

INVESTORS' PERCEPTION AND ITS DETERMINANTS IN MUTUAL FUND INVESTMENT IN THIRUVANANTHAPURAM DISTRICT

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ABSTRACT

Mutual funds have emerged as an important investment avenue by offering portfolio diversity, expert fund oversight, liquidity, and accessibility to investors with varying financial capabilities. However, investment participation is substantially influenced by how investors perceive expected returns, associated risks, transparency, liquidity, and the effectiveness of professional fund management. Although previous studies have examined mutual fund investment behaviour, understanding the combined influence of these factors on investor perception within specific regional contexts remains important. Addressing this concern, the present study examines investors' perception towards mutual fund investment and identifies the major factors influencing such perception in Thiruvananthapuram District, Kerala. A structured questionnaire was used to gather primary data from 217 mutual fund investors utilizing a quantitative research approach. The findings revealed a significantly favourable overall perception towards mutual fund investment. Professional fund management recorded the strongest standardized impact on investor perception, followed by perceived return and transparency. The identified factors collectively explained 65.9% of the disparity in investor perception. The findings demonstrate that favourable mutual fund perception extends beyond return expectations and incorporates managerial expertise, transparency, liquidity, and risk considerations.

Keywords: *Investor Perception; Mutual Funds; Perceived Return; Professional Fund Management; Investment Behaviour*

1. INTRODUCTION

Mutual funds have become an essential part of modern finance by providing professionally managed and diversified investment portfolios to investors [1]. Mutual funds provide individuals with the ability to participate in the capital market through investment in securities

by pooling money from various investors without having to possess specialized knowledge in security selection [2]. Various advantages associated with mutual funds like diversification, liquidity, low cost, professional management, and flexibility have made mutual funds more popular among individual investors. On the other hand, decision-making about mutual funds is not only influenced by various financial factors pertaining to mutual fund schemes, but is mostly affected by investor perception and expectations. One of the most significant psychological factors that affect evaluation and choice of financial instruments is investor perception. In the case of mutual funds, perception is created according to the expectations of investors concerning return, risk, liquidity, transparency, and fund management [3]. Perceived return reflects investors' expectations regarding the returns they expect to derive from an investment. At the same time, perceived risk is determined by investors' perceptions of uncertainty and the financial risk associated with the investment. Liquidity is associated with investors' perception because it makes it easy for an investor to withdraw funds from an investment, and transparency is associated with investors' perception because it helps investors understand the performance, costs, structure, and risk of an investment scheme. Professional fund management offers investors expertise in investment, portfolio management and risk management [4].

There has been significant growth in the mutual fund industry in India due to increased financial literacy, online investment services, systematic investment plans, regulatory measures, and greater participation of retail investors [5]. Although this increase in size, investor participation and perceptions remains variable due to financial knowledge, risk preferences, rate of return expectations, financial experience, and access to information.

Kerala provides an appropriate context for conducting such a study owing to its high level of literacy, growing financial awareness, increasing involvement in digital financial transactions, and growing awareness of investment opportunities available through market-linked investment schemes. Thiruvananthapuram District comprises investors from various professions, income levels, age groups, and level of investment experience. Hence, the present study investigates investors' perceptions of mutual funds in Thiruvananthapuram District and examines the relationship of return, risk, liquidity, transparency, and fund management with investor perceptions.

2. RELATED WORKS

Rani and Sanjay [6] examined mutual fund investment patterns with specific reference to ICICI Prudential Mutual Fund and investor awareness in Hyderabad. The study adopted a mixed-method descriptive-analytical design using secondary fund-performance data and primary data from 80 respondents selected through purposive sampling. Percentage analysis and independent-samples t-tests were employed. The findings showed that the ICICI Tax Saver (ELSS) recorded the highest annualised return of 102.80%, while only 46.25% of respondents were aware of mutual funds and 82.5% had not invested in them. Life insurance remained the preferred savings avenue. The study was restricted by its time-specific market performance data.

Radha *et al.* [7] examined the effects of behavioural biases on mutual fund investment decisions in India. This study employed a quantitative research design and collected primary data from 180 mutual fund investors using convenience sampling and structured questionnaire. The results indicated that loss aversion and risk perception negatively affected investment decisions and together accounted for 38% of the variance in investor behaviour. Investors exhibiting these biases displayed conservative investment and early redemption behaviour. However, the use of convenience sampling and the examination of only two behavioural biases limited the generalizability of the findings.

