



HEALTH MOTIVATION VERSUS FASHION AND STATUS: WHY INDIAN YOUTH BUY SMARTWATCHES

Nandini Sharma*

Research Scholar, Alard School of Business Management, Alard University, Pune

*Corresponding Author

ABSTRACT

Smartwatch shipments in India have declined for two years in a row after a period of fast, discount-led growth, so brands now need to understand why young buyers choose these devices at all. This paper examines three motives that are commonly linked with smartwatch purchase: health motivation, fashion appeal, and social status or self-image. Using published research on technology acceptance, consumption values and the extended self, the paper proposes a simple model in which each motive influences purchase intention, and in which gender and price sensitivity may change the strength of these links. Six propositions are developed and a survey design is outlined for testing them among young consumers in Chhatrapati Sambhaji Nagar, Maharashtra. The study is conceptual and reports no primary data. It suggests that smartwatches are bought for a mix of reasons, and that brands should speak to health and style together instead of choosing one.

KEYWORDS :

INTRODUCTION

The smartwatch began as a gadget for technology enthusiasts but is now a common accessory among young people in India. Domestic brands made it popular by selling attractive watches at low prices through online marketplaces and social media. That fast growth has slowed. IDC reports that smartwatch shipments in India fell by 17.6 percent in 2025, the second yearly decline [1]. When growth slows, companies can no longer rely on discounts alone and need to know what truly makes a young person decide to buy.

Two explanations are often heard. One is that people buy smartwatches for health and fitness, such as counting steps, tracking sleep and monitoring heart rate. The other is that people buy them because they look good and show who the owner is. Research supports both views. Choi and Kim argued that the smartwatch is both an information technology product and a fashion product [2], and studies of wearable health devices show that perceived health benefit matters for adoption [3], [4]. Few studies place these motives side by side for young buyers in India, and fewer still consider cities outside the large metros.

This paper therefore asks a simple question: do young Indian consumers buy smartwatches mainly for health, for fashion, or for status? It does not report survey results. It builds a clear model from existing research, states propositions that can be tested, and proposes a method for testing them in Chhatrapati Sambhaji Nagar.

Objectives of the Study

1. To explain the role of health motivation, fashion appeal and social status in smartwatch purchase among youth.
2. To propose a simple conceptual model linking these three motives to purchase intention.
3. To identify gender and price sensitivity as conditions that may change these links.
4. To suggest a research design for empirical testing in Chhatrapati Sambhaji Nagar.

Review of Literature

Smartwatch adoption has been studied mostly through technology acceptance models. The classic model says that people adopt a technology when they find it useful and easy to use [5]. Kim and Shin applied this idea to smartwatches and found that perceived usefulness and the value of information from the device shaped attitudes [6]. Later work suggested that usefulness alone is not enough for a worn object. Chuah and colleagues showed that the visibility of the device and its fashion-related qualities affect willingness to adopt [7], and Choi and Kim found that people judge smartwatches partly as fashion items [2].

Health is the second main theme. Gao, Li and Luo found that perceived health benefits and related beliefs influence the acceptance of wearable health devices [3]. Lunney, Cunningham and Eastin reported that fitness-related outcomes are linked with acceptance of wearable fitness technology [4]. These findings fit health behaviour theories, such as the health belief model, which holds that people act to protect their health when they feel a need and see a benefit [8].

Status and self-image form the third theme. Possessions can express

who a person is and how they want others to see them [9]. Products also tend to be chosen when they match a person's self-concept [10]. Sheth, Newman and Gross describe consumption values such as functional, social and emotional value that together explain why people choose a product [11], and Hirschman and Holbrook describe the pleasure and feelings that products can offer [12]. Dehghani found that enjoyment and related motives affect continued use among smartwatch users [13]. Taken together, this research suggests that health, fashion and status may all be present, but their weight may differ across groups.

Conceptual Model and Propositions

Figure 1 shows the proposed model. Three motives are placed on the left and purchase intention on the right. Table 1 explains each construct in plain words.

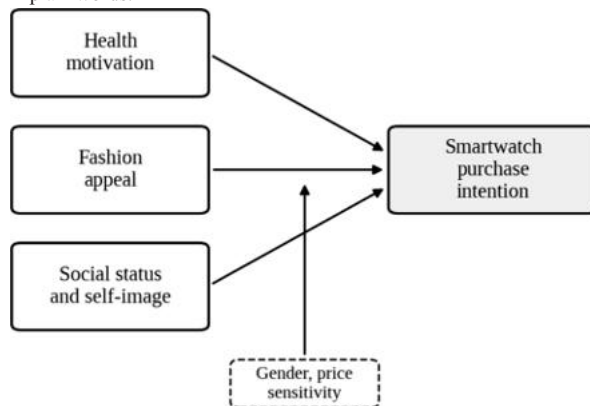


Figure 1: Proposed Model of Smartwatch Purchase Motives

Source: Developed by the Author

Health motivation means the wish to track and improve one's health and fitness. Young people who exercise, who worry about sleep or stress, or who are conscious about their health may see the smartwatch as a useful tool. Based on the health literature [3], [4], [8], the first proposition is:

P1: Health motivation is positively related to smartwatch purchase intention.

Fashion appeal means how attractive and stylish the watch looks, including its strap, display and design. Since smartwatches are worn in public every day, appearance counts [2], [7]. Hence:

P2: Fashion appeal is positively related to smartwatch purchase intention.

Social status and self-image mean the extent to which owning a smartwatch makes the person feel modern, successful or part of a group. Because possessions help people express identity [9], [10], the third proposition is:

P3: Social status and self-image are positively related to smartwatch purchase intention.

