Market Planning among Apparel Retailers in Mizoram: An Exploratory Study

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ABSTRACT: This research paper provides an overview of Apparel Retail Business with special reference to Aizawl where the fashion sector is booming to a huge extent due to high western influence. The study focuses on market planning of the apparel retailers in terms of location of business, sales forecasting and coping with competition as well as the supplier-retail inter relationship in terms of communication, selection and redressal of dissatisfaction. The study uses SPSS for data analysis with measures of central tendency i.e mean value along with weighted score and percentage to Maximum Possible Score (MPS). This study will help existing and upcoming apparel retailers on how they would plan and survive in the thriving market as well as give an insightful information to apparel suppliers on how to further expand their businesses in Mizoram.

Keywords: apparel retailers, market planning, suppliers, supplier-retailer relationship

1. INTRODUCTION

Marketing is universal, formally and informally, people and organizations are engaged in an infinite number of activities that can be clubbed in to marketing. Good and efficient marketing has become an increasing vital ingredient for the success of every business, big or small and has profoundly affected the day to day lived and is continually embedded in our every action-from the attire we wear to the appliances we use, technological gadgets to the food that we consume daily and to the ever-increasing utilization of superficial products to enhance the physical well-being.

Retailing can be defined as a distribution channel function, where an organization buys products from supplying firms or manufacturers and sell these products directly to customers. Retailing plays a significant role for both customers and sellers since it enables the customers to purchase small quantities of an assortment of products at reasonable and affordable price and offers an opportunity to suppliers in identifying their target market. Through retail promotions, such sellers can build a strong product demand and provide customer feedback to the marketer as well as the manufacturer (Dun and Bradstreet,2009).

Therefore, retailing consists of sale of goods and services from individuals or businesses to the end user. A retailer earns profit by purchase of large quantities of goods and services either directly from manufacturers or through wholesalers and as such he becomes an integrated part of the supply chain (Crown Stars, 2013). The retail supply chain comprises of manufacturers, wholesalers, retailers and end users. The roles played by the key players in the typical supply chain consists of:

- Manufacturers: Production of goods, use of machinery, raw materials and labour
- Wholesalers: Purchase of finished goods followed by bulk sales to retailers
- Retailers: Sells goods in small quantities to end users at higher prices, theoretically at the Manufacturers Suggested Retail Price (MSRP)
- Consumer: The end user that purchases the goods from the retailer for use (Farfan, 2019)

Indian Retail Sector is evolving and growing at a very rapid pace and is stipulated by the exuberant and sturdy economy, promising demography, the ever increasing standard of living, the rapid changing lifestyles and consumer aspirations for the growing youth and middle income class (Ranganathan, 2019). India's present retail sector is experiencing a vivacious change. Aggressive market programs for expansion of retail and development of shopping centers or announcement of new ventures with foreign retailers (Kearny, 2011). The optimistic boom in retail sector comes with remarkable real estate opportunities as the emerging retail markets are undergoing structural changes at a fast pace. The demographic and economic statistics emphasizing on the progressive expansion of India's retail sector is a real excitement (Ranganathan, 2019).

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Moore & Fairhurst (2003) in their study of capabilities and performances of fashion retailing examined the effectiveness of different marketing aspects of the United States speciality apparel and footwear retail sector. They found that in order to be competitive in the market, it is necessary for the retail units to develop and leverage core marketing capabilities. They concluded that executives in the fashion sector to focus on differentiation in the marketplace since it is one of the most relevant factor for growth.

Mehta, A (2012) studied the role of retail entrepreneurship in Indian Rural retailing. The study aimed to find the impact of unorganized retailing among small vendors in rural India. The study found that the overall market is impacted by level of employment, quantity of consumers, impact of prices and the overall impact on economic growth.

Ramaswamy (2013) studied the marketing problems faced by entrepreneurs involved in handloom. The study found that the core marketing problem lie due to the overly dependence on retail outlets to market and sell their products at a higher profit margin. The study showed that the marketing aspect of handlooms are losing the three C's of distribution management i.e. Coverage of the market, Controlling the channel members and cost of channel management.

Rakhmatia and Riyanto (2016) studied the role of strategic retail marketing to gain competitive advantage and suggested that marketers should focus more and more on their strategic marketing and devote more resources through meeting customer needs, deliver high value to customers and the usage of available resources.

Maziriri et al (2019) in their study of key drivers that influence store choice in the Contemporary Apparel Retail Market and found that store atmosphere and merchandise availability are the key drivers of influence. The study also revealed merchandise availability is also a major factor in apparel market solution.

3. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

a. To study the market planning of Apparel Retailers
b. To identify retailer-supplier relationship

4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Method of Study: The study is an Exploratory Research to understand in detail the concept and extent of Apparel retail marketing in Aizawl City

Data Collection:

Primary Data: The study depends mostly on primary data sources. Primary data is collected through structured questionnaire for Apparel retailers in Aizawl City who are registered under the Department of Taxation, Government of Mizoram.