Jagadeeswaran and Hemavathy [8] analysed investor awareness and risk perceptions towards mutual fund investments in India. This study used only secondary data sources such as SEBI, AMFI, RBI, Government publications, journal articles, and industry reports. According to the results, the level of mutual fund awareness had increased, especially in urban and semi-urban areas; however, there was limited knowledge of investment terminologies and risk-return trade-offs. Education, income, financial literacy, and perceived risk were found to influence investment behaviour. However, reliance on secondary data prevented a direct assessment of investor behaviour, while methodological differences, regional variations, and temporal biases limited the generalisability of the findings.

SIPs' ability to encourage long-term wealth growth among Indian retail investors was investigated by Prabha and Radha [9]. The study used secondary data from selected equity-oriented mutual fund schemes and compared SIP and lump-sum investments. The findings showed that SIPs generated a higher corpus of ₹12.5 lakh and a 14.2% XIRR, compared with

₹11.8 lakh and 13.1% CAGR for lump-sum investment. SIPs also demonstrated lower volatility and superior risk-adjusted performance. However, the study was limited by its reliance on selected schemes and a specific investment period.

Kalaichelvan [10] examined the impact of behavioural, psychological, and socio-economic factors on mutual fund investment choices in Tamil Nadu. Primary data were collected from 250 individual investors using convenience sampling and a structured questionnaire. Mean, standard deviation, correlation, regression, and ANOVA were used for analysis. The results indicated that risk perception, overconfidence, herding, financial literacy, influence, and demographic factors had a significant impact on investment preferences and risk aversion. Financially literate investors demonstrated more rational and diversified investment behaviour. However, the study was limited by convenience sampling and geographical concentration in selected districts.

Deb and Ruchi Jain [11] examined the effect of technology-enabled CRM and relationship quality outcomes on mutual fund investment decision-making in India. The study collected valid responses from 262 online mutual fund investors using non-probability criterion-based sampling and a structured questionnaire. The results revealed a strong positive relation between CRM and investment decision-making, while trust, satisfaction, loyalty, and commitment significantly mediated this relationship. However, the study was limited mainly to urban and metropolitan investors, excluding rural investors and factors such as technology barriers, risk-taking ability, and investor attitudes.

Srinivasan and Dhini [12] examined women investors' awareness and perceptions of mutual fund investments in Kerala. The study collected primary data from 400 female mutual fund investors selected through purposive sampling from leading stock-broking institutions. Data were gathered using a structured interview schedule and analyzed using Chi-square and Multiple Regression Analysis. The findings revealed that women investors had inadequate awareness of various mutual fund schemes and that socio-economic characteristics influenced their level of awareness. The regression model described approximately 80% of the variation in awareness. However, the study was limited by purposive sampling and its primary focus on awareness and perception.

Girish and Ravikumar [13] examined investors' perceptions of mutual fund investments in Karnataka, with particular emphasis on socio-economic and financial factors influencing

investment decisions. The results indicated that factors such as financial literacy, economic growth, urbanization, financial services, investment opportunities, risk perception, and investment experience were some of the elements that facilitated the development of positive attitudes towards mutual funds among the investors. Furthermore, the importance of transparency and investor education was highlighted by the study. Nonetheless, the limitations of the research included the lack of clearly stated sample size, sampling method, data collection tool, and statistical approach.

Arora and Gupta [14] conducted an analysis of the factors affecting the decisions of rural investors to participate in mutual funds in the Amroha District of Uttar Pradesh. The study used descriptive and exploratory approaches, in which primary data were obtained through purposive convenience sampling from 150 respondents. The results revealed that financial literacy, income, savings capacity, family obligations, occupation, risk attitude, and mutual fund performance were some of the factors influencing their decisions. This study was constrained by its limited geographical coverage and limited number of factors taken into account.

The factors affecting the Thai investors' attitude towards the adoption of online mutual funds were studied by Kasemharuethaisuk and Samanchuen [15]. TAM2 was further developed to incorporate the factors of regulator support, trust, convenience, subjective norms, perceived usefulness (PU), and perceived ease of use (PEU). For the study, descriptive statistics and PLS-SEM with SmartPLS software were applied. It was revealed that PU, convenience, trust, and subjective norm positively affected the behavioural intention, while PEU did not significantly affect behavioural intention. This research was restricted to experienced Thai investors, who were also familiar with technology.

