

Gender Differences in Purchasing Behavior of Artisanal Garments: Evidence from the Theory of Planned Behavior in the Valley of Toluca

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Abstract

In Mexico, artisanal garments represent a manifestation of cultural heritage that has preserved centuries-old ancestral production practices. Although local consumption may strengthen collective identity and the community economy, recent studies report apathy among residents in the regions where these garments originate. This study identifies the variables influencing residents' purchasing behavior, drawing on the Theory of Planned Behavior.

The research adopted a quantitative, applied, correlational approach with a non-experimental, cross-sectional design. A convenience sample of 137 residents (87 women and 50 men) completed a survey measuring the constructs of the Theory of Planned Behavior. Attitudes emerged as the primary predictor of purchasing behavior in both groups, indicating that residents value locally produced artisanal garments for their quality, cultural symbolism, and linkage to local identity. Among women, perceived behavioral control also exerted a significant influence, as purchasing decisions require availability in designs and colors, sizes, and styles to enable the buying action. Among men, purchasing intention constituted another predictor of buying behavior, suggesting that a clear motive—such as purchasing a gift—drives their decision to acquire artisanal garments.

The analysis revealed no significant differences between men and women in the mean values of the variables examined. Residents demonstrate potential to act as promoters of artisanal garments, particularly if positive attitudes receive reinforcement and barriers related to availability and personal taste receive attention. Such efforts may consolidate a collective identity that supports growth in cultural tourism and, consequently, regional development.

Keywords: Purchasing behavior, local consumption, artisanal garments, Theory of Planned Behavior.

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Introduction

Artisanal garments constitute a tangible expression of cultural heritage because, beyond emerging as part of community identity, their production processes and materials embody knowledge transmitted across generations (Fu, 2023; Yang, Shafi, Song, & Yang, 2018). In several municipalities of central Mexico—particularly in the Valle de Toluca region—the crafting of artisanal textile garments has endured for centuries (Sánchez-Nájera, 2009) due to its cultural and economic relevance (Hernández-Ramírez, Pineda-Domínguez, & Andrade-Vallejo, 2011). Nevertheless, despite the symbolic value and quality of these garments (Bhaduri & Stanforth, 2017), recent studies have documented a degree of resident apathy toward their consumption (Minbale, Bizuneh, Seife, Eyasu, Asfaw, & Sharew, 2024), with preferences shifting toward industrialized products or globally fashionable items (Mendoza, 2025).

The challenge intensifies when considering that municipal, state, and federal governments have sought to promote local development by strengthening artisanal production and, consequently, cultural tourism (Sánchez-Nájera, 2009). Yet residents often perceive these efforts as external and therefore invest limited effort in promoting such garments (Minbale et al., 2024). Moreover, the literature offers few studies focused on residents' purchasing behavior regarding artisanal garments, which constrains the development of strategies aimed at fostering local consumption and promotion through greater resident participation as ambassadors of their communities' cultural heritage.

Given the importance of identifying factors with the potential to increase residents' purchasing decisions for artisanal garments—and thereby reinforce regional cultural identity and expand cultural tourism—this research finds strong justification.

The study aimed to determine the variables with the greatest explanatory power for purchasing behavior among residents of municipalities producing artisanal textile garments in the Valle de Toluca, with a view to encouraging their participation as ambassadors of these products. To this

end, the research adopted the Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen, 1991) and followed a quantitative, applied, correlational approach with a non-experimental, cross-sectional design.

The study population comprised adults residing in municipalities that produce artisanal textiles in the Valle de Toluca (Almoloya de Juárez, Calimaya, Santiago Tianguistenco, and Tenancingo). A convenience sample of 137 individuals completed a survey.

The manuscript unfolds across five sections: the theoretical framework, which outlines the study's foundations; the methodology, describing the design, instrument, and data collection procedures; the results analysis, presenting the statistical findings; the discussion, identifying convergences and divergences between these findings and prior studies; and, finally, the conclusions, which propose directions for future research.

