

The Role of Design Principles in Consumer Textile Selection: An Empirical Study of Aesthetic Decision-Making

Abdul Hafeez¹ and Majid Ghaffor²

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Abstract

This quantitative research examines the perception of fundamental design elements in consumer choice of textiles, specifically aesthetic considerations. Through a survey of 47 design-focused consumers, this study looks at how the factors of color, pattern, texture, and symmetry influence textile choices, and how they compare with other more functional attributes, like price and brand. The results reveal design is a significant driver of consumer decisions and, at times, is preferred over more functional aspects. Of the design attributes, the most important was color; 89.4% of the participants considered it an important element in their textile selection. Texture and pattern also play a significant role, as they impact both aesthetic and functional attributes. There was greater diversity in responses to symmetry, with consumers perhaps becoming more drawn to contemporary, adaptable and less formal designs. The research also reveals cultural influences in aesthetic decision-making, demonstrating that design is not only subjective but also cultural. This study is consistent with current views on visual and aesthetic perception, highlighting balance, harmony and appeal as crucial aspects of textile design. These findings offer useful guidance for designers and textile professionals in creating attractive, meaningful, and consumer-friendly textile products.

Keywords: Textile Selection, Aesthetic Perception, Consumer Decision-Making, Design Elements, Visual Evaluation, Cultural Context

Introduction

Consumer choice in the purchasing of textiles and garments is complex and relies on a combination of aesthetic and functional product attributes. As markets become increasingly design-driven, sensory and aesthetic product attributes are increasingly impacting consumer choice, rather than more utilitarian product attributes such as price, quality or brand. In particular, the elemental principles of design - namely, color, pattern, texture, symmetry and proportion - play a critical role in consumers' evaluation of product quality, desirability and appeal.

Design principles are the principles of visual communication, which also determine the organization and meaning of elements in a textile design. Indeed, color is a key element in evoking emotions and forming initial impressions of products. Studies in the areas of color psychology and visual perception have shown that Color draws attention, communicates meanings and feelings, and influences consumer behavior (Elliot & Maier, 2020). There's also motif and pattern, which are part of the aesthetics of textiles and can convey style, complexity and tradition. Research has

¹Department of Design, University of Gujrat, Gujrat. Corresponding Author Email: majid.ghaffoor@uoq.edu.pk

²Department of Design, University of Gujrat, Gujrat. Email: abdul.hafeez@uoq.edu.pk



also shown that customers are attracted to both novel and familiar patterns and this highlights the importance of visual continuity.

And there is texture which is visual and physical. It is able to influence aesthetic preferences, comfort and quality. Studies have shown that customers could anticipate the tactile properties of products on the basis of the visual properties (smoothness and fabric quality), and that the visual or anticipated tactile sensations may enhance product perceptions (Mirjalili & Hardeberg, 2019). So, texture bridges visual and tactile attributes to enhance the sensory enjoyment of textile products.

Conventionally, Gestalt psychology, as well as design principles, associate balance, harmony and aesthetic pleasure with symmetry and proportion. But recent research suggests contemporary consumer preferences may not be restricted to symmetry, as they may also include a certain degree of asymmetry and novelty. While symmetrical textures are often perceived as harmonious and stable, a little asymmetry can be used to create novelty and dynamic effects in textile and fashion design (Reber et al., 2021).

Besides these design features, cultural and psychological factors also influence aesthetic appeal. Colors, shapes and patterns are perceived differently in different cultures, as they may carry cultural meanings. Multicultural studies have demonstrated that consumer preferences are strongly influenced by cultural context and the design process should take culture into account (Wan et al., 2021). Additionally, consumer research indicates that, in many situations, aesthetic appeal is a key factor in consumer decision-making, as consumers often respond more to aesthetic appeal and enjoyment than to other attributes (Bloch et al., 2023).

Although the impact of design principles on consumer behavior has been attracting growing attention, there is a need for empirical studies which evaluate the significance of design principles in textile choice. Existing studies tend to look at single design elements or general consumer trends, rather than the integration of multiple design variables (Luchs et al., 2016). Further, integrated research that predicts consumer choice through self-reported data and visual analyses is needed to understand consumer behavior.

This study aims to address these gaps by exploring the impact of design principles on consumer choice of textiles and decision-making. The aim of the research is to explore the role of design principles, such as Color, pattern, texture and symmetry as well as functional elements such as price and brand, in consumer decision-making to provide a comprehensive understanding of textile choice. Moreover, the study includes visual preference assessments to include subconscious decision-making, and to gain insight into the consumer response to textile designs in a real-world context.