Most of the existing research has focused on awareness, behavioural biases, financial literacy, technology adoption, SIP performance, and impact of demographic factors on mutual fund investment, with an emphasis on geographical location. The effect of perceived return, perceived risk, liquidity, transparency, and fund management on overall investor perception has received little attention. Furthermore, the literature on Thiruvananthapuram District is limited.

3. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

RQ₁: What is the level of investors' perception towards mutual fund investment in Thiruvananthapuram District?

RQ₂: What factors significantly influence investors' perception towards mutual fund investment?

4. OBJECTIVES

- To assess investors' perception towards mutual fund investment in Thiruvananthapuram District.
- To investigate the elements affecting investors' opinions about investing in mutual funds.

5. PROPOSED HYPOTHESES

H₀₁: Investors do not exhibit a significant positive perception towards mutual fund investment in Thiruvananthapuram District.

H₁₁: Investors exhibit a significant positive perception towards mutual fund investment in Thiruvananthapuram District.

H₀₂: Factors such as perceived return, risk, liquidity, transparency, and professional management do not significantly influence investors' perception towards mutual fund investment.

H₁₂: Factors such as perceived return, risk, liquidity, transparency, and professional management significantly influence investors' perception towards mutual fund investment.

6. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

6.1 Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework shows that perceived return, perceived risk, liquidity, transparency and professional fund management are the independent variables associated with investors' perception of mutual fund investments in Thiruvananthapuram District, as shown in Figure 1 below. Perceived return and risk are the investors' monetary expectations of an investment, while liquidity defines how easily investors can enter or exit an investment. Transparency and professional fund management contribute to investor confidence in mutual fund operations. These factors are collectively associated with investors' perception.

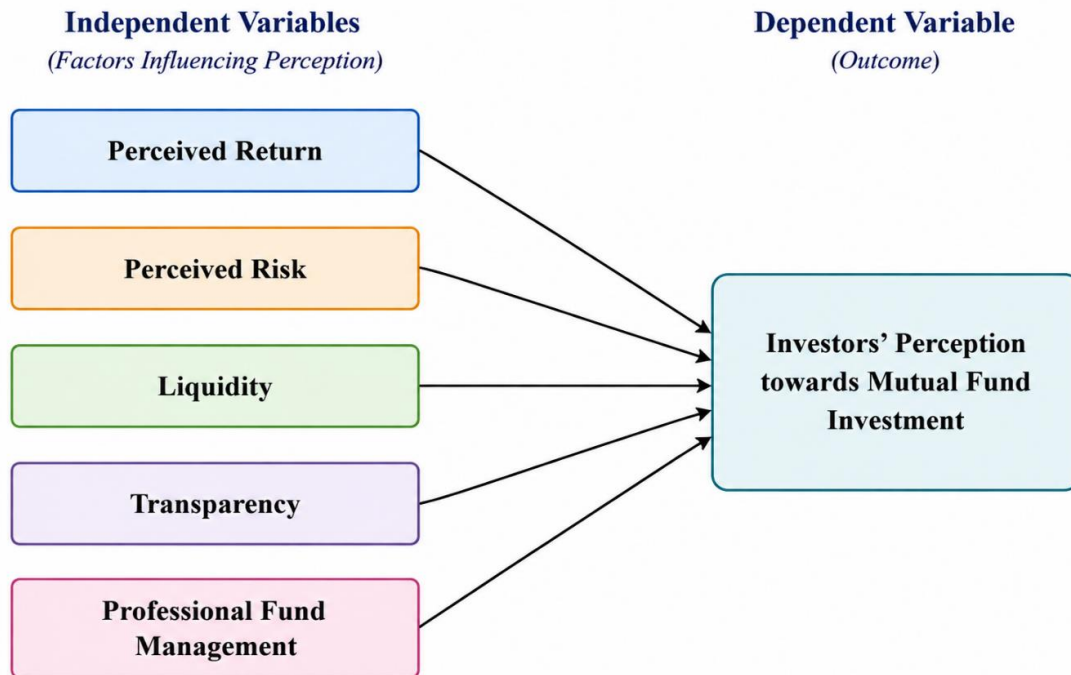


Fig.1. Conceptual Framework of the Proposed Study

6.2 Research Design

The study adopted descriptive and analytical research design and quantitative research methods to study the perception of the Investors of mutual fund investors in Thiruvananthapuram District. The descriptive design was used to measure the general perception of investors while the analytical design was used to studying the association between perceived return, perceived risk, liquidity, transparency and professional fund management and the investors' perception.