Theoretical Framework

Purchasing behavior constitutes a process through which individuals evaluate available options, make decisions, and carry out the actions required to acquire a tangible or intangible good. This process involves recognizing and accepting the existence of a need, executing the necessary actions to obtain the good that satisfies that need, and completing the purchase, which internal and external factors jointly shape (Alonso & Grande, 2013).

Within communities that produce textile handicrafts—such as the municipalities of the Valle de Toluca—residents' purchasing decisions represent not only an economic transaction but also an expression of cultural identity and tradition, together with the acceptance of symbolic elements that confer uniqueness (Ogden, Ogden, & Schau, 2004). Despite this relevance, few studies have examined residents' consumption of handicrafts as a mechanism that strengthens collective identity, preserves cultural heritage, and fosters local economic development (López Ceballos & Sarmiento Franco, 2002; Meza Calderón, 2023).

The study conducted by Minbale et al. (2024) stands out for analyzing local consumers' purchases of artisanal garments, concluding that residents in emerging economies often display apathy toward locally produced handicrafts due to the influence of global fashion, perceptions of lower quality, or a weak symbolic connection. In Mexico, however, this phenomenon remains largely unexplored, as most research on handicraft consumer behavior has focused on tourists rather than residents (Zetina, Guzmán, & Magaña, 2023).

Despite these trends, cases exist in which residents have widely embraced artisanal garments. One example involves the guayabera, a loose and lightweight shirt produced mainly in the state of Yucatán. Residents of southeastern Mexico highly value this garment because they associate it with elegance and national identity. Such cultural appropriation illustrates how attitudes toward local consumption can shift when garments appear valuable, contextually updated, and functional (Colín-Flores, 2025).

Among the most recognized artisanal garments in central Mexico stands the rebozo, a textile woven on a pedal loom and highly valued for its versatility, functionality, and strong cultural identification with Mexico (Sánchez-Montiel, 2023).

Nevertheless, not all residents can afford this garment due to the high prices of most artisanal products (México Desconocido, 2001). Other artisanal garments produced in the region include blouses and dresses made with drawn-thread techniques, sweaters, scarves (Instituto de Investigación y Fomento de las Artesanías, 2024), and the sarape, a long woolen blanket recognized as intangible cultural heritage of the State of Mexico (Rodríguez, 2025). Although the region offers a wide variety of high-quality artisanal garments, many residents undervalue the labor and time required for their production, leading outsiders to appreciate these items more frequently than community members themselves (INEGI, 2018). Accordingly, this study proposes the following hypothesis:

H1: Purchasing behavior toward artisanal garments among residents of producing municipalities in the Valle de Toluca manifests at a moderate level.

Regarding gender differences in purchasing behavior for artisanal garments, the literature remains limited. The most recent study, conducted by Bahety, Sarkar, De, Kushwaha, and Bhattacharjee (2024), reports no significant differences in such behavior. Nevertheless, other studies suggest that women exhibit greater willingness to engage in local consumption, motivated by empathy toward producers, a desire to preserve traditions, or perceptions of artisanal quality (Acuña-Moraga & Severino-González, 2018; López, Cruz, & Plata, 2024). These findings indicate that gender may function as a relevant variable when analyzing differential motivations underlying the purchase of artisanal products. Consequently, this study advances the following hypothesis:

H2: Significant differences exist between the explanatory factors of purchasing behavior toward artisanal garments among male and female residents of producing municipalities in the Valle de Toluca.

The Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) ranks among the most widely applied theoretical models for explaining decision-making related to purchasing behavior, owing to its capacity to integrate experience and knowledge with personal, social, and contextual factors. Ajzen (1991), who developed this theory, argues that behavior depends on the intention to perform a specific action, which three principal variables influence: attitudes toward the behavior, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control.

