

The impact of sales promotions on consumers' purchasing behaviour in the clothing industry

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ABSTRACT – REZUMAT

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The fashion industry reflects global economic, technological, and cultural transformations, and consumer behaviour regarding clothing purchases is strongly influenced by these dynamic forces. In today's highly digitalised and competitive market, consumers are more informed, more demanding, and increasingly aware of the social, environmental, and economic implications of their purchasing decisions. They have access to an unprecedented variety of products, and the rise of e-commerce has significantly shaped their preference for convenience, speed, and personalisation. A growing number of consumers prefer quick, online purchases and are attracted to promotions and special offers that provide value for money. In this context, promotional strategies and discount campaigns have become essential tools for fashion retailers, helping them attract new customers, retain existing ones, and stimulate demand in an oversaturated market. These strategies include seasonal sales, "buy two, get one free" offers, flash sales, discount coupons, and loyalty programs. The study on the impact of promotions on consumer behaviour in the clothing sector highlighted aspects related to consumer preferences based on place of residence, level of education, gender, and income. The key factors influencing the decision to purchase clothing were identified, as well as the impact of discounts and special offers on this decision – all of which provide valuable insights for marketing professionals operating in the fashion industry.

Keywords: promotions, consumers, clothing, fashion, marketing

Impactul promoțiilor asupra comportamentului de cumpărare al consumatorilor în industria de îmbrăcăminte

Industria modei reflectă transformările economice, tehnologice și culturale înregistrate la nivel global, iar comportamentul consumatorilor în ceea ce privește achizițiile de îmbrăcăminte este puternic influențat de aceste modificări dinamice. În piața actuală, extrem de digitalizată și competitivă, consumatorii sunt mai informați, mai exigenți și din ce în ce mai conștienți de implicațiile sociale, de mediu și economice ale deciziilor lor de cumpărare. Ei au acces la o varietate fără precedent de produse, iar dezvoltarea comerțului electronic a modelat semnificativ preferința lor pentru confort, rapiditate și personalizare.

Un număr tot mai mare de consumatori preferă achizițiile rapide, online și sunt atrași de promoții și oferte speciale care oferă un raport bun calitate-preț. În acest context, strategiile promoționale și campaniile de reduceri au devenit instrumente esențiale pentru retailerii din industria modei, ajutându-i să atragă clienți noi, să-i fidelizeze pe cei existenți și să stimuleze cererea într-o piață suprasaturată. Aceste strategii includ reduceri sezoniere, oferte de tipul „cumperi două, primești unul gratuit”, vânzări fulger, cupoane de reducere și programe de loialitate.

Studiul privind impactul promoțiilor asupra comportamentului consumatorilor în sectorul produselor de îmbrăcăminte a evidențiat aspecte legate de preferințele acestora în funcție de locul de reședință, nivelul de educație, gen și venit. Au fost identificați factorii principali care influențează decizia de cumpărare a articolelor de îmbrăcăminte, precum și impactul reducerilor și ofertelor speciale asupra acestei decizii – toate acestea oferind perspective valoroase pentru specialiștii în marketing care activează în industria modei.

Cuvinte-cheie: promoții, consumatori, îmbrăcăminte, modă, marketing

INTRODUCTION

The study of consumer behaviour has become a field of interest for marketing specialists, as it helps them understand how buyers choose products and services and the factors that influence these choices. Since the 1960s, the study of consumer behaviour has evolved into a distinct branch of marketing, once the need to understand the complex process through which a need transforms into demand for goods and services was recognised [1].

The way consumers make purchasing decisions is highly varied, as their reactions are strongly influ-

enced by the context of their environment. The complexity of consumer behaviour is also due to the diversity of factors that affect the decision-making process of purchasing and consumption, both directly and indirectly. To understand consumer behaviour, a deep knowledge of the system of interacting and mutually influencing factors is necessary [2].

The increasing complexity of economic life has emphasised the need to study human behaviour in an economic context, divided into two major components: behaviour as a producer and behaviour as a consumer. In contemporary society, where technological progress tends to replace the human producer with

machines, the analysis of consumer behaviour becomes even more important. This analysis is crucial, especially in the context of limited resources, to ensure the production of only necessary goods and services.