6.3 Population and Sample

The sample population consist of individual investors of mutual fund schemes in Thiruvananthapuram District who have invested in the mutual fund schemes previously. The investors differ in terms of their age, occupation, income level, investment experience and preferred mutual funds, thus providing various perspectives on mutual fund investments. Thiruvananthapuram District was chosen because it has a vibrant finance industry and offers banking and advisory services related to mutual fund investments.

The participants were not selected from the general population but only from those who had the required experience in the investment of mutual funds, thus using a purposive sampling technique. The sample size of this study was 217 mutual fund investors. The sample was sufficient for the analysis of investors' perception as well as the association between the investors' perception and perceived return, perceived risk, liquidity, transparency, and professional fund management. The sampling method thus ensured that the responses are obtained from individuals with sufficient investment experience.

6.4 Data Collection

Primary and secondary data were used for in-depth analysis of the research study. The primary data were collected from the selected sample of the mutual fund investors in Thiruvananthapuram District using a structured questionnaire to understand the perception of the investors towards return, risk, liquidity, transparency, and professional fund management. The questionnaire also contained information on the basic demographic and investment characteristics of the respondents. Secondary data were gathered from the publications of SEBI and AMFI, mutual funds reports, academic journals, research articles, books, government publications and other reliable sources of financial data. These secondary sources also served as the theoretical foundation, provided industry knowledge and empirical data, and were used to analyze and interpret investors' perception regarding mutual fund investments.

6.5 Data Analysis

IBM SPSS Statistics Version 29.0 was employed for the purpose of data analysis in order to fulfill the aims of this study. Descriptive statistics were used to summarise the dimensions of investors' perception and characteristics of respondents. Cronbach's Alpha was used to assess the validity of the measures. The dimensions of investors' perceptions were identified using Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA). A One-Sample t-Test was used to compare investor perception with the neutral level. Correlation and multiple linear regression were used to test associations.

7. ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

7.1 Analysis of demographic profile

The demographic and investment characteristics of the 217 mutual fund investors interviewed in the Thiruvananthapuram District were shown in Table 1. In relation to gender distribution, both genders were presented, with males representing 57.6% of the total, and females

representing 42.4%. In terms of age groups, the largest percentage was from the age group of 31-40 years (31.8%), followed by 41-50 years (26.3%). This indicated considerable involvement of investors in economically active age groups. In terms of occupation, the group of salaried employees was the largest (35.9%) followed by the self-employed (23.0%). In the case of income, 30.4% of the participants earned between ₹50001 and ₹75000 per month. Concerning investment experience of mutual funds, 31.3% of the participants had invested for 3 to 5 years, whereas 25.8% had investment experience.

Table.1. Respondents' Demographic Profile

Variable	Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	125	57.6
	Female	92	42.4
Age	Below 30 years	42	19.4
	31–40 years	69	31.8
	41–50 years	57	26.3
	51–60 years	33	15.2
	Above 60 years	16	7.4
Occupation	Salaried Employee	78	35.9
	Self-employed/Business	50	23.0
	Professional	38	17.5
	Retired	25	11.5
	Others	26	12.0
Monthly Income	Up to ₹25,000	29	13.4
	₹25,001–₹50,000	57	26.3
	₹50,001–₹75,000	66	30.4
	₹75,001–₹1,00,000	39	18.0
	Above ₹1,00,000	26	12.0
Mutual Fund Investment Experience	Less than 1 year	31	14.3
	1–3 years	56	25.8
	3–5 years	68	31.3
	5–10 years	42	19.4
	More than 10 years	20	9.2

7.2 Investors' Perception towards Mutual Fund Investment

This study examines investor perceptions on mutual fund investment in Thiruvananthapuram District.

7.2.1 Reliability Analysis

The Cronbach's Alpha for all constructs exceeds the acceptable value of 0.70, as illustrated in Table 2. Professional Fund Management reported the highest reliability ($\alpha = 0.86$), followed by Transparency ($\alpha = 0.84$), Perceived Return ($\alpha = 0.82$), Liquidity ($\alpha = 0.80$), and Perceived Risk ($\alpha = 0.78$). The results indicate that the test items have good internal consistency and are suitable for statistical analysis.