Numerous studies have demonstrated the usefulness of the TPB in explaining purchasing behavior related to artisanal and sustainable products (Galván-Mendoza & González-Rosales, 2025; Gómez, Fernández, & Medina, 2023; Minbale et al., 2024; Sabina del Castillo, 2024; Zamacona-Aboumrads & Barajas-Portas, 2022). These works converge in identifying attitudes and beliefs toward artisanal garments as variables that directly and decisively influence purchasing behavior, while also exerting indirect effects through intention.

Greaves, Zibarras, and Stride (2013) argue that purchasing decisions cannot rely solely on economic rationality, as human action also incorporates personal beliefs, social pressures from close reference groups, and perceived facilitators or constraints.

For these reasons, the TPB underpins this research, as it integrates affective, cognitive, social, and contextual dimensions of purchasing behavior—elements particularly salient in the case of artisanal garments among residents of producing municipalities, where aesthetic value and cultural identification play central roles (Fernández-Jardón, 2018). The TPB variables applied to residents' purchasing behavior toward artisanal garments conceptualize as follows (Ajzen, 1991):

Attitudes toward the behavior, defined as the evaluation of an individual's beliefs and opinions regarding the intended action. In the context of artisanal garment consumption, attitudes encompass beliefs and perceptions related to garment quality, respect for cultural identity, aesthetic value, and environmental and social awareness concerning materials and production processes (Zetina, Guzmán, & Magaña, 2023).

Subjective norms, composed of internal moral norms governing individual behavior, together with the perceived opinions of close social groups regarding the performance of a given action. In this context, the expectations and views of family members, friends, or authority figures shape residents' willingness to purchase artisanal products (Yadav & Mahara, 2019). However, Galván-Mendoza and González-Rosales (2025) found that ethnic identity and attitudes among domestic tourists exert greater predictive power over purchase intention than subjective norms.

Perceived behavioral control, referring to the degree of ease individuals perceive in performing an action, based on available resources and facilitating conditions. In the case of artisanal garment purchases, this dimension involves alignment with consumer preferences, size availability, and access within a specific marketplace (Yadav & Mahara, 2019).

Purchase intention, which functions as the most direct indicator of behavior and reflects an individual's level of willingness to carry out the action, shaped by the three preceding variables. Higher intention levels increase the likelihood that purchasing behavior will materialize (Ajzen, 1991; Greaves et al., 2013). For artisanal garments, purchase intention represents residents' predisposition toward acquisition, ranging from recognition of a latent need to recommendation and promotion.

Methodology

This study adopted an applied, quantitative, correlational, and field-based research approach, employing a non-experimental, cross-sectional design (Hernández, Fernández, & Baptista, 2014), as data collection occurred at a single point in time without deliberate manipulation during survey administration. The research took place in the municipal capitals of Almoloya de Juárez, Calimaya, Santiago Tianguistenco, and Tenancingo—localities with a strong tradition in the production of artisanal garments within the Valle de Toluca, central Mexico.

The analysis focused on the variables proposed by the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) (Ajzen, 1991): attitudes, subjective norms, perceived behavioral control, purchase intention, and purchasing behavior. Operationalization of these constructs drew on prior empirical studies conducted by Yadav and Mahara (2018) and Zamacona-Aboumrad and Barajas-Portas (2022).

The study population comprised adults residing in the municipalities with the highest specialization in artisanal garment production in the Valle de Toluca. According to the most recent Economic Census conducted in Mexico (INEGI, 2020), this population appears as reported in Table 1.

Table 1. Study Population

Municipality	Men	Women	Total
Almoloya de Juárez	54,013	55,005	109,018
Calimaya	22,818	23,980	46,798
Santiago Tianguistenco	25,393	27,854	53,247
Tenancingo	32,987	36,000	68,987
Total	135,211	142,839	278,050

Source: Authors' elaboration based on INEGI (2020).

A non-probabilistic convenience sampling strategy guided participant selection, surveying individuals who voluntarily agreed to take part in the study. The final sample comprised 137 residents (87 women and 50 men), all of whom completed the questionnaire in person at public locations within the municipalities considered.