Secondary Data: Secondary data is collected from Government reports i.e Statistical Handbooks, Taxation Department, Govt. of Mizoram, reports of previous researches, academic journals, trade associations, magazines, newspapers and records of small-scale retail units proposed to be studied.

Scope of Coverage: The study covers small scale apparel retail units in Aizawl City who are Tax Assesses under the Department of Taxation, Government of Mizoram

Area of Coverage: The area of study is limited to Aizawl City.

Sample Size: 30 apparel retail units

5. ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

Analysis of Demography

Table 1 presents the demography of Apparel Retailers where 30 have been selected and studied.

Table 1: Demography of Retailers: Apparel

Type of Retailers	Criteria	Frequency
Total	**Apparels**	**30**
	Total	**30**
Age	**Criteria**	**Frequency**
	Below 20	0 (0.0)
	21-30	19 (63.3)
	31-40	5 (16.7)
	41-50	3 (10.0)
	51-60	3(10.0)

	Above 60	0 (0.0)
	Total	**30**
Gender	**Criteria**	**Frequency**
	Male	7 (23.3)
	Female	23 (76.4)
	Total	**30**
Education	**Criteria**	**Frequency**
	Primary	1 (3.3)
	Secondary	8 (27.7)
	Graduate	13 (43.3)
	Post Graduate	6 (20.0)
	Above Post Graduate	2 (6.7)
	Total	**30**
Annual Income	**Criteria**	**Frequency**
	Below 3 lakhs	3 (10.0)
	3 lakhs – 6 lakhs	10 (33.3)
	6 lakhs – 9 lakhs	6 (20.0)
	9 lakhs – 12 lakhs	3 (10.0)
	12 lakhs – 15 lakhs	2 (6.7)
	Above 15 lakhs	6 (20.0)
	Total	**30**

Source: Primary Data

Mizoram especially Aizawl being influenced highly by the western culture and fashion, apparel retailing is growing at a rapid rate. Nearly two-third of the retailers are below the age between 21 to 30. It can be inferred that it is most common among the females since majority of the retailers are women. Mizoram being a highly literate state(92.11%), all respondents are literate with almost two-third of the respondents having graduated. The highest level of income is between 3 to 6 lakhs.

Analysis of Market Planning of Apparel Retailing
Table 2 presents the factors that influence the selection of location of apparel business
Table2: Factors Influencing Selection of Location of Business

Particulars	Weighted Data
Close to Residence	20
Weighted Mean	**1.82**
% to MPS	60.66
Cluster of Similar Business	55
Weighted Mean	**2.04**
% to MPS	68
Potential for Growth	76
Weighted Mean	**2.62**
% to MPS	87.33
Low Rent	18
Weighted Mean	**1.29**
% to MPS	43
Less Competition	6
Weighted Mean	**1.00**
% to MPS	33.33
Own Property	5

Weighted Mean	**1.67**
% to MPS	55.66

Source: Primary Data

Under the apparel retailing the main factor for selection of location of business is due to the potential for growth of such business at mean value of 2.62 with a weighted score of 76 at 87.33% to MPS. The second most influencing factor is due to the presence of a cluster of similar business at mean value 2.04 with a weighted score of 55 at 68% to MPS. The third factor is due to the close proximity of residence at mean value of 1.82 with weighted score of 20 at 60.66% to MPS.

Table 3 presents the various methods of sales forecasting adopted by the retailers' understudy.

Table 3: Methods of Sales Forecasting:

Criteria	Apparel
Personal Judgement	19 (63.3)
Trend Analysis of Past Sales	6 (20.0)
Survey of Customer Requirements	13 (43.3)
Other Methods	4 (13.3)

Source: Primary Data

Under this retail understudy, the main method of forecasting sales is through personal judgement at 63.3% and second main method of sales forecasting is through the survey of customer requirements at 43.3%. The third method of forecasting is through the trend analysis of past sales at 20%.

Table 4 provides an overview of the places of acquisition of products of the retail businesses under studys

Table 4: Places of Acquisition of Products

Criteria	f/%
Within Mizoram	1 (3.3)
Mizoram and Other States in India	5 (16.7)
Abroad	16 (53.3)
India and Abroad	8 (26.7)

Source: Primary Data

Under this retail business, the main place of acquiring the products is abroad at 53.3% followed by India and Abroad at 26.7%.

Table 5 provides the information on modes of transport of acquirement of products of the retail businesses under study.

Table 5: Mode of Transport of Acquiring Products

Criteria	Apparel
Road	19 (63.3)
Rail and Road	0 (0.0)
Air Transport	5 (16.7)
Road and Air Transport	6 (20.0)

Source: Primary Data

Under this retail business, 63.3% of them acquire products by road, 20% by road and air transport and 16.7% acquire products through air transport only.