Table 2. Reliability Statistics of Investors' Perception Dimensions

Variable	Cronbach's Alpha	No. of Items
Perceived Return	0.82	5
Perceived Risk	0.78	5
Liquidity	0.80	4
Transparency	0.84	5
Professional Fund Management	0.86	5

7.2.2 Exploratory Factor Analysis

The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) test and the Bartlett Test of Sphericity were first performed to determine the adequacy of the data for factor analysis. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin value obtained was 0.846, as displayed in Table 3 below, thus indicating the satisfactory suitability of the sample. The p-value of Bartlett's Test of Sphericity ($\chi^2 = 1864.327$, $df = 276$, $p < 0.001$) revealed the presence of adequate correlations between the measurement items.

Table 3. KMO and Bartlett's Test

Test	Value
KMO Measure	0.846
Bartlett's Test – Approx. χ^2	1864.327
df	276
Sig.	< 0.001

The five factors with eigenvalues greater than one were identified using Principal Component Analysis with Varimax Rotation, as presented in Table 4. The five factors were as follows: Perceived Return, Perceived Risk, Liquidity, Transparency, and Professional Fund Management. It was found that the five factors explained 70.83% of the total variance.

Table 4. EFA Results

Factor	Eigenvalue	Variance Explained (%)	Cumulative Variance (%)
Perceived Return	5.214	21.73	21.73
Perceived Risk	3.846	16.03	37.76
Liquidity	3.126	13.03	50.79
Transparency	2.671	11.13	61.92
Professional Fund Management	2.138	8.91	70.83

The structure of factors obtained from EFA is presented graphically using a scree plot in Figure 2. The plot shows a distinct drop in the eigenvalues beyond the selected number of factors, supporting the five-factor structure used to represent investors' perceptions of mutual fund investments.

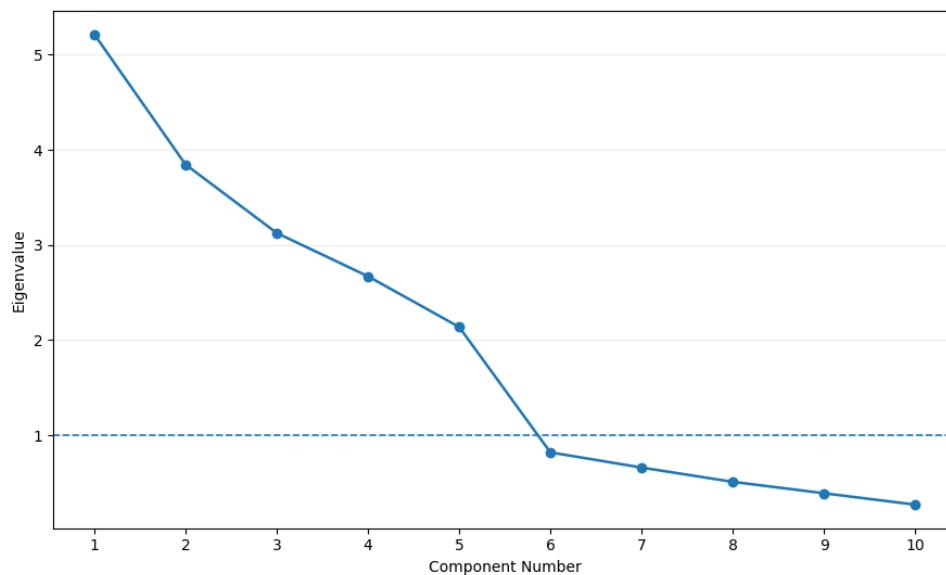


Fig. 2. Scree Plot of Extracted Perception Factors

7.2.3 Descriptive Statistics

The descriptive statistics were calculated to determine the perception level of mutual fund investors across five different dimensions, as shown in Table 5. Professional Fund Management had the highest mean ($M = 3.89$, $SD = 0.57$), reflecting a high degree of investor confidence in the professional management of mutual funds. The dimension of Perceived Return had a relatively high mean ($M = 3.82$, $SD = 0.61$), reflecting the favourable perception of investors regarding investment return. The dimension of transparency had a mean of 3.71 ($SD = 0.64$), while Liquidity had the mean of 3.65 ($SD = 0.66$), reflecting a relatively favourable investor perception. However, Perceived Risk had a comparatively low mean of 3.43 ($SD = 0.72$). Overall, the investor perception level was 3.70 ($SD = 0.52$).