Data collection relied on a structured questionnaire specifically designed for this purpose and administered through the Google Forms platform. The instrument included a sociodemographic section and 26 items measured on a five-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree) that captured the variables defined for the study.

Instrument administration took place between March and April 2025, ensuring data confidentiality and informing respondents that their answers would serve academic purposes exclusively.

Data analysis employed SPSS statistical software, version 26.0. The procedure involved assessing the reliability and validity of the data collection instrument, calculating means and standard deviations to characterize the study sample, and comparing mean differences between men and women using Student's t-test. Finally, stepwise multiple linear regression identified the most significant predictors of purchasing behavior, with analyses stratified by sex.

Results

To assess instrument validity, the study applied Exploratory Factor Analysis using robust unweighted least squares (Ledesma, Ferrando, & Tosi, 2019), extracting five factors through the varimax rotation method. These factors aligned with the variables proposed in this research (Table 2).

Table 2. Reliability and Validity of the Instrument Factor Loadings from the Exploratory Factor Analysis

	Attitudes	Subjective Norms	Perceived Behavioral Control	Purchase Intention	Purchase Behavior
Cronbach's alpha	0.873	0.819	0.752	0.806	0.816
Handcrafted garments show greater environmental friendliness	0.725				
Handcrafted garments rely on more organic materials than conventional ones	0.674				
Handcrafted garments deliver higher quality than conventional ones	0.620				
Handcrafted garments feature traditional designs	0.715				
Artisans employ traditional production techniques	0.685				
Purchasing handcrafted garments supports the local producers' economy	0.615				
Purchasing handcrafted garments contributes to preserving community culture	0.759				
Purchasing handcrafted garments strengthens our national identity	0.778				
My family's and friends' opinions matter when I purchase a handcrafted garment		0.758			
I rarely purchase a handcrafted garment until my friends and family approve it		0.827			
It matters to me that others like the handcrafted garment I purchase		0.830			
To ensure a genuine handcrafted garment, I always observe what others buy		0.701			
Finding a handcrafted garment that I like feels easy			0.639		
Finding a handcrafted garment in my size feels easy			0.635		
Reaching the locality where handcrafted garments I like are sold feels easy			0.779		
Visiting a shop that sells handcrafted garments I like feels easy			0.746		

Source: Authors' own elaboration based on calculations performed with SPSS 26.0.

In addition, the instrument's reliability was ensured by calculating Cronbach's alpha, which yielded values above 0.70, the minimum threshold considered acceptable for this type of study (Rodríguez-Rodríguez & Reguant-Álvarez, 2020).

The attitudes construct (measured through six items) captures residents' perceptions of the sustainable value, quality, cultural value, and national identity associated with handcrafted garments. Subjective norms (four items) reflect the social value that respondents perceive these garments to hold within their social environment. Perceived behavioral control (four items) represents the ease with which respondents can locate and access handcrafted garments. Purchase intention (four items) denotes residents' willingness to acquire, recommend, and promote handcrafted garments, whereas purchase behavior (four items) encompasses the motivations that drive residents to carry out the purchasing action.

Based on these results, composite variables were constructed in order to compute the descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation) presented in Table 3.

The descriptive analyses made it possible to identify the average scores for each study variable according to participants' sex. A Student's t-test was conducted to determine statistically significant differences between the two study groups: men and women.

Most standard deviations ranged between 0.800 and 0.976, indicating relatively low data dispersion and suggesting a high degree of response consistency among respondents. Only one standard deviation reached 1.104, corresponding to the subjective norms variable among women, which indicates a moderate level of variability in the responses provided by female participants.

Table 3. Descriptive Statistics for Both Groups

Variable	Men (50)		Women (87)		Statistically Significant Difference
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
Purchasing behavior	3.93	0.923	4.01	0.976	No
Attitudes	4.06	0.757	3.93	0.975	No
Subjective norms	2.62	0.915	2.63	1.104	No
Perceived behavioral control	3.46	0.800	3.33	0.942	No
Purchase intention	3.14	0.870	3.35	0.881	No

Source: Authors' own elaboration based on calculations performed using SPSS 26.0.

