

Lack of consumer awareness and Its effect on khadi apparel sales: An empirical study of marketing challenges in Coimbatore

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Abstract

Khadi is a hand-spun, hand-woven Indian textile associated with rural employment, self-reliance, and sustainable fashion, yet its market performance in urban centres continues to lag behind synthetic and fast-fashion apparel. This study empirically examines one specific and frequently cited marketing challenge: the extent to which low consumer awareness of khadi products affects apparel sales. Using a descriptive research design, primary data were collected from 109 khadi apparel marketers and retailers in Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu, through a structured questionnaire, and respondents' perceptions were measured on a five-point agreement scale. Simple percentage analysis shows that 67.0% of respondents agree or highly agree that lack of consumer awareness affects khadi sales, against only 7.3% who disagree, with a mean perception score of 3.82 (SD = 0.92) on a five-point scale. A one-sample t-test against the scale midpoint ($t(108) = 9.26, p < 0.001$) and a chi-square goodness-of-fit test against an equal-distribution null ($\chi^2(4) = 61.14, p < 0.001$) both confirm that this pattern of agreement is statistically significant rather than attributable to chance or response randomness. The findings indicate that low consumer awareness is a statistically substantiated and practically significant marketing challenge constraining khadi apparel sales in the study area. Implications for awareness-building strategy among khadi marketing institutions are discussed.

Keywords: Khadi apparel, consumer awareness, marketing challenges, sales performance, Coimbatore, empirical study

Introduction

Khadi occupies a distinctive position in the Indian textile economy. Produced through hand-spinning and hand-weaving of natural fibers, it is promoted by the Khadi and Village Industries Commission (KVIC) as an eco-friendly, employment-generating alternative to mass-manufactured synthetic and power-loom textiles. Despite sustained institutional promotion, khadi apparel continues to face difficulty competing with branded and fast-fashion clothing in urban retail markets.

Coimbatore, one of Tamil Nadu's principal textile and garment hubs, provides a useful setting in which to examine this difficulty, since it combines a well-developed apparel retail infrastructure with an active khadi marketing presence. Marketers operating in this environment routinely cite consumer awareness — or the lack of it — as a central obstacle to sales growth, alongside pricing, design, and

competitive pressure. However, such claims are often asserted rather than empirically tested.

This paper isolates and empirically tests one specific marketing-challenge item: the proposition that a lack of consumer awareness about khadi products affects sales. Rather than treating this as an assumed truism, the paper analyses primary survey data collected from khadi marketers and retailers to establish whether the perception that awareness deficits harm sales is statistically well-founded, and how strongly marketers themselves subscribe to this view.

Review of Literature

A focused review of prior studies bearing directly on consumer awareness of khadi products is presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Review of Literature on Consumer Awareness of Khadi Products

S. No	Year	Author(s)	Focus / Findings
1	2024	Gandhi	Lack of modern marketing and weak branding restrict urban sales growth of khadi apparel.
2	2024	Sharma & Verma	Consumer awareness of khadi products is low; poor advertising results in weak brand recall among youth.
3	2022	Mehta & Shah	Consumers largely perceive khadi as traditional or occasional wear, limiting regular demand.
4	2022	Anand & Priya	Awareness of government support schemes for khadi remains low among consumers and marketers alike.
5	2020	Bose	Greater eco-friendly / sustainability awareness is associated with higher preference for khadi.

The reviewed studies converge on the view that low consumer awareness recurs as a constraint on khadi's market performance. Weak branding and limited modern marketing have been linked to restricted urban sales growth (Gandhi, 2024) ^[6], while poor advertising has been associated with weak brand recall among younger consumers (Sharma & Verma, 2024) ^[10]. Many consumers continue to perceive

khadi primarily as traditional or occasional wear rather than everyday apparel (Mehta & Shah, 2022) ^[9], and awareness of government schemes supporting khadi remains limited among both consumers and marketers (Anand & Priya, 2022) ^[1]. Conversely, greater eco-friendly and sustainability awareness has been shown to increase consumer preference for khadi (Bose, 2020) ^[5]. Taken together, these findings

indicate that awareness gaps are particularly pronounced among younger, urban consumers exposed to heavily advertised competing brands, and provide the empirical and theoretical basis for the present study's narrower focus.