The diversification of supply and the increase in purchasing power, associated with a higher level of education and culture, provide consumers with more options and more sophisticated needs. Producers must take these changes into account to respond appropriately to consumer preferences.

A deep understanding of consumer behaviour allows fashion brands to personalise their marketing strategies for specific audience segments. Different categories of consumers (based on age, gender, income level, lifestyle) have different preferences and behaviours when it comes to purchasing clothing products. Understanding these differences helps brands create more effective campaigns and attract consumers through personalised messages and promotions [3].

The objective of this study was to identify how promotions influence clothing purchase decisions, which types of promotions are most appreciated by consumers, and the sources of information through which these promotions reach them. The methodology employed consisted of an online questionnaire developed using the Google Forms platform.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The fashion industry has experienced rapid development in recent decades, marked by globalisation and digitalisation. Technology has had a major impact on how consumers buy clothing and how brands promote their products. E-commerce and social media platforms have transformed the purchasing process, allowing consumers to access brands and products from around the world without geographical limitations. Additionally, data and digital marketing analytics enable companies to better understand consumer behaviour and offer various types of promotions [4]. Over time, promotions have been widely studied due to their significant impact on purchasing decisions. They have been defined as a set of marketing tools used to stimulate consumer interest, trial, or purchase of products or services [5].

In the fashion industry, promotions are particularly important due to the fast pace of product changes, seasonal trends, and intense competition among brands. Promotions play an essential role in the marketing strategy of clothing brands, serving as a key tool for achieving various objectives such as increasing sales, attracting new customers, building customer loyalty, and creating an appealing brand identity. In an industry that is highly competitive and trend-sensitive, promotions provide a distinct advantage to stand out and build a strong connection with consumers.

Promotions also play a crucial role in consumer psychology, influencing both brand loyalty and impulsive

buying behaviour. These effects are triggered by various psychological mechanisms such as instant rewards, fear of missing out (FOMO), and immediate gratification [6].

Promotions and discount strategies have become essential tools in the fashion industry, contributing to customer acquisition and retention. These include seasonal discounts, “2+1 free” offers, flash sales, as well as discount coupons and loyalty programs. The most appreciated promotions for clothing products are discounts and coupons [7, 8], while “buy one, get one free” promotions should be used with caution, as they tend to have less impact [9,10]. Promotions have proven effective in increasing short-term sales by creating a sense of urgency and perceived value [11]. Moreover, promotions – especially those with limited duration, monetary discounts, and online reviews – directly influence consumer behaviour, stimulating impulsive purchases, particularly in clothing, where fashion trends and consumer preferences evolve rapidly [12].

Numerous studies have focused on identifying the factors that determine how consumers respond to promotions. Chowdhury and Akter highlight that income level plays a crucial role, pointing out that lower-income consumers are more price-sensitive and more responsive to promotions than higher-income ones [13]. Shukla shows that women are generally more motivated by promotional offers in the fashion sector compared to men [14]. Another factor influencing perception and reaction to promotions is the consumer’s age. Studies have concluded that consumer interest in promotions increases with age [15].

Consumer behaviour has changed significantly in recent years, influenced by factors such as digitalisation, globalisation, and sustainability concerns. Modern consumers are more informed, have access to a wider variety of options, and are more aware of the impact of their purchasing decisions. The digital revolution and the growth of e-commerce have transformed promotional tactics in the fashion industry. Online flash sales, personalised discount codes, and loyalty programs offered through digital channels allow retailers to target consumers more precisely and increase engagement [16]. Furthermore, content creation on social platforms (Instagram, TikTok) plays a major role in shaping trends, influencing buying behaviour, and enhancing the effectiveness of promotions [17]. Zhang and Huang highlight the importance of visual marketing in influencing purchase intentions for fast fashion brands, while also emphasising the role of promotional strategies in the context of e-commerce [18]. Solomon and Rabolt emphasise the psychological factors that influence purchasing decisions and responses to promotions in the fashion sector [19], while Mishra et al. mention that the clothing industry adapts its promotional strategies based on the socio-economic status of consumers, which is closely tied to their market behaviour [8].