Considering the five-point response scale, the data indicate that both men and women demonstrate high purchasing behavior (3.93 and 4.01, respectively), rather than a medium level as proposed in Hypothesis 1. Attitudes obtained the highest scores for both men (4.06) and

women (3.93), which suggests that respondents value the quality, sustainability, and cultural identity of handcrafted garments produced in their community.

Subjective norms received the lowest ratings among men (2.62) and women (2.63), implying that residents rely more on their personal convictions than on social expectations when deciding whether to purchase artisanal clothing. Perceived behavioral control shows that, overall, residents locate handcrafted garments with relative ease (3.46 for men and 3.33 for women). Finally, purchase intention reflects a moderately high level in both groups, with women reporting slightly higher scores (3.35 vs. 3.14), possibly due to stronger appreciation for cultural elements or greater empathy toward producers.

The Student's t-test yielded no significant mean differences between men and women across all variables ($p > .05$), revealing a generally homogeneous perception of the constructs under study, regardless of gender.

To test Hypothesis 2, multiple linear regression analyses estimated the factors with the greatest explanatory weight for purchasing behavior in each group (men and women). Table 4 presents the results.

Among men, the variables included in the regression account for 50% of the variance in purchasing behavior. Attitudes emerged as the strongest predictor, followed by purchase intention, while perceived behavioral control did not enter the model.

Among women, the regression model explains 61.5% of the variance in purchasing behavior. Attitudes again represented the strongest predictor, followed by perceived behavioral control. Purchase intention showed no predictive value for this group.

In both models, subjective norms did not contribute significantly to predicting the purchasing behavior of artisanal garments.

Table 4. Multiple Linear Regression Results for Men and Women

Predictors	Men (50)		R ²	Women (87)		R ²
	Unstandardized Coefficients			Unstandardized Coefficients		
	<i>b</i>	SE		<i>b</i>	SE	
	-0.028	0.521		0.538	0.271	
Attitudes	0.637	0.127	0.50	0.743	0.069	0.615
Purchase intention	0.436	0.111		/	/	
Perceived behavioral control	/	/		0.163	0.072	

Source: Authors' own elaboration based on calculations performed using SPSS 26.0.

The results support the acceptance of Hypothesis 2, since the predictors of purchasing behavior differ between men (attitudes and purchase intention) and women (attitudes and perceived behavioral control).

Discussion

The findings shed light on key elements of purchasing behavior for artisanal garments among residents of textile-oriented municipalities in the Valley of Toluca, grounded in the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB).

First, the analysis reveals consistently high levels of purchasing behavior among residents, which contrasts with evidence reported by Minbale et al. (2024). Their study identified low consumption levels, suggesting an underlying apathy among local inhabitants toward artisanal products, possibly driven by perceptions of low quality or a disconnection from cultural identity.

Although some communities display indifference toward local handicrafts (Meysami, 2024), the case of artisanal garments in the Valley of Toluca suggests a latent consumption potential that can be activated through strategies that reinforce positive attitudes and reduce practical barriers—especially in the case of women.

The differentiated predictors for men and women offer valuable insight for developing market-specific strategies. Among men, purchase intention emerged as the second strongest predictor in the regression model, indicating that their final behavior responds to specific motives such as buying an artisanal garment as a gift or for an upcoming trip. This aligns with Ajzen's (1991) model, where intention functions as a central mediator between attitudes and observed behavior. The relevance of intention for this group also reflects Minbale et al.'s (2024) observation that, in emerging contexts, men tend to make consumption decisions in a more instrumental manner, prioritizing convenience and concrete purposes rather than identity-driven values.

In contrast, perceived behavioral control represented the second most influential factor for women, suggesting that their purchasing decisions depend on practical attributes of the garment, such as size availability, design, aesthetics, and ease of access.