The aim of this study is to explore the impact of design principles on consumers' purchase of textile products, especially in terms of aesthetics. Specifically, it seeks to establish the influence of design elements on consumer preference, to establish the relative importance of aesthetic and functional attributes, and to investigate the effects of culture on design. Further, it aims to investigate the relationship between consumer preference and visual preference, thus providing empirical evidence of the relationship between design and consumer behavior in the textile sector.

Material and Methods

This chapter describes the methodology adopted to investigate the influence of design principles on consumer choice of textiles. A quantitative methodology was used to gather and examine data from participants using a questionnaire. The objective of the research design was to allow for a

comprehensive assessment of how consumers consider both aesthetic and functional aspects of design.

Research Design

This research takes a quantitative, cross-sectional approach to examine the effects of design principles on textiles and aesthetic choices. A questionnaire was designed to gather information from the sample to understand their perceptions of textiles in terms of aesthetic and functional preferences. This allows an evaluation of the interaction between design principles (color, pattern, texture, symmetry) and preference.

Participants

A convenience sample of 47 volunteers ($N = 47$) was asked. The sample consisted of primarily design consumers, including students and individuals with an interest in textiles, fashion or design. This was because they were familiar with aesthetic terminology and its relevance to the study of design-oriented decision making.

This was a non-probability, convenience sample because of time and availability constraints. Convenience sampling is not a good method for generalising the results but is acceptable for an exploratory study of preferences of a population.

Data Collection Procedure

The survey was conducted using an online instrument (Google Forms). The survey was distributed via online through academic and social networks, and consumers could complete the survey at their own convenience. Data was collected over a specified time period, during which time the respondents were aware of the research being undertaken. Survey responses were anonymous, and participants were not asked to provide personal details, ensuring confidentiality and promoting truthful responses.

Research Instrument (Questionnaire Design)

A questionnaire was designed to cover a range of aspects of consumer textile choices. The questionnaire had multiple sections:

1. *Demographic Data:* Personal information (age, gender, educational background)
2. *Importance of Aesthetic Attributes:* Questions about the importance of color, pattern, texture, and symmetry
3. *Preference Questions:* Choice of preferred color schemes, patterns, and textures
4. *Behavioral Questions:* Assessing decision-making processes, including a trade-off between design and non-design factors (e.g., price, comfort, brand)
5. *Ranking Questions:* Ranking of quality aspects such as color combination, fabric quality, price, and brand
6. *Visual Preference:* Choice between alternative textile designs (A/B/C) to assess implicit aesthetic preferences

Questions were primarily designed to be answered using a Likert scale, multiple-choice, and ranking to facilitate analysis.

Variables of the Study

The study includes the following variables:

Independent Variables (Design Principles): Color, Pattern, Texture and Symmetry and proportion

Dependent Variable: Consumer textile choice and preference.

Moderating Variable: Cultural effect on design preference

Control Variables (where applicable): Demographic characteristics

Data Analysis Techniques

We used descriptive statistics to analyze the data. Data was presented using:

1. Frequencies and percentages to detect patterns in preferences
2. Rankings and relative importance of quality indicators
3. Comparative visual choices analysis to measure decision-making processes

The findings were presented visually, through charts, table and graphical displays to interpret trends and associations between variables.

Ethical Considerations

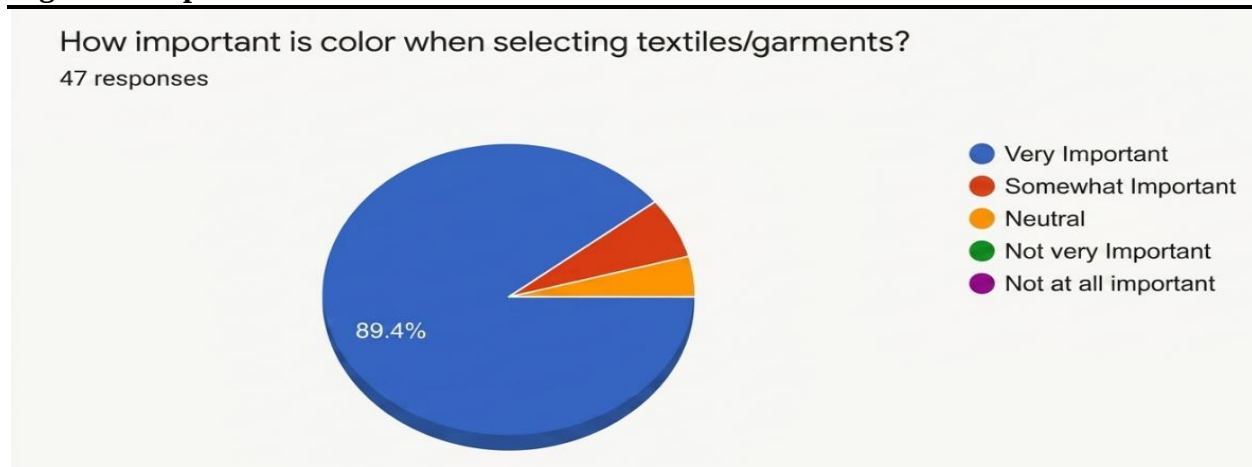
The research adhered to typical ethical standards. Consent was fully voluntary and participants were briefed about the research before the survey. Personal or sensitive information was not gathered, and the data were anonymous. The information was only used for research purposes.