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The survey study aimed to determine the impact of promotions on consumer behaviour regarding clothing products.

The instrument used for data collection was an online questionnaire developed using the Google Forms platform. It included 18 questions, most of which were closed-ended (with pre-set answers), along with a few open-ended questions designed to capture qualitative nuances of consumer behaviour. The questions addressed aspects such as the frequency of clothing purchases, the budget allocated to them, preferred purchasing channels, factors influencing the purchase decision, the impact of discounts on buying behaviour, types of promotions perceived as attractive, and disadvantages experienced by respondents in relation to promotional offers.

The questionnaire was pre-tested on a small sample of 10 individuals to assess the clarity of the wording, the logical flow of the questions, and the time required to complete it. Following the pre-test, minor adjustments were made to ensure the content validity of the instrument.

Data collection was conducted online over a period of two months by distributing the questionnaire via email, WhatsApp, and social media platforms (Facebook, Instagram). In total, 167 individuals completed the questionnaire voluntarily and anonymously.

The data were analysed using descriptive statistical methods (frequencies, percentages) and highlighted the relationships between various socio-demographic variables and respondents' consumption behaviours, providing relevant and particularly useful insights for stakeholders in the fashion industry.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Demographic characteristics and consumer behaviour

The first part of the questionnaire included several questions aimed at collecting demographic data from respondents, to determine if there are particularities in the behaviour of clothing consumers based on gender, age, education level, income, etc.

No significant differences related to clothing consumer behaviour were identified based on the respondents' gender. Regardless of gender, the average monthly budget allocated for clothing purchases ranged between 100 and 300 RON. Purchase sources included both physical stores and online shops, while the main factors influencing purchase decisions were price, product quality, and promotions/discounts. Percentage discounts (e.g., 30% off) and fixed amount price reductions (e.g., 50 RON off) were preferred. The only difference observed was in purchase frequency, which was monthly for females compared to once every few months for males.

Respondents' income influenced both the purchase frequency and the budget allocated. As income increased, so did both the purchase frequency and the budget dedicated to clothing products.

Education level and place of residence were not influential factors in consumers' clothing purchasing behaviour.

Clothing purchase patterns

The subsequent questions in the questionnaire were designed to identify the main patterns of clothing acquisition, encompassing the frequency of purchases and expenditure levels, as well as the preferred points of purchase and the factors influencing consumer choices.

Regarding the question on the frequency of clothing purchases, most respondents indicated that they buy clothes either once every few months (45.5%) or once a month (40.1%).

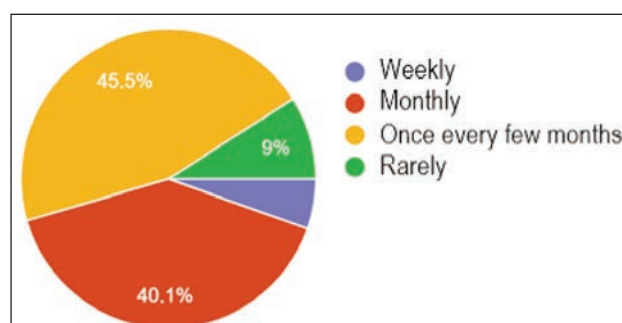


Fig. 1. Frequency of clothing purchases

The average monthly budget allocated for clothing purchases is between 100 and 300 RON for 52.7% of respondents.