Table 5. Descriptive Statistics of Investors' Perception

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Perceived Return	3.82	0.61	2.10	4.90
Perceived Risk	3.43	0.72	1.80	4.80
Liquidity	3.65	0.66	2.00	4.90
Transparency	3.71	0.64	2.10	5.00
Professional Fund Management	3.89	0.57	2.30	5.00
Overall Investor Perception	3.70	0.52	2.18	4.86

7.2.4 One-Sample t-Test

One-sample t-test was conducted to determine whether investors' perception regarding mutual funds differed from the neutral point of 3.00 on the five-point Likert scale. The results were presented in Table 6.

Table 6. One-Sample t-Test of Investors' Perception

Variable	Mean	Test Value	Mean Difference	t-value	df
Perceived Return	3.82	3.00	0.82	19.80	216
Perceived Risk	3.43	3.00	0.43	8.80	216
Liquidity	3.65	3.00	0.65	14.50	216
Transparency	3.71	3.00	0.71	16.34	216
Professional Fund Management	3.89	3.00	0.89	22.99	216
Overall Investor Perception	3.70	3.00	0.70	19.83	216

Overall investor perception was significantly above the neutral rating point ($M = 3.70$, $t = 19.83$, $p < 0.001$). All the five perception dimensions were significantly different from the neutral point, with all mean ratings being above 3.00. The highest mean difference was observed for Professional Fund Management (0.89), followed by Perceived Return (0.82) and Transparency (0.71). These results indicated the rejection of H_{01} and acceptance of H_{11} . It was clear that mutual fund investors in Thiruvananthapuram District had a favourable perception about mutual fund investments.

7.3 Factors Influencing Investors' Perception towards Mutual Fund Investment

The impact of perceived returns, perceived risk, liquidity, transparency, and professional fund management on investor perceptions regarding mutual fund investments in Thiruvananthapuram District has been empirically studied.

7.3.1 Pearson Correlation Analysis

The direction and strength of correlation between the selected investment characteristics and general perception of mutual fund investing among investors were determined through Pearson

correlation analysis, as indicated in Table 7. Professional Fund Management had the highest correlation with Investors' Perception ($r = 0.691$, $p < 0.01$), followed by Perceived Return ($r = 0.654$, $p < 0.01$), Transparency ($r = 0.608$, $p < 0.01$), and Liquidity ($r = 0.546$, $p < 0.01$). Perceived Risk had a relatively weaker but significant association with Investors' Perception ($r = 0.421$, $p < 0.01$). These results show that all five variables have a significant association with investors' perception of mutual funds.

Table 7. Pearson Correlation among Investment Factors and Investors' Perceptions

Variable	Investors' Perception (r)	p-value
Perceived Return	0.654	< 0.001
Perceived Risk	0.421	< 0.001
Liquidity	0.546	< 0.001
Transparency	0.608	< 0.001
Professional Fund Management	0.691	< 0.001

The relationships between the five investment factors and the perception of the investors were plotted graphically using the correlation matrix in Figure 3. The correlation matrix indicated mostly positive relationships, especially between Professional Fund Management and Perceived Return and investor perception.



Fig. 3. Correlation Matrix Plot of Investment Factors and Investors' Perception

7.3.2 Multiple Linear Regression Analysis (MLR)

The effect of Perceived Return, Perceived Risk, Liquidity, Transparency, and Professional Fund Management was evaluated together using MLR. The model summary was given in Table 8. The regression analysis gave an R^2 value of 0.659, meaning that the five independent variables together accounted for 65.9% of the variance in the investors' perception of mutual fund investments. The adjusted R^2 value was 0.651, indicating that the model explained 65.1% of the variance in investors' perception after adjustment for the number of predictors.

Table 8. Multiple Regression Model Summary

R	R^2	Adjusted R^2	Std. Error of the Estimate
0.812	0.659	0.651	0.307

7.3.3 Regression ANOVA

ANOVA was conducted to test the significance of the overall regression model presented in Table 9. With $F = 81.52$ and significance value less than 0.001, the regression model revealed that the combined association of the independent variables on investors' perception was statistically significant.