Results and Discussion

This chapter reports and examines the results as they relate to the research questions on the impact of design principles on consumer choice of textiles. The results are discussed in terms of: design elements, consumer perceptions, composition, consumer decision-making, culture and visual assessment. The use of descriptive statistics and visual preference allows us to explore the relationship between the aesthetic and functional aspects of consumer choice.

Importance of Design Elements in Textile Selection

Figure 1: Importance of Color in Textile Selection

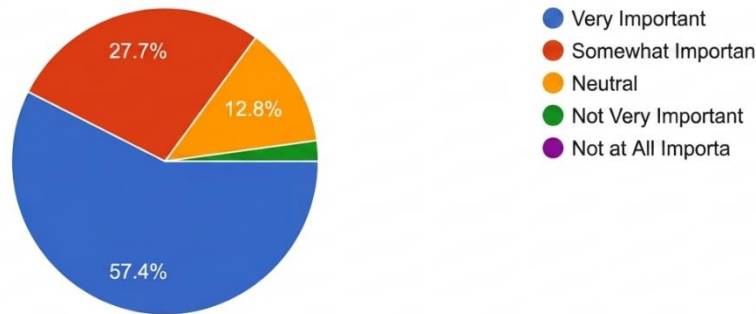


In the results, in figure 1, it is shown that Color is the most important design element as 89.4% rated it as very important. This suggests the dominant role of Color in first impressions and attention grabbing.

Figure 2: Importance of Pattern in Textile Selection

How important is the pattern in your selection process for textiles/garments?

47 responses

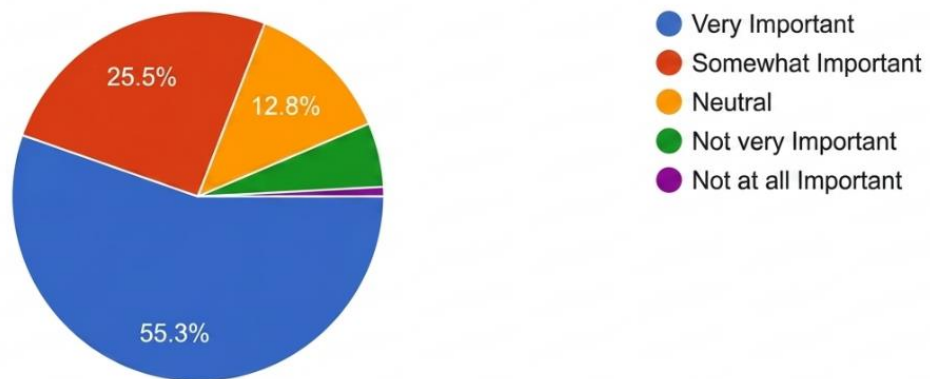


In figure 2, pattern is also revealed to be an important element as 57.4% answered it as very important. This suggests that pattern is important to differentiate and identify textile products.

Figure 3: Importance of Texture in Textile Selection

How important is texture when selecting textiles/garments?

47 responses



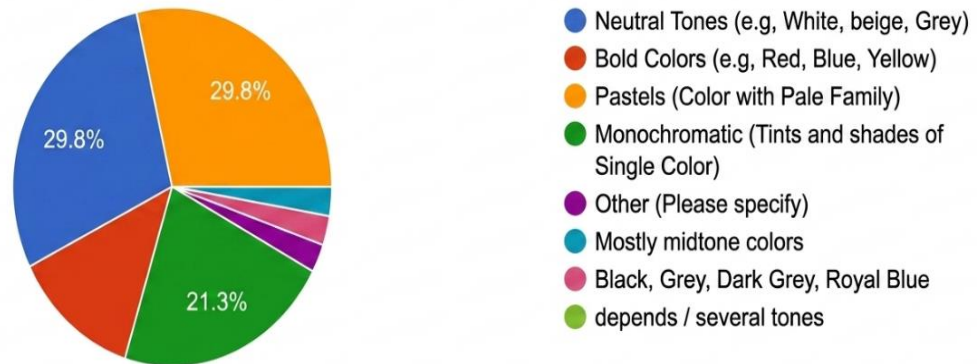
Another important element as demonstrated in figure 3 is texture where 55.3% claimed it as very important element, which demonstrates its role in aesthetics and comfort.