Research Gap and Objective

While the broader literature on khadi marketing challenges (pricing, design, branding, competition, digital marketing) is well documented, few studies isolate and statistically test the specific claim that low consumer awareness affects sales, as distinct from simply listing it among other challenges. This study addresses that gap with a single, sharply defined objective: to empirically examine, using primary data from khadi marketers and retailers in Coimbatore, whether lack of consumer awareness about khadi products is perceived to significantly affect apparel sales, and to test the statistical significance of this perception.

Hypotheses

H₀ (Null Hypothesis): Respondents' agreement that lack of consumer awareness affects khadi apparel sales does not differ significantly from a neutral / chance response pattern.
H₁ (Alternative Hypothesis): Respondents' agreement that lack of consumer awareness affects khadi apparel sales differs significantly from a neutral / chance response pattern, indicating a genuine perceived effect on sales.

Research Methodology

1. Research Design

The study adopts a descriptive research design, appropriate for measuring the existing pattern of perceptions among khadi marketers and retailers regarding the effect of

consumer awareness on sales, without manipulating any variable.

2. Population and Sample

The population comprises khadi apparel marketers, retailers, wholesalers, and sellers operating in Coimbatore city. A non-probability convenience sampling method was used to select 109 respondents, based on accessibility and willingness to participate.

3. Data Collection

Primary data were collected through a structured questionnaire administered both online and offline. The relevant survey item measured agreement with the statement "Lack of consumer awareness about khadi products affects sales" on a five-point scale ranging from Highly Disagree (1) to Highly Agree (5).

4. Tools of Analysis

Responses were analysed using simple percentage analysis to describe the distribution of agreement, and two inferential tests were computed directly from the reported frequency distribution to establish statistical significance: (i) a one-sample t-test comparing the mean perception score against the scale midpoint of 3 (neutral), and (ii) a chi-square goodness-of-fit test comparing the observed frequency distribution against a null of equal distribution across the five response categories. A significance level of 0.05 was used for both tests.

Data Analysis and Results

1. Frequency and Percentage Distribution

Table 2: Lack of Consumer Awareness about Khadi Products Affects Sales (Challenges in Marketing)

Response Category	Frequency	Percent (%)	Valid Percent (%)	Cumulative Percent (%)
Highly Disagree	2	1.8	1.8	1.8
Disagree	6	5.5	5.5	7.3
Neutral	28	25.7	25.7	33.0
Agree	47	43.1	43.1	76.1
Highly Agree	26	23.9	23.9	100.0
Total	109	100.0	100.0	—

Table 2 shows that a combined 67.0% of respondents agree (43.1%) or highly agree (23.9%) that lack of consumer awareness affects khadi apparel sales, while only 7.3% disagree or highly disagree (5.5% and 1.8% respectively), and 25.7% remain neutral. The distribution is markedly skewed toward agreement rather than symmetric around the neutral category.

2. Graphical Representation

The chart visually confirms the pattern in Table 2: response volume rises sharply through the Agree and Highly Agree categories and falls off toward the Disagree end of the scale, reinforcing the impression of a clearly skewed, agreement-dominated distribution rather than a flat or symmetric one.

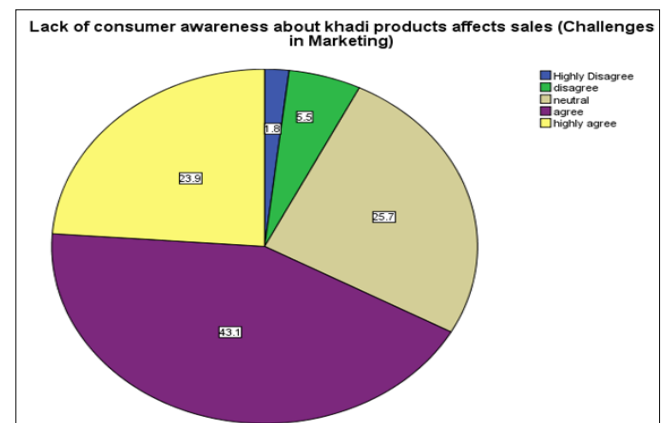


Chart 1: Lack of Consumer Awareness about Khadi Products Affects Sales

3. Descriptive and Inferential Statistics

Table 3: Descriptive and Inferential Statistics for the Awareness–Sales Perception Item