Table 9. ANOVA for Multiple Regression Model

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p-value
Regression	38.436	5	7.687	81.52	< 0.001
Residual	19.897	211	0.094		
Total	58.333	216			

The model was statistically significant ($F(5,211) = 81.52$, $p < 0.001$), indicating that the selected factors collectively explained a significant proportion of the variance in investors' perception of mutual fund investment.

7.3.4 Regression Coefficients and Collinearity Diagnostics

Individual contributions of all independent variables were further analyzed using the standardized regression coefficients, as presented in Table 10. The collinearity was also

analyzed by means of Tolerance and Variance Inflation Factor (VIF). Professional Fund Management emerged as the strongest predictor of Investors' Perception ($\beta = 0.312$, $p < 0.001$), followed by Perceived Return ($\beta = 0.289$, $p < 0.001$), Transparency ($\beta = 0.226$, $p < 0.001$), Liquidity ($\beta = 0.173$, $p < 0.001$), and Perceived Risk ($\beta = 0.126$, $p = 0.005$). The significance test showed that all the five predictors had statistically significant positive association with investors' perception. The values of VIF varied between 1.263 and 1.543, indicating that none exceeded the threshold level. Tolerance values were all higher than 0.10. Thus, these findings suggest that there was no multicollinearity problem between the independent variables.

Table 10. Regression Coefficients and Collinearity Statistics

Predictor	B	Std. Error	Beta (β)	t-value	p-value	Tolerance
Constant	0.418	0.142	–	2.944	0.004	–
Perceived Return	0.247	0.041	0.289	6.024	< 0.001	0.681
Perceived Risk	0.091	0.032	0.126	2.844	0.005	0.792
Liquidity	0.136	0.037	0.173	3.676	< 0.001	0.734
Transparency	0.184	0.039	0.226	4.718	< 0.001	0.706
Professional Fund Management	0.273	0.043	0.312	6.349	< 0.001	0.648

Thus, the results imply the rejection of H_{02} and acceptance of H_{12} , thereby supporting the conclusion that perceived return, perceived risk, liquidity, transparency, and professional fund management had significant association with investors' perception of mutual fund investment in Thiruvananthapuram District. Of these factors, professional fund management and perceived return had the largest standardized coefficients, indicating that these factors had relatively stronger associations with investors' perception.

8. DISCUSSIONS

The results obtained from the present study offered significant theoretical and practical insight into investors' perception of mutual fund investments in Thiruvananthapuram District. The

results indicated that investors' perception was multi-dimensional and consisted of elements such as return perceptions, risk perceptions, liquidity, transparency, and professional fund management. The significantly positive perception clearly indicated favourable views towards mutual fund investments and the role of professional management. Among all those dimensions, professional fund management was the strongest predictor of investors' perception which indicated the importance of professional expertise for investors when making decisions regarding the selection of funds, diversification of investments, and managing risk management. Perceived return was another important variable. Transparency also was significantly associated with investors' perception, highlighting the need for information and transparency in fund operations. Although perceived risk had a relatively weaker association with investors' perception than other variables, it was statistically significant. Furthermore, the results of the study showed that liquidity was an important dimension that was associated with positive perceptions, given its practical flexibility. Mutual fund companies as well as financial advisers must pay more attention to areas such as communication, risk communication, risk disclosure, and information systems with respect to investors. In general, the findings showed that investor confidence was associated with a combination of return expectations, risk communication, liquidity, transparency, and fund management expertise.

9. CONCLUSION

Investors' perception of mutual fund investment and factors associated with their perception were analyzed in the present study. The findings obtained through empirical investigation suggested that investors had a highly positive perception of mutual fund investments, with professional fund management, return on investment, transparency, liquidity, and risk emerging as important dimensions. As per the regression analysis performed, all these factors together accounted for 65.9% of the variance in investors' perception ($R^2 = 0.659$). Professional fund management had the strongest standardized coefficient ($\beta = 0.312$, $p < 0.001$), followed by perceived return ($\beta = 0.289$, $p < 0.001$) and transparency ($\beta = 0.226$, $p < 0.001$). The results showed that the investors' perception of mutual funds involves not only the financial performance of the mutual funds but also management abilities, information disclosure, flexibility, and risk. Hence, mutual fund institutions could focus on professional advice, communication, and risk disclosure to retain positive investor perception. The limitation of the current research is that the results were obtained using a cross-sectional research design and

were limited to the Thiruvananthapuram District. Future studies may adopt different research designs and include different geographical locations.

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