Consumer Preferences for Design Attributes

Figure 4: Preferred Color Palettes

What Type of Color palette you usually prefer?

47 responses

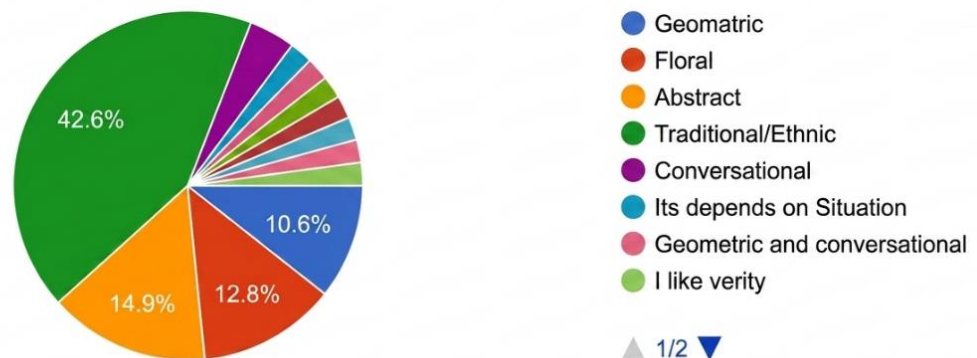


Most of the respondents preferred neutral and soft pastel colors in figure 4, followed by monochrome colors, which suggests harmony and balance in designs.

Figure 5: Preferred Pattern Types

Which type of pattern do you prefer for textiles/garments?

47 responses

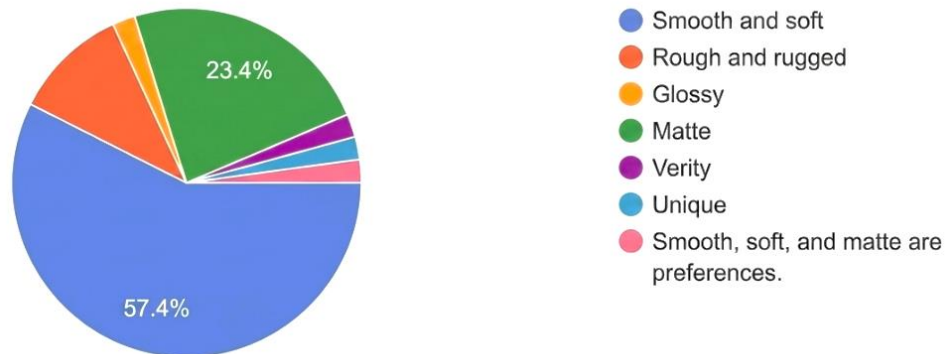


In figure 5, floral and geometric patterns were mostly preferred as 12.8% and 14.9% which creates a balance between traditional and contemporary design taste which is about 42.6%.

Figure 6: Preferred Texture Types

Which type of texture do you find most appealing?

47 responses



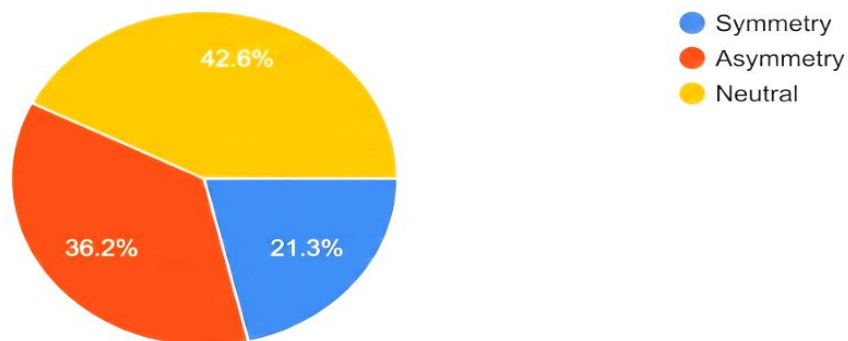
Many (57.4%) preferred soft textures for comfort and subtle aesthetic, as shown in figure 6.