Young buyers may not treat the three motives equally. Many Indian smartwatches are sold at low prices, so the cost of showing status is small, while health features still require the buyer to see real benefit. This leads to a comparison between motives:

P4: Fashion appeal and social status have a stronger relationship with purchase intention than health motivation among youth who are highly price sensitive.

Gender may also matter. Earlier work on wearables suggests that men and women can differ in how they judge technology and appearance [2], [7]. For this reason:

P5: The relationship between fashion appeal and purchase intention is stronger for women than for men.

P6: The relationship between health motivation and purchase intention is stronger among youth who exercise regularly than among those who do not.

Table – 1 Constructs in the Model

Construct	Meaning in simple words	Based on
Health motivation	Wish to track and improve health and fitness	[3], [4], [8]
Fashion appeal	How stylish and attractive the watch looks	[2], [7]
Social status, self-image	Feeling modern and showing identity through the watch	[9], [10], [11]
Purchase intention	Likelihood of buying a smartwatch	[5], [14]
Gender, price sensitivity, exercise habit	Conditions that may change the links	[2], [7]

Source: Compiled by the author from the literature reviewed

Proposed Research Methodology

The propositions can be tested through a cross-sectional survey of young consumers aged 18 to 30 in Chhatrapati Sambhaji Nagar who own or plan to buy a smartwatch. Respondents can be reached through colleges, workplaces and retail outlets, using quota sampling so that gender, age and ownership are balanced. The minimum sample size can be fixed with a standard formula for large populations [15].

Each construct can be measured with several statements on a five-point agreement scale, adapted from published studies and checked by experts. Because many respondents may be more comfortable in Marathi or Hindi, the questionnaire should be translated and translated back to check meaning. Data can be analysed with reliability tests, correlation and regression, or with partial least squares modelling for the full model and group comparisons [16].

Implications

For brands, the model suggests that advertising should not choose between health and style. A smartwatch can be shown as a health partner and a fashion accessory at the same time. Retailers in tier-two cities can use local fitness and lifestyle creators to speak to both motives. For researchers, the paper offers a small set of propositions that can be tested quickly and compared across cities.

The main limitation is that the paper is conceptual and the propositions are not yet supported by data. The model includes only three motives; other factors such as brand trust, price value and peer influence can be added later. The study is limited to one city, so results may differ elsewhere.

CONCLUSIONS

Smartwatches are bought for several reasons at once. This paper proposed that health motivation, fashion appeal and social status each shape purchase intention among young Indian consumers, and that gender, price sensitivity and exercise habit may change the strength of these links. As the Indian market moves from fast growth to slower, more selective buying [1], understanding these motives can help brands decide what to say to young buyers. The six propositions give a clear starting point for survey research in Chhatrapati Sambhaji Nagar.

REFERENCES

- [1] IDC India (2026), "India's wearables market declines 4.0% to 114 million units in 2025 as smartwatch shipments fall 17.6%," press release, March 2026.
- [2] Choi, J., and Kim, S. (2016), "Is the smartwatch an IT product or a fashion product? A study on factors affecting the intention to use smartwatches," *Computers in Human Behavior*, 63, 777-786.
- [3] Gao, Y., Li, H., and Luo, Y. (2015), "An empirical study of wearable technology acceptance in healthcare," *Industrial Management & Data Systems*, 115(9), 1704-1723.

- [4] Lunney, A., Cunningham, N. R., and Eastin, M. S. (2016), "Wearable fitness technology: A structural investigation into acceptance and perceived fitness outcomes," *Computers in Human Behavior*, 65, 114-120.
- [5] Davis, F. D. (1989), "Perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use, and user acceptance of information technology," *MIS Quarterly*, 13(3), 319-340.
- [6] Kim, K. J., and Shin, D. H. (2015), "An acceptance model for smart watches: Implications for the adoption of future wearable technology," *Internet Research*, 25(4), 527-541.
- [7] Chuah, S. H. W., Rauschnabel, P. A., Krey, N., Nguyen, B., Ramayah, T., and Lade, S. (2016), "Wearable technologies: The role of usefulness and visibility in smartwatch adoption," *Computers in Human Behavior*, 65, 276-284.
- [8] Rosenstock, I. M. (1974), "Historical origins of the health belief model," *Health Education Monographs*, 2(4), 328-335.
- [9] Belk, R. W. (1988), "Possessions and the extended self," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 15(2), 139-168.
- [10] Sirgy, M. J. (1982), "Self-concept in consumer behavior: A critical review," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 9(3), 287-300.
- [11] Sheth, J. N., Newman, B. I., and Gross, B. L. (1991), "Why we buy what we buy: A theory of consumption values," *Journal of Business Research*, 22(2), 159-170.
- [12] Hirschman, E. C., and Holbrook, M. B. (1982), "Hedonic consumption: Emerging concepts, methods and propositions," *Journal of Marketing*, 46(3), 92-101.
- [13] Dehghani, M. (2018), "Exploring the motivational factors on continuous usage intention of smartwatches among actual users," *Behaviour & Information Technology*, 37(2), 145-158.
- [14] Ajzen, I. (1991), "The theory of planned behavior," *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, 50(2), 179-211.
- [15] Cochran, W. G. (1977), *Sampling Techniques*, 3rd ed., Wiley, New York.
- [16] Hair, J. F., Hult, G. T. M., Ringle, C. M., and Sarstedt, M. (2022), *A Primer on Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM)*, 3rd ed., Sage, Thousand Oaks, CA.