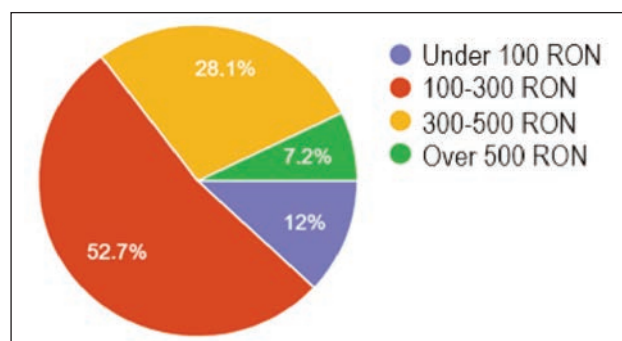


Fig. 2. Average monthly budget allocated for clothing purchases

In response to the question, "Where do you most often purchase your clothing products?" the vast

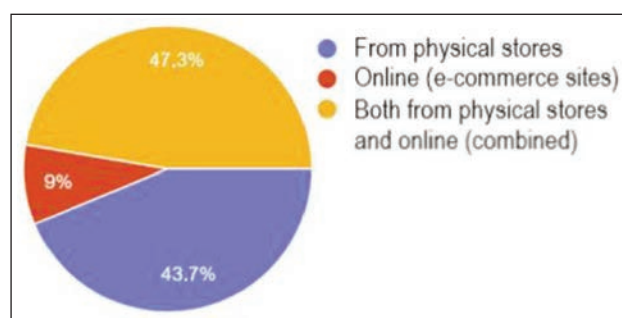


Fig. 3. Preferred place for purchasing clothing

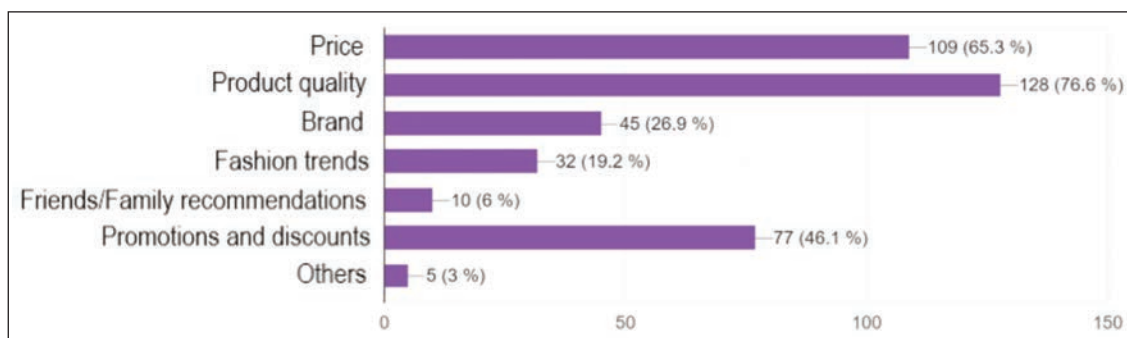


Fig. 4. Factors that most influence the decision to buy clothing

majority of respondents indicated that they prefer to buy clothing from physical stores or through a combination of physical and online options. Only 9% of respondents purchase their clothing exclusively online (figure 3).

The factors that most influence the decision to buy clothing are product quality, price, and promotions or discounts applied to the products (figure 4).

Impact of promotions on consumer behaviour

The final questions of the questionnaire focused on the impact of promotions on clothing purchase decisions.

To the question, “How often are you tempted to buy clothing products when they are promoted through discounts or special offers?” 58.7% of respondents answered “often” or “very often”. Only 1.2% stated that they are not interested in purchasing clothing products when there are discounts or special offers (figure 5). The preferred promotions among clothing buyers are percentage discounts, followed by bundle

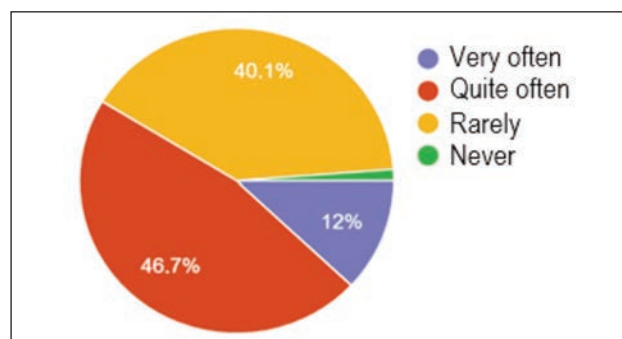


Fig. 5. Impact of discounts and special offers on clothing buyers

offers such as “buy 2, get 1 free”, and free shipping (figure 6).

