



# International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research and Growth Evaluation



International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research and Growth Evaluation

ISSN: 2582-7138

Received: 26-04-2021; Accepted: 14-05-2021

www.allmultidisciplinaryjournal.com

Volume 2; Issue 3; May-June 2021; Page No. 156-160

## Consumer behavior for branded clothes purchasing: The case of employed urban population in Sri Lanka

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### Abstract

The purpose of this study was to identify the consumer behavior for branded clothes among employed urban population in Sri Lanka. Researcher selected employed people in Colombo city as population and sample size of the study was 250 respondents. A self-developed questionnaire was used to collect data. The descriptive analysis and regression analysis were used as main analytical tools. Descriptive analysis explained the basic characteristics of

sample profile. Reliability analysis showed that questions are reliable in the current study. Researcher conducted multiple regression analysis to identify the factors behind consumer purchasing decision based on personal, social and psychological factors. The result of the multiple regression analysis concluded that gender and income level are significant factors when consumers making buying decisions.

**Keywords:** branded clothes, consumer behaviour, purchasing decision, Sri Lanka

### 1. Introduction

#### 1.1 Background of the study

Consumer behavior refers to human behavior when making purchasing decisions of goods and services. The microeconomic theory of consumer behavior provides the solid framework in analyzing an understanding consumer behavior. Consumer can be identified as the individual who purchases goods and services in order to satisfy their needs and wants. According to Walters (1974) consumer behavior represents specific types of human actions which concerned with the purchase of goods and services. Further he has described the consumer behavior as the process of individual decides what to purchase, when, where, how often, whether and from whom to purchase goods and services. Consumers make purchasing decisions every day. Schiffman and Kanuk (1997) <sup>[12]</sup> have defined the consumer behavior as the behavior that consumers display in searching for purchasing, using, evaluating and disposing of products, services and ideas. They have further mentioned that consumer behavior as the study of how individuals make decisions to spend their existing resources such as time, money, effort etc. on consumption related items. Solomon (2004) <sup>[13]</sup> has mentioned in his study that consumer behavior is not limited to study what consumers buy to satisfy their basic needs and desires, it attempts to understand the way of decision-making process goes and how it affects consumers' buying behavior. The consumer behavior could be understood in three distinct steps; consumer preferences, budget constraints and consumer choices (Robert *et al.* 2013) <sup>[11]</sup>. Studying these concepts enables to identify the nature of consumer buying behavior.

Understanding consumer behavior completely is impossible since it is closely related to human mind. A number of factors influence to consumer behavior; both internal and external. These factors act behind every buying decisions that can come from social, personal or psychological factors (Kotler, 2001) <sup>[8]</sup>. This study attempts to identify these factors behind purchasing decision through social, personal and psychological factors of consumer buying behavior in order to identify the reasons behind consumer preferences among different customer groups when selecting products. The author has selected branded clothes as a research subject on this study. Clothes are daily used commodity and the purchasing decision can be made routinely. But consumer behavior of selecting and purchasing clothes can be varied based on many factors. The study was limited to employed urban population in Sri Lanka since employed population live in urban areas are becoming more spending time and money trying out new products and services and showing rapidly changing and highly diversified consumer preferences than unemployed people and consumers in rural areas. There is a considerable variance exists of income and branded clothing stores between urban and rural areas also. Therefore, it is interesting to study how the employed urban consumers has ended up selecting and purchasing branded clothes and what has been effect of social, personal and psychological factors.

## 1.2 Research Problem

The consumer purchasing behavior in economics refers the explanations of how consumers allocate income to the purchase of different goods and services. In turn, identifying consumer purchasing decisions allows understanding the way of changes in income and prices affect the demand for goods and services and the reasons behind the sensitivity differences among products to the changes in prices and income. According to the economic theory, consumer behavior is built based on three distinct steps which are consumer preferences, budget constraints and consumer choices. This research was conducted to answer the following problem that is closely related to the above-mentioned areas.

- What are the factors behind consumer purchasing decision among employed urban population in consuming branded clothes?

## 2 Literature Review

### 2.1 Factors affect to consumer buying behavior

According to Kotler (2010), the factors affecting to consumer buying behavior can be put into social, cultural, personal and psychological factors. These factors act as the basis for consumer preference when he or she is purchasing goods and services. Consumers try to satisfy their needs and wants through purchasing products to maximize their utility and consumers can come from different backgrounds, different tastes, different ages and different life styles (Kardes *et al.*, 2011) <sup>[5]</sup>.

Social factors significantly affect consumer behavior. Social status, reference group, life style, family can be identified as important social factors (Tanja, 2015) <sup>[14]</sup>. The reference group influences the consumer behavior and self-image. Reference groups provide points to compare about their habits, life style and behavior. Reference groups could be family, friends, work groups, neighbors or people that consumers closely associate (Tanja, 2015) <sup>[14]</sup>. According to Khan (2006) <sup>[6]</sup>, reference groups create perceptions about products or brands and consumer habits. Social status reflects the individual's position in social groups. It shows the things like education, wealth, occupation (Wright, 2006). Consumer's life style shows how the person spends his money and how person lives (Khan, 2006) <sup>[6]</sup>.

Consumers' decisions are influenced by personal factors like gender, age, personality and income. A consumer's occupation and their purchasing power highly influence to purchasing and buying behavior. Income helps the consumer in decision making about spending, whether the consumer should spend a certain amount over luxuries or opt to save that amount (Mohammad *et al.*, 2016). Income acts as an indicator which decides one's purchasing power (Solomon, 2004) <sup>[13]</sup>. According to Tanja (2015) <sup>[14]</sup> individuals who are having low income are probably more interesting in buying and consuming products which are necessary to survival than spending money on luxury brands or designer clothes. One's personality determines how we see ourselves, how other people see ourselves and the world around us (Tanja, 2015) <sup>[14]</sup>. Personal traits distinguish one consumer from another and personality traits can be self-confidence, adaptability, dominance and sociability (Kotler & Armstrong, 2010). Kardes *et al.* (2011) <sup>[5]</sup> have revealed in their study that personality allows consumers to express themselves through brand selection and brands have developed an image correspond with consumer's traits and values.

A consumer's purchasing preference is influenced by psychological factors like motivation, perception, attitudes, learning and beliefs. Perception refers the process through which sensations like taste, smell, color, and light are selected, organized and interpreted to build meaningful picture (Tