

PREFACE

The apparel sector in India dominates the share of organized retailing. Indian apparel retailers face throat cut competition due to globalization, new technology development, new government policies/initiatives like Goods and Service Tax (GST), Digital India, Insolvency and bankruptcy code, and Foreign Direct Investment (FDI). In the future, traditional retailers can face three-sided competition for their survival and growth in the competitive market. The first competition will be from domestic counterparts with similar products to sell and familiar with the local environment and corporate giants. The second competition will be from foreign retailers with better retail offerings, international expertise, and advanced technology to sense the market. The third competition will be from rapidly rising e-tailing. Organized retailing in India is growing day by day, and there is much scope for traditional retailers in the coming decade. However, Indian retailers face many challenges like financial, technological, and cost of inventory.

Due to global economic instability, a decline in apparel retailing consumption in the United States and the European Union has been observed. Significant declination has been observed in the USA, Germany, France, and the UK. Therefore, foreign retailers seek a favorable market for their products. India can be the best place for them based on government policies/initiatives (GST, Digital India, FDI and Insolvency and bankruptcy code). Whereas India's per capita apparel consumption can increase by 25% between 2011 and 2015, the trend will continue until 2020. Due to this reason, the Indian market can be the best destination for foreign retailers. The fashion business witnessed several tectonic shifts; one is the changeover of control from brands to retailers in global fashion trends.

There is the prevalence of organized retailing in the current Indian scenario. This section shows the issues and problems that the thesis attempt to address based on the above discussions. The vital premise of this research is to propose a framework for providing guidelines for the decision-makers and managers in strategy formation to achieve a competitive position. Succinctly, the research objective of this thesis is as follows:

- RO 1: To design and develop a Proposed Instrument for assessing customer value perception and predict the effect on loyalty.
- RO 2: To identify the strengthening factors of competitive positioning and establish interrelationships amongst them.
- RO 3: To propose an integrated framework for system design for achieving an improved level of customer satisfaction.
- RO 4: To Analyse the interaction among barriers of competitive positioning strategy implementation in retail.

Since retailers attempt to create an image of their stores in the customers' minds over their competitors, in such context, it is essential to satisfy and retain the customers by providing the value-added services that customers can perceive. Retailers' better quality of offerings over their competitors can fulfill the customers and make them loyal. A study on customer perceived value and loyalty has conducted in Varanasi city (a tier II city of India). The government of India has taken many shops in the road widening process. The construction of buildings, roads, and the development of other infrastructure are at evolution. These issues make Varanasi the most favorable place to capture retailers' current situation and customer value perception (CVP). A questionnaire survey is used to understand the customer's perceived value. The survey

items have been taken from previously published research manuscripts and modified based on the experts' opinions to fit them better in the Indian customer context.

Further, the principal component analysis followed by varimax rotation is used to ensure the model variables' importance and suitability. Since the questionnaire was administered to a new set of respondents, location, and field, the scale went through exploratory factor analysis (EFA). Further, confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was used for two models. The first one is the measurement model for in-store logistics. The second is the measurement model with In-Store Logistics, store environment, store communication, perceived price, merchandise assortment, customer satisfaction, and loyalty. Finally, the Structural equation model is used to test the hypothesized relationships.

Indian apparel retailers are adopting organized retailing at a rapid pace. Then, all stakeholders need to keep thoughtful attention throughout the changeover. While developing the competitive positioning strategy, it is required to know about the CVP and factors that strengthening the strategy (design requirements). To identify design requirements and establish interrelationships among them, interpretive structural modeling (ISM) has been used. Fuzzy matrix cross-reference multiplication applied to a classification (FMICMAC) is used to overcome the vagueness in subjective opinion to classify the factors in four clusters: autonomous, dependent, linkage, and driver. Therefore, key strengthening factors have been identified with better vision. The customers' value perception and retailers' competitive performance requirements (strengthening factor) need to be structured effectively. This framework can help retailers create, manage, and evaluate their positioning strategies in the Indian apparel retailing market. Quality function deployment has been used for the framework.

To implement a competitive positioning strategy in a retail firm, it is essential to understand the importance of resources and related barriers that can hinder the strategy's successful implementation. For the identification of barriers and classify these barriers in terms of cause and effect, DEMATEL has been used. This method can suffer from human biases, incomplete information, and uncertainty. To overcome this problem, the Grey theory has been applied. This theory can make better decisions in an unpredictable environment. The study finally provides some valuable guidelines for the managers and decision-makers to improve strengthening factors quality in the Indian apparel retailing context.

Keywords: Resource-based theory (RBT), Competitive positioning strategy, Strengthening factors for competitive positioning, Interpretive structural modelling (ISM), Grey theory, Decision Making Trial and Evaluation Laboratory (DEMATEL) technique, Structural equation modelling (SEM), and Quality function deployment (QFD).