Clothing buyers consider the most attractive promotions to be those during season changes (46.7%) and in established discount periods such as Christmas, Easter, and Black Friday (figure 7).

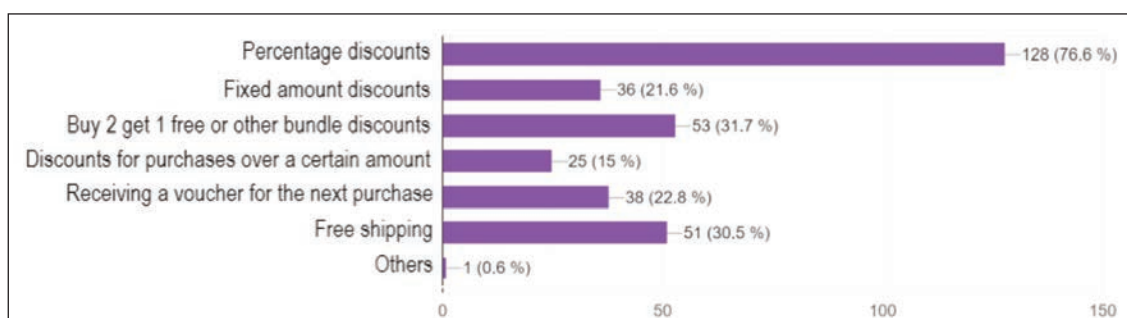


Fig. 6. Types of promotions preferred by clothing buyers



Fig. 7. Periods with the most attractive clothing promotions

Promotions influence 29.3% of respondents to make purchasing decisions more easily, 19.8% to buy more than they initially intended, and 13.8% to purchase a product they otherwise would not have bought (figure 8).

The main sources through which consumers learn about clothing promotions are advertisements on social media platforms (Facebook, Instagram, TikTok), in-store advertisements (e.g., window displays or posters), and recommendations from friends or family. A significant percentage also learn about promotions

through clothing store websites and email newsletters (figure 9).

The primary disadvantages of clothing promotions mentioned are limited stock availability, the desired product or size being unavailable, misleading discounts, and promotions encouraging unnecessary or impulsive purchases (figure 10).

Among the survey respondents, 36.5% would like to see larger discounts during promotional periods, 21.6% want promotions dedicated to loyal customers and to be more frequent, and 20.4% desire clearer and easier-to-understand promotions (figure 11).

