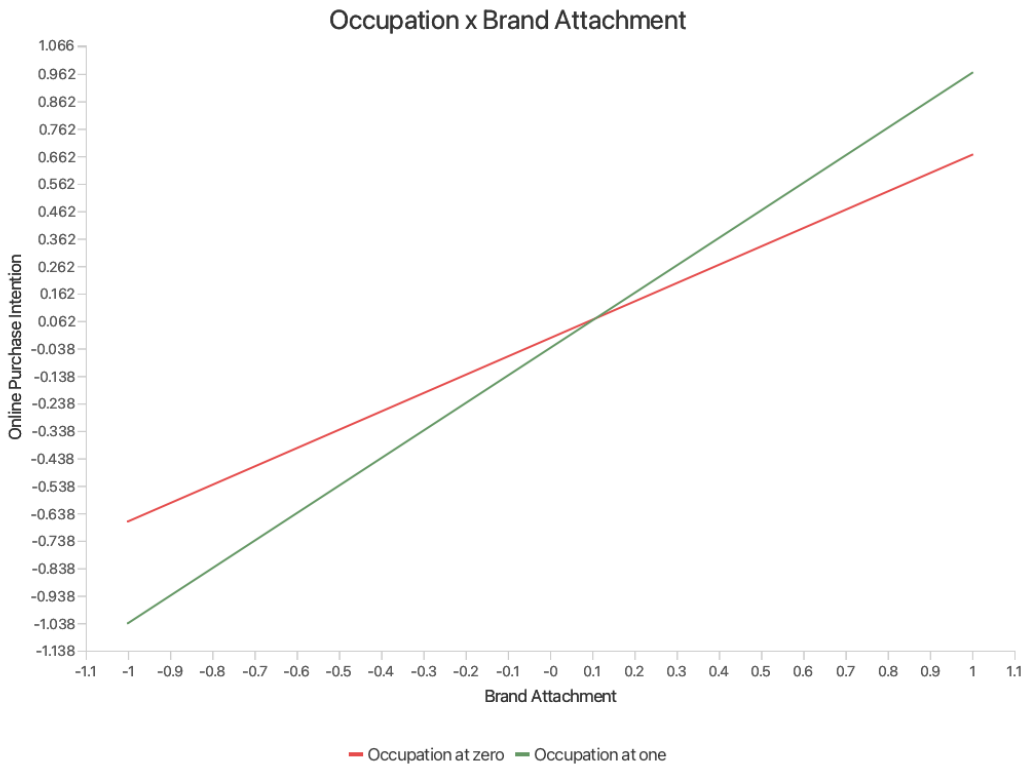


Figure 8. Slope Analysis showing the relationship of Occupation * Brand Attachment

The figure shown above represents the interaction between occupation and brand attachment on online purchase intention. The slope displays two lines representing different levels of occupation: zero (red) and one (green). The red line represents occupation at zero (the unemployed group), whereas the green line represents occupation at one (likely another group, i.e., employed). The slope analysis shows that the green line is steeper and more positive than the red line in the graph, indicating a rise in brand attachment. Brand attachment increases the influence on online purchase intention, with stronger effects in the employed group than in the unemployed. The red line is

flatter because the relationship between brand attachment and online purchase intention is weaker among the unemployed group. Moreover, it suggests that occupation moderated the relationship between brand attachment and online purchase intention. It means people in higher-occupational groups might have more disposable income and can make purchases more easily. Alternatively, the lower level of occupation may not have the same resources and purchasing power to make online purchases and to understand the attachment, which in turn weakens the relationship between brand attachment and online purchase intention.

6. Implication

6.1. Theoretical Implications

The present study significantly contributes to the existing literature on customer brand attachment and their intention to purchase via the online medium. It emphasises the crucial role of demographic factors such as gender, education, and occupation of the customers in shaping the relationship between brand attachment and online purchase intention in the context of the customers buying apparel. The study's findings reveal that, across demographics, factors such as education and occupation significantly influence online purchase intention. On the other hand, the only factor that did not create a difference was gender. This suggests that nuanced insights into these demographic factors are vital for building strong relationships between brands and customers. This work extends studies that focused only on gender and income differences, now encompassing differences in people's ability to purchase branded products. Customers are more brand-conscious, brand-loyal, and attached to brands that provide satisfaction and the promise of safety. The study can be valuable for developing more targeted interventions to promote buyers' online purchase intentions and final decisions by considering the diverse needs across demographic settings.

6.2. Practical Implications

The work examines the significance of demographic factors, such as education, gender, and occupation, in customer-brand relationships. Findings suggest that marketers, brand managers, and strategists should tailor brand attachment and online purchase intention strategies to address the needs of different customer segments. The lack of trust and attachment towards

a branded product or organisation leads to lower customer retention. It negatively affects and weakens customers' connection to the brand. More initiatives should be tailored to customise the market campaigns based on the diverse moderating role of gender, education, and occupational status of the customers; for example, the brand managers may trigger the educated consumers with detailed and in-depth product information while using emotional appeals for a different demographic factor. Managers should encourage the brands to make products that align with the values and lifestyles of various demographic groups. Understanding the preferences influenced by gender and occupational status can lead to a better product fit for the customer's apparel. Proposing different educational awareness campaigns to help customers develop a deeper understanding of brand attachment and online purchase intention can be effective for the brand-customer relationship. The findings suggest that brand attachment drives online purchase intentions similarly across genders, indicating an opportunity for marketers to create inclusive campaigns. Brand evangelism, especially through influencer collaborations and customer advocacy, can be leveraged to reinforce emotional bonds with consumers with low educational attainment. Rather than tailoring messages based on gender, brands can focus on shared values, aesthetics, and lifestyle aspirations that resonate universally. Campaigns like FabIndia's sustainability-driven narratives, which offer clear and data-rich product descriptions, may be warmly received by educated urban consumers in India. Conversely, through emotionally charged, culturally rooted marketing that features approachable celebrities or patriotic themes, businesses like Manyavar

successfully connect with consumers across different levels of emotion, regardless of their education level. These customised communication tactics show how companies may promote connection and trust across educational gaps.

7. Limitations and Future Research Paths

The present study underscores several additions to the existing literature; however, some limitations remain to be acknowledged. The study recruited respondents from diverse demographic backgrounds within the Delhi NCR region. Cross-state and country studies in this regard can be proved valuable. Further, research can examine the other psychological factors consumers encounter when purchasing a branded product, whether online or offline. More research can be conducted longitudinally within the focus groups for a specific apparel brand to gain deeper insights into the brand's identity and the customer's relationship with it over time. By doing this, we can gain useful insights to strengthen relationships and increase profits. The present study has been conducted on a limited sample size. More work can be done to evaluate the factors that drive customer tracking and lasting relationships with the brand (brand attachment and purchase intention). A qualitative research design can be used to gain insights into the use of AI technology in customer experience and satisfaction as customers move towards purchasing a product. The study also considered only limited demographic variables; additional factors, such as income, region, cultural differences, and technological readiness, can be evaluated in future studies. Apart from this, the relationships among the variables analysed in the study focused on

online apparel purchasing and may also be extended to second-hand apparel purchasing in the future. Recent studies have highlighted the need to better understand consumer behaviour in the context of second-hand clothing purchasing (Corboş, R.A. et al., 2023). Various schemes and policymakers' interventions can be implemented to foster transparency, build trust, and leverage influencer advertising to gain customers' trust.

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