Symmetry and Design Composition

Figure 7: Preference for Symmetry vs Asymmetry

Do you value symmetry or asymmetry more in design?

47 responses



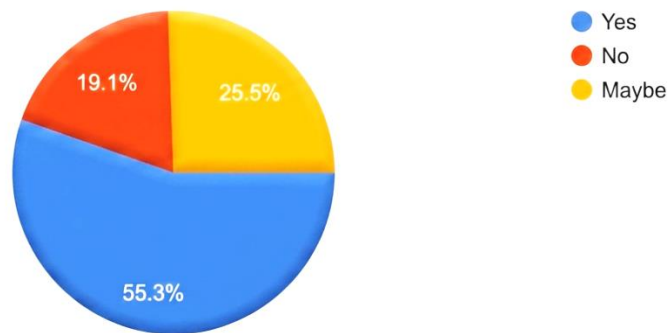
The findings in figure 7 reveal that only 21.3% preferred symmetry, and 36.2% preferred asymmetry but 42.6% were neutral.

Aesthetic vs Functional Decision-Making

Figure 8: Preference for Design over Functional Factors

Have you ever chosen a garment solely based on its design, even if other factors like price or comfort were less favorable?

47 responses



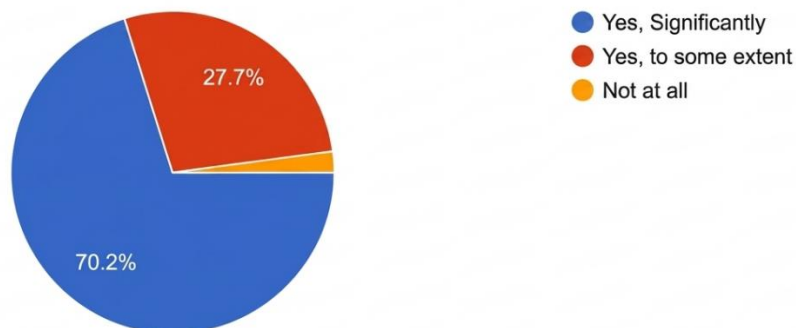
In figure 8, Over 55.3% reported that their choice of textiles is usually based on design, even when there are other usage consideration (such as price or comfort).

Cultural Influence on Design Preferences

Figure 9: Cultural Influence on Textile Preferences

Do you think cultural or regional influences affect your perception of textile/garment aesthetics?

47 responses



In figure 9, 70.2% of the respondents agreed that culture affects their design preference.

Table 1: Ranking of Factors Influencing Textile Quality Perception

Factor	Rank 1 (%)	Key Insight
Color Combination	57.4	Most influential
Fabric Quality	46.8	Important but variable
Pattern Clarity	36.2	Moderate influence
Texture	27.7	Secondary factor
Price	27.7	Not dominant
Brand	23.4	Least influential

Visual Preference Analysis

For the visual preferences few designs were used to check the design presences.