Table 6 presents the analysis of the retailers' understudy on their strategies adopted to face competition.

Table 6: Strategies adopted to face Competition

Particulars	Apparel
Product Range	20
Weighted Mean	**1.82**
% to MPS	60.67
Credit Facility to Customers	6
Weighted Mean	**1.20**
% to MPS	40.00
Pricing	38
Weighted Mean	**1.71**
% to MPS	57
Quality	60
Weighted Mean	**2.40**
% to MPS	80
Promotion	16
Weighted Mean	**2.00**
% to MPS	66.66
After Sales Services	12
Weighted Mean	**2.40**
% to MPS	80
Building Image of Shop	24
Weighted Mean	**2.18**
% to MPS	72.66

Source: Primary Data

Under this retail business, the main strategy of facing competition is by providing quality products and after sales services at mean value of 2.49 with 80% to MPS respectively which is followed by building of image of the shop at mean value of 2.18 at 72.66% to MPS. The third strategy is by promotion of products at mean value of 2.00 with weighted score of 16 at 66.66% to MPS.

Analysis of Retailer-Supplier Relationship

Table 7 presents the various factors considered by the retailers under study for the selection of suppliers.

Table 7: Factors considered for Selection of Suppliers

Particulars	Apparel
Easy Approach	37
Weighted Mean	**1.76**
% to MPS	58.66
Reasonable Prices	42
Weighted Mean	**2.10**
% to MPS	70
Credit Facility	6
Weighted Mean	**1.50**
% to MPS	50
Timely Supply	15
Weighted Mean	**1.50**
% to MPS	50
Free Delivery	34
Weighted Mean	**2.25**
% to MPS	75
Standard Quality	53
Weighted Mean	**2.52**
% to MPS	84
Technical Assistance	4

Weighted Mean	**2.00**
% to MPS	66.66
Promotion by Supplier	6
Weighted Mean	**2.00**
% to MPS	66.66

Source: Primary Data

Under apparel retail business, the main factor considered for selection of suppliers is the provision of standard quality products at mean value of 2.52 with weighted score of 53 at 84% to MPS followed by free delivery services of suppliers at mean value 2.25 with weighted score of 34 at 75% to MPS. The third main factor is the supply at reasonable prices at mean value of 2.10 with weighted score of 42 at 70% to MPS.

Table 8 presents the means of satisfying the suppliers' expectations by retailers under study.

Table 8: Means of Satisfying Suppliers' Expectation

Particulars	Apparel
Achieving Sales Target	19
Weighted Mean	**1.58**
% to MPS	52.66
Maintaining Personal Contact	32
Weighted Mean	**1.60**
% to MPS	53.33
Prompt Payment	64
Weighted Mean	**2.37**
% to MPS	79
Placing Regular Orders	53
Weighted Mean	**2.30**
% to MPS	76.66
Supply of Market Intelligence	10
Weighted Mean	**1.67**
% to MPS	55.66
Other Means	2
Weighted Mean	**1.00**
% to MPS	33.33

Source: Primary Data

Under this retail business under study, the main means of satisfying suppliers is through prompt payment of products with mean value of 2.37 with weighted score of 64 at 79% to MPS followed by placement of regular orders at mean value of 2.30 at 76.66% to MPS. The third means of satisfying suppliers is through the supply of market intelligence with mean value of 1.67 at 55.66% to MPS.

Table 9 presents the different problems faced by the retailers when dealing with suppliers of their goods.

Table 9: Problems faced from Suppliers

Particulars	Apparel
Delivery of Required Products	59
Weighted Mean	**2.46**
% to MPS	82
Replacement of Damaged Products	39
Weighted Mean	**2.05**
% to MPS	68.33
Credit Facility	11
Weighted Mean	**1.38**
% to MPS	46

Fixing of Unrealistic Sales Target	12
Weighted Mean	**2.00**
% to MPS	66.66
Irregular/ Insufficient Supply	24
Weighted Mean	**1.85**
% to MPS	61.66
Variation in Supply of Agreed Quality	11
Weighted Mean	**1.38**
% to MPS	46
Other Problems	7
Weighted Mean	**2.33**
% to MPS	77.66

Source: Primary Data

Under this retail business, the main problem faced by the retailers from the suppliers in the delivery of required products with mean value of 2.46 at 82% to MPS with weighted score of 59 followed by the problem of replacement of damaged goods at mean value of 2.05 at 68.33% to MPS. The third main problem faced by the retailers is the fixing of unrealistic prices by suppliers at mean value of 2.00 at 66.66% to MPS with weighted score of 39.

Table 10 presents the mode of expressing discontentment/ dissatisfaction with suppliers by the retailers under study.