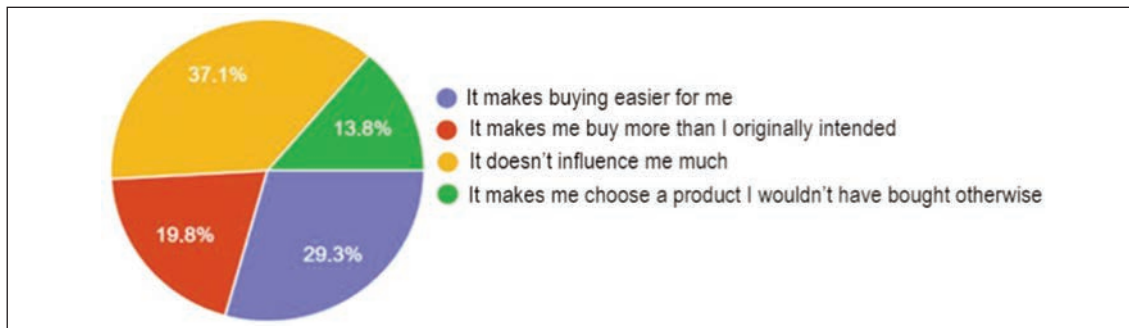


Fig. 8. Influence of promotions on the decision to purchase a clothing product

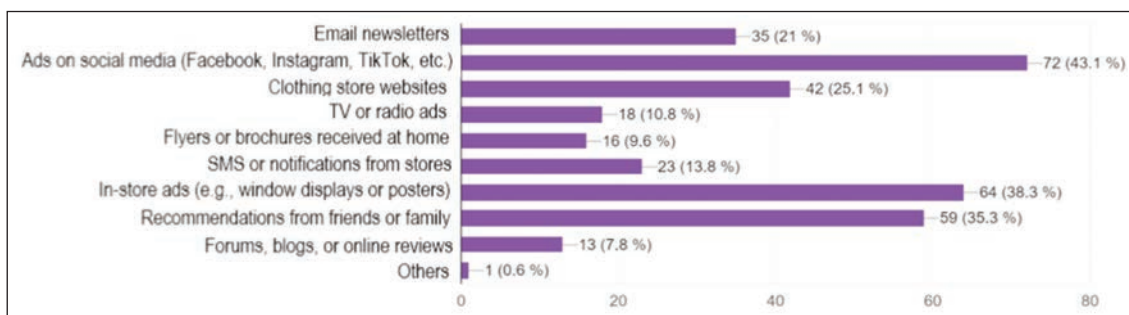


Fig. 9. Main sources of information about clothing promotions



Fig. 10. Main disadvantages of clothing promotions

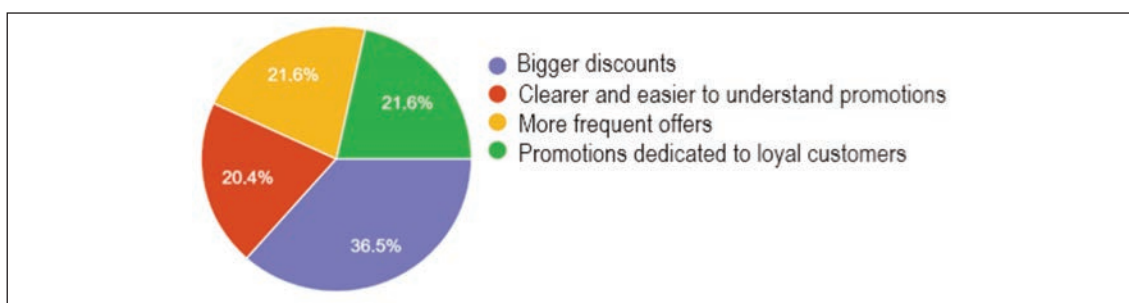


Fig. 11. Suggestions for improving clothing promotions

CONCLUSIONS

This study on consumer behaviour regarding clothing products found no major differences based on place of residence, education level, or gender, except for purchase frequency, which is higher among women. While the literature shows mixed findings regarding gender differences in decision-making styles, motivations, or influencing factors (e.g., higher brand loyalty among men) [20], there is general agreement that women purchase clothing more frequently than men [21, 22].

Respondents' income influences both purchase frequency and the budget allocated for clothing purchases: as income increases, so does purchase frequency and the allocated budget.

The most influential factors in clothing purchase decisions – product quality, price, and applied promotions or discounts – are consistent with findings from previous studies [23, 24].

Promotions influence clothing purchase decisions in various ways, from making the decision easier to buying in larger quantities, or even purchasing products that consumers would not have bought otherwise.

The most appreciated types of promotions are percentage discounts, followed by bundle offers such as “buy 2, get 1 free” and free shipping.

The main sources of information about promotions are social media advertisements, in-store displays,

and recommendations from friends or family. Ads on store websites and email newsletters are also significant. These sources are highlighted in the most recent studies, whereas earlier research emphasised direct mail marketing, TV advertisements, and in-store promotions as the primary channels for communicating promotions [25].

The primary disadvantages of clothing promotions mentioned are limited stock availability, the desired product or size being out of stock, misleading discounts, and promotions that encourage unnecessary or impulsive purchases.

The study demonstrates how promotions affect the purchasing behaviour of clothing consumers. By understanding and leveraging this information, companies can optimise their marketing tactics, enhance brand loyalty, differentiate themselves in a competitive market, and increase sales. In the clothing market, sales promotions can drive sales, customer retention, and business growth. However, companies must carefully balance promotional efforts to avoid undermining brand credibility and long-term profitability.

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