Figure 10: Design 1

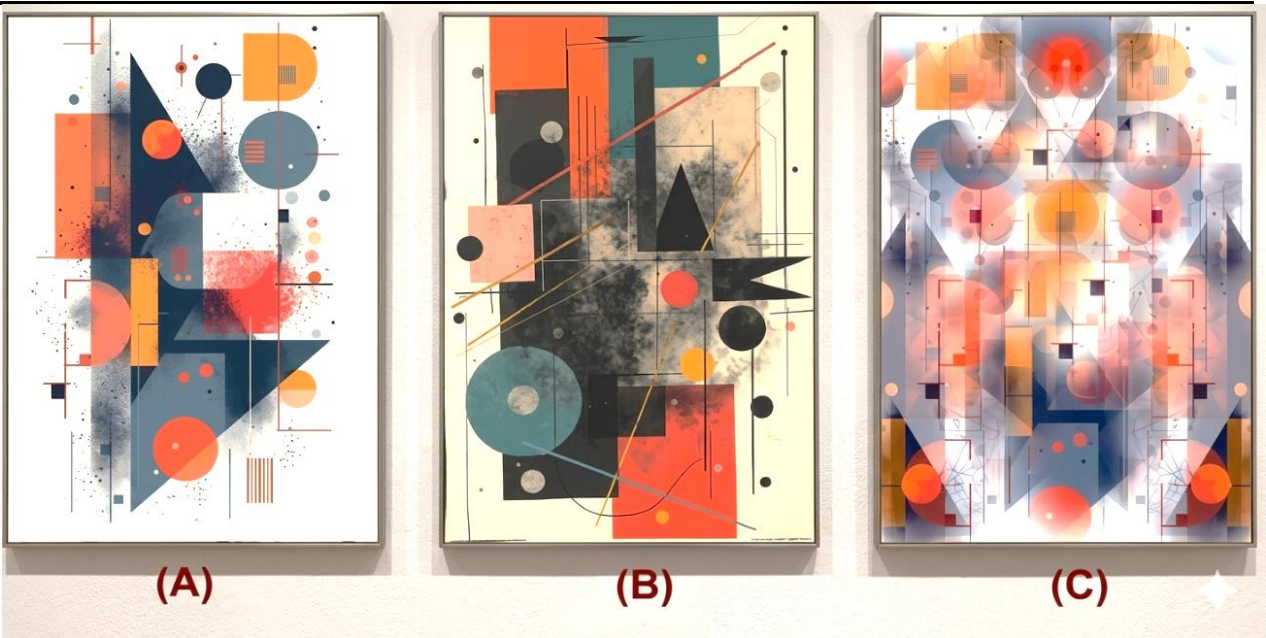


Figure 11: Design Selection – Set 1

Which Design do you prefer?