Statistic	Value
Sample size (N)	109
Mean perception score (1 = Highly Disagree, 5 = Highly Agree)	3.82
Standard deviation (SD)	0.92
Test value (scale midpoint / neutral point)	3.00
One-sample t-statistic (df = 108)	9.26
p-value (two-tailed)	< 0.001
Chi-square goodness-of-fit (df = 4), test of equal distribution across categories	61.14
p-value (chi-square)	< 0.001

Treating the five response categories as an ordinal scale scored 1 to 5, the mean perception score is 3.82 (SD = 0.92), indicating that the average respondent's view lies between "Neutral" and "Agree," closer to "Agree." A one-sample t-test comparing this mean against the scale midpoint of 3 yields $t(108) = 9.26$, $p < 0.001$, indicating that the mean level of agreement is significantly higher than a neutral position. A chi-square goodness-of-fit test comparing the observed frequencies (2, 6, 28, 47, 26) against an expected equal distribution (21.8 per category) yields $\chi^2(4) = 61.14$, $p < 0.001$, confirming that responses are not randomly or uniformly distributed across categories but are concentrated in the agreement categories.

On the basis of both tests, the null hypothesis (H_0) is rejected in favour of the alternative hypothesis (H_1): respondents' agreement that lack of consumer awareness affects khadi apparel sales is statistically significant and is not attributable to chance.

Discussion

The results provide statistical support for a claim that is frequently made informally in the khadi marketing literature but rarely tested directly: that insufficient consumer awareness is not merely one item on a list of marketing challenges, but a challenge that marketers themselves perceive, with high consensus and statistical significance, as materially affecting sales. This is consistent with prior findings that low brand recall among younger consumers stems from weak advertising (Sharma & Verma, 2024)^[10], and that awareness of khadi's sustainability and heritage value is a precondition for stronger consumer preference (Bose, 2020)^[5].

The relatively small neutral segment (25.7%) and small disagreement segment (7.3%) suggest that very few marketers view awareness as an unimportant factor, which strengthens the practical, and not merely statistical, significance of the finding. In a market such as Coimbatore, where khadi competes directly with a dense concentration of branded and fast-fashion retail options, marketers' near-consensus view that awareness gaps depress sales points to a specific and addressable lever, rather than a diffuse and unmanageable set of competitive pressures.

Managerial and Policy Implications

- Khadi retailers and KVIC-affiliated institutions in Coimbatore should prioritize sustained consumer awareness campaigns (exhibitions, promotional events, in-store education) rather than treating awareness-building as a secondary activity behind pricing or design interventions.

- Given the statistically significant skew toward agreement across the sample, awareness campaigns can be justified as a core strategic investment rather than a peripheral promotional expense, since the perceived link to sales is not a minority or marginal view among marketers.
- Awareness-building efforts should specifically address the gap between khadi's actual attributes (durability, sustainability, cultural value) and consumers' current, often limited, understanding of them, since prior literature indicates this gap is most pronounced among younger, urban consumers.
- Digital and social media channels should be considered alongside traditional exhibitions and government-scheme promotion, given the well-documented weak digital presence of khadi marketing noted in the broader literature (Anand & Priya, 2022; Gandhi, 2024)^[1, 6].

Limitations of the Study

The study is confined to khadi marketers and retailers in Coimbatore city and relies on a convenience sample of 109 respondents; findings may not generalize to other regions or to end consumers themselves, whose awareness levels were not directly measured in this study. The analysis is based on self-reported marketer perception of the awareness–sales relationship rather than on objective sales records or consumer-side awareness testing, and should be interpreted as evidence of a strongly and significantly held perception rather than a direct causal measurement of sales impact.

Conclusion

This study set out to empirically test a single, specific marketing-challenge claim: that a lack of consumer awareness about khadi products affects sales. Based on primary data from 109 khadi marketers and retailers in Coimbatore, the evidence strongly supports this claim. A substantial majority (67.0%) of respondents agree or highly agree with the statement, the mean perception score (3.82) is significantly above the scale's neutral midpoint ($t(108) = 9.26$, $p < 0.001$), and the overall response distribution is significantly skewed away from a chance pattern ($\chi^2(4) = 61.14$, $p < 0.001$). Lack of consumer awareness therefore emerges not as an assumed but as a statistically substantiated marketing challenge facing khadi apparel sales in this market, underscoring the strategic importance of sustained, well-targeted awareness-building initiatives for khadi institutions and retailers.

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