Table 10: Expression of Discontentment/ Dissatisfaction with Suppliers

Particulars	Apparel
Through Messages	34
Weighted Mean	**2.27**
% to MPS	75.66
Through E-mail	19
Weighted Mean	**1.90**
% to MPS	63.33
Through Phone Call	46
Weighted Mean	**1.92**
% to MPS	64
Through Supply Agents	20
Weighted Mean	**2.00**
% to MPS	66.66
Stop Purchase	20
Weighted Mean	**2.00**
% to MPS	66.66
In Person	22
Weighted Mean	**2.00**
% to MPS	66.66
Other Modes	1
Weighted Mean	**1.00**
% to MPS	33.33

Source: Primary Data

Under this retail business, the main mode of expression of discontentment is through messages with mean value of 2.27 at 75.66% to MPS with weighted score of 34 followed by expression through supply agents, by stopping purchase and in person with mean value of 2.00 at 66.66% to MPS respectively.

6.   FINDINGS

- Mizoram being one of the highest literacy states among all of India, all retailers are literates with nearly two third of the retailers' understudy having a graduate degree with only 3.3% with primary education. Apparel sector is also dominated by women entrepreneurs at 76% implying that the sector is dived in more by women rather than men.
- Growth is focused by the apparel retailers since majority of them infer that their store location selection is based on its potential for growth. Fashion being a booming business in Mizoram especially in Aizawl, the focus and factor is greatly justified from the study.
- Sales forecasting is mainly done through personal judgement and survey of customers. It can be inferred that most retailers are confident enough to do forecast by themselves rather then doing scientific trend analysis of the current market.
- With Mizoram lacking behind in industries and production center, more than half of the retailers acquire products from abroad with China and Thailand as the main suppliers of apparel goods. Only a meagre 3.3% procure products from Mizoram.
- With railways not yet connected to the state, nearly two-third of the products are acquired by road and around 20% acquire through both air and road. Air transport costs are very high and hence most products acquired through air are more likely to be priced higher.
- Quality products and after sales service constitute the highest when it comes to facing competition which is a very positive strategy especially form a consumers' point of view. Image of the shop is also one of the ways to tackle competition which kind of infers the superficiality since there are more pressing strategies that can be adopted to face competition such as credit facilities and pricing.
- Standard quality and free delivery services were ranked as the main factor for selection of suppliers which is in fact a very positive finding since it can be inferred that retailers prefer to sell only quality products to their customers.
- Prompt payment is the main means to satisfy the suppliers by the retailers followed by placement of regular orders implying that most suppliers do not give credit facility or give only short-term credit facility.
- Delivery of required products ranked the main problem faced by retailers which is quite common especially during the pandemic as well as the Mizoram-Assam border clash. Delivery being mostly by road and products being acquired mostly from abroad, products tend to be delivered on longer time period.
- Discontentment is mainly communicated to the suppliers through messages followed by stopping purchase altogether. It can be seen that most retailers have faced uncertainties from their suppliers since all respondents have shown discontentment one way or another. Due to the fact that 100% of products are produced and sourced from outside Mizoram, problems are prone for every retailer understudy.
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7.   SUGGESTIONS

From the findings and observation of the study, the following are put forward to the retailers and suppliers with special focus to Aizawl city.

a. Sales forecasting of retailers should be based more on consumer wants and needs rather than personal judgement so that satisfaction could increase at a higher scale.

b. Production centers and industries should be set up be it small or large scale to Mizoram so as to decrease imports from abroad and outside the state.

c. Free delivery and availability of credit to credible retailers should to introduced more by the suppliers so as to increase supply and satisfaction among the retailers.

d. Transport facilities should be introduced in an efficient, systematic and prompt manner especially by logistic companies as it provided a wide scope of business in Mizoram.
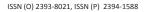
CONCLUSION

Retail is a world in itself. Possibly older than the oldest profession to date. There is a little bit of retail in everything that we see, touch, smell, taste and experience. To that extent, retail is a sensorial part of our daily life. Everything that is bought or sold reaches out to us through this very intermediary process called as retail. Every market place, physical or digital is retail. And every enterprise, whether it be an economic, commercial, religious, political or social, markets itself through this intermediary. Retail is that point where buyer meets seller. And there are sellers everywhere, just as there are buyers every where in society.

With that said, Mizoram especially Aizawl, being highly influenced by the western culture dating back to the 1890's with the British Missionaries coming to Mizoram that led to the boom and love for western culture especially when it

comes to fashion, apparel marketing can be said to be one of the biggest retail sector both in market dominance and capital investment. The apparel retailers have played a great role in the Mizoram marketand it can be seen from the study that a great and ideal plan is being taken up by the retailers in-terms of marketing as well as the suppliers which plays a great role since more than two third of apparel products sold in Mizoram are from suppliers of India (outside Mizoram) and abroad.

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