47 responses

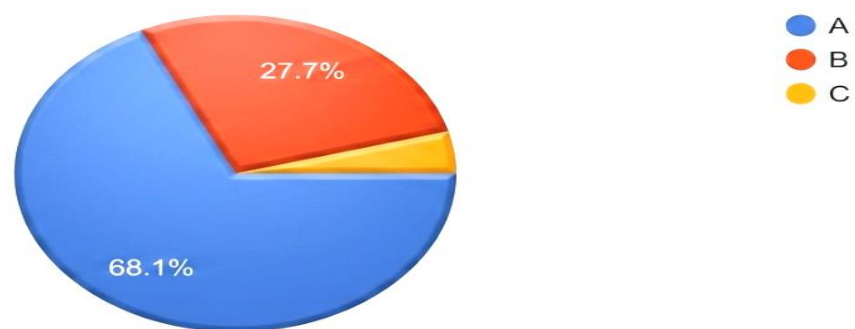


Figure 12: Design 2

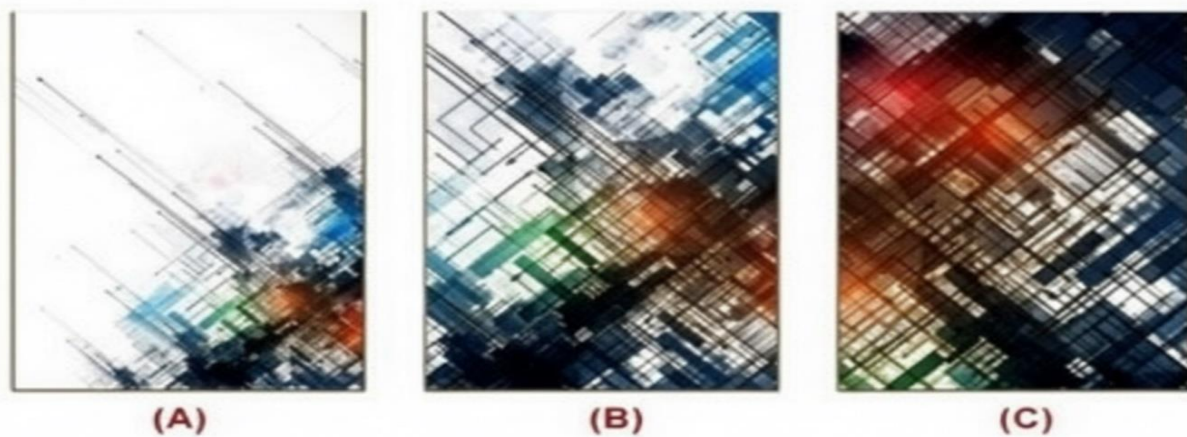


Figure 13: Design Selection – Set 2

Which Design do you prefer?
47 responses

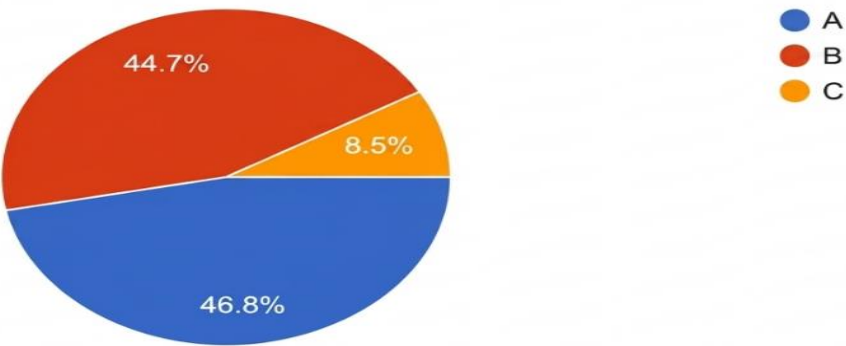


Figure 14: Design 3



Figure 15: Design Selection – Set 3

Which Design do you prefer?
47 responses

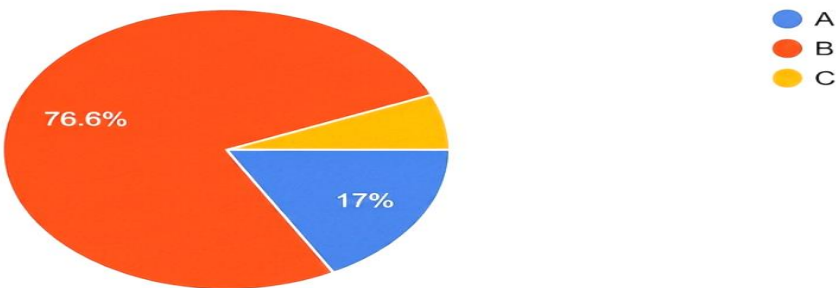
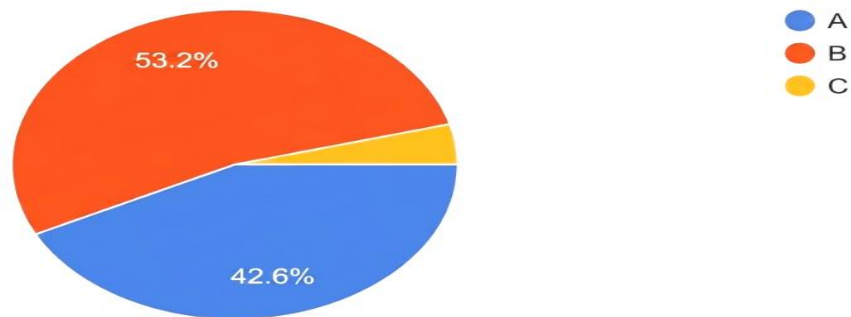


Figure 16: Design 4**Figure 17: Design Selection – Set 4**

Which Design do you prefer?

47 responses

**Table 2: Visual preference summary (% of respondents choosing each option)**

Design Set	Option A (%)	Option B (%)	Option C (%)
Set 1	68.1	21.3	10.6
Set 2	46.8	44.7	8.5
Set 3	14.9	76.6	8.5
Set 4	42.6	53.2	4.3

The results of the visual preferences in table 2 are clear with some designs being the most preferred (e.g., 68.1% for Design 1 in Set 1 and 76.6% for Design 2 in Set 3).

Discussion

This study offers a holistic view of the impact of design principles on consumers' textile choices, answering all research questions (RQ1-6) in conjunction. In summary, the findings suggest that

design principles play an important role in consumer choice, and may be more important than functional textile product attributes (price and brand). This study offers a holistic view of the influence of design principles on consumers' textile choices, answering all research questions (RQ1-6). In summary, the findings demonstrate that design principles play an important role in consumer choice and may be more important than functional product attributes, such as price and brand.

The study confirms that, among the design principles investigated, the most important are those related to color, which influence consumer perception and preference (RQ1 and RQ2). This aligns with theories of color psychology, which suggest that the visual stimulus of color is the most prominent element that draws attention and influences emotion and first impressions of products (Elliot & Maier, 2020). The finding that consumers prefer neutral and pastel tones also implies that they value visual balance and adaptability, as supported by the assertion that a balanced color composition enhances the product's perceived functionality and attractiveness.

Patterns and texture were also found to be important for aesthetics. Patterns are used to establish distinction and identity of textile products, and texture contributes to aesthetic appeal and comfort. This finding supports RQ4 and confirms that texture is an aesthetic and tactile characteristic. The preference for soft, smooth textures suggests that consumers believe texture relates to comfort and quality, and confirms that perceptions of aesthetics and function are not separate.

The results for design composition and symmetry (RQ3) are less straightforward. Although classical design theories emphasize that symmetry is a key factor in aesthetic appeal, the results show that consumers are not always attracted to symmetry. Rather, many consumers favored asymmetry or lacked feelings, indicating a preference for more versatile designs. This aligns with contemporary design trends, where asymmetry is used to create interest and balance.