This pattern had already been noted by Acuña-Moraga and Severino-González (2018), who observed that women show greater willingness to support local consumption when products match their personal needs. López, Cruz and Plata (2024) further argue that women tend to show stronger empathy toward local producers, although barriers such as limited availability, insufficient innovation, or restricted adaptability to current tastes may constrain their behavior.

Attitudes emerged as the strongest predictor of purchasing behavior for both men and women. This result aligns with Fernández-Jardón (2018) and Zamacona-Aboumrad and Barajas-Portas (2022), who concluded that positive attitudes—linked to symbolic, aesthetic, and cultural value—encourage the purchase of artisanal products.

In the specific context of residents in the Valley of Toluca, positive attitudes appear to stem from recognition of the garments' heritage value, artisanal quality, and symbolic connection to local identity. This coincides with the findings of Colín-Flores (2025), who identified a strong link between the Yucatecan guayabera and collective identity, which reinforces both its cultural legitimacy and its everyday use among residents.

Another relevant finding concerns the absence of significant gender differences across measured variables. This mirrors the results of Bahety, Sarkar, De, Kushwaha and Bhattacharjee (2024), who detected no variation in artisanal consumption patterns by gender or age, noting that consumers generally purchase these items due to their creativity, natural design, and aesthetic appeal. Consequently, men and women appear to attribute cultural value to artisanal garments, even though the underlying motives driving purchase differ. This situation reflects Greaves, Zibarras and Stride's (2013) argument that behavioral determinants may operate differently across groups even when global evaluations of the object remain similar.

Finally, the evidence indicates that subjective norms exert minimal influence on purchasing behavior. As Galván-Mendoza and González-Rosales (2025) suggest, ethnic identity and personal decisions shaped by convictions, preferences, and individual needs carry greater weight than subjective norms. Thus, social pressure from an individual's close circle plays little role when deciding to purchase an artisanal garment.

Conclusions

This study aimed to identify the variables with the greatest explanatory power in the purchasing behavior of residents in municipalities that produce artisanal garments in the Valley of Toluca, with the purpose of promoting their active participation as ambassadors of these products. The findings lead to several conclusions.

Empirical results confirm that, consistent with TPB, attitudes toward artisanal garments represent the main predictor of purchasing behavior for both men and women. Residents value the garments produced in their community for their quality, cultural symbolism, and connection to local identity.

However, the regression models by gender reveal distinct underlying mechanisms: men tend to rely on specific motives or purposes for the purchase (purchase intention), whereas women depend on the availability of designs, colors, sizes, and styles to complete the action.

This study contributes to knowledge on the consumption of cultural and artisanal products in Mexico, particularly by providing TPB-based evidence for residents of municipalities that specialize in textile crafts, a population rarely examined in the literature.

It also contributes by developing, validating, and presenting an instrument tailored to measure variables associated with purchasing behavior of artisanal garments, enabling replication of this study in other contexts and with different types of crafts or local products.

The findings may serve as inputs for designing awareness campaigns, marketing strategies, and artisanal garment designs that strengthen positive attitudes, remove practical barriers, and enhance cultural identity. They may also inform public policies aimed at promoting cultural tourism and encouraging local consumption with a stronger sense of belonging among residents.

Future research should replicate the study in other regions of Mexico and Latin America with strong artisanal traditions, to compare consumption patterns and cultural perceptions across communities. Incorporating a qualitative perspective—particularly by engaging artisans—would allow deeper exploration of the roots of attitudes and perceived barriers. Additional psychological variables such as attachment, cultural identity, or ethical consumption also merit examination.

Producers of artisanal garments should diversify available designs and sizes to meet the needs of the female segment. Communication and awareness campaigns targeted at residents could reinforce the symbolic value of the garments as expressions of local identity. Finally, spaces that foster interaction between producers and local consumers could facilitate dialogue and co-creation of value, strengthening emotional and cultural bonds and contributing to broader economic benefits derived from cultural tourism.

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