The most significant finding concerns RQ6, which examines aesthetic vs. non-aesthetic factors. It seems likely that many of the respondents are more concerned with design than with functional aspects, such as price and comfort. This finding is consistent with the idea of experiential consumption, whereby aesthetic and emotional factors are important elements of the decision-making process. This is also supported by the ranking results, which show that aesthetic elements (especially colors) are the main quality indicators, followed by more traditional factors, such as brand and price (Reber et al., 2021).

Culture (RQ5) was also found to influence aesthetic preference. The majority of respondents reported that their cultural background is important to how they perceive design elements. This supports studies on cross-cultural preferences, which show that aesthetic preferences are context-dependent and influenced by social and cultural factors (Wan et al., 2021). Hence, preference for design can never be universal but must be understood in context.

Finally, the visual preference tasks confirm the study's findings. The correspondence between stated and design choices suggests that consumers' stated preferences align with their implicit design preferences. This strengthens the research's validity and confirms the value of using visual preference tasks in design research.

All in all, these findings support the claim that textile selection is a complex choice process in which consumers' choices are mostly influenced by aesthetic design principles, complemented by sensory and cultural preferences, and are only marginally influenced by functional needs. This study contributes to the field by accounting for multiple design elements and using both self-report and behavioral data from visual preference tasks.

Conclusion, Practical Implications, and Future Research

This research explores the impact of basic design principles on consumer textile choices, especially aesthetic choices. This study explores the impact of fundamental design principles, including color, pattern, texture, and symmetry, in conjunction with functional aspects, such as price and brand, to better understand consumer perceptions of textiles.

The results suggest aesthetic design principles are important. Specifically, the most important element is color, which affects first impressions and quality. Pattern and texture are also significant, as they enhance visual and haptic perceptions. In contrast, symmetry appears less important, with consumers not favouring symmetry or asymmetrical patterns, which aligns with current design and consumer trends.

Crucially, the research shows that design is more important than functional factors, with many consumers claiming they shop for textiles for their design, rather than price and brand. This highlights an experiential element of consumption that includes a visual/emotional element. In addition, the study reveals that cultural factors influence design preference, showing that design is not universal and that social/cultural factors play a role.

Overall, the study shows that fabric selection is a complex process that involves interactions of visual, sensory, and cultural elements. Using self-reported measures and visual preferences, this study provides empirical evidence for the role of design principles in shaping preferences.

Practical Implications

This research has implications for designers, producers and marketers of textiles and fashion.

First, the impact of color on decision-making suggests that color and color palettes should be considered important. Designers should be able to create effective color harmonies, such as neutral and pastel colors, which consumers prefer.

Second, the role of pattern and texture suggests that designs should focus on balancing visual and tactile appeal. Patterns should not be too complicated but should be unique, and fabrics should give consumers a sense of comfort and luxury, such as silky, soft textures.

Third, the observation that consumers value aesthetics more than price and brand suggests that visual design can be a market differentiator. This presents an opportunity for brands to highlight design aspects through their marketing, product presentation, and branding.

Fourth, the role of cultural influences highlights the need for culturally sensitive design strategies. Businesses and designers need to consider cultural preferences, symbols, and emotions when manufacturing textile products for various markets.

Lastly, the visual preference analysis indicates that consumer testing with visual prototypes or design comparisons can be a valuable approach for forecasting market success. This helps designers to better match their designs to consumer preferences rather than assumptions.

Future Research Directions

This study provides insights, but also raises questions for future research.

First, this study used a small sample ($N = 47$) with a convenience sampling method. A larger sample size and probability sampling could enhance representativeness.

Second, our research applied a descriptive statistical approach. More advanced analytical approaches, such as regression analysis and Structural Equation Modeling, could be used to examine cause-and-effect relationships between design principles and consumer behavior.

Third, this study focused on a specific group of consumers who have an interest in design. Research could explore other consumer groups, such as age, culture, and profession, in terms of their aesthetic preferences.

Fourth, while this study used visual preference tasks, future studies could include experimental methods or eye-tracking technologies to better understand how consumers process visual information about textile designs and make decisions.

Finally, research could also use new technologies, such as virtual reality or textile simulations, to study the interaction with textile designs in a virtual environment.

Final Impact Statement (Optional but good to finish on)

This study contributes to the growing body of research on design and consumer behavior, revealing that design principles are not merely about decoration, but are important in the decision-making process of textile consumption. This shows the importance of visual and sensory-based perceptions and provides insights into more design-based and customer-oriented approaches in the textile and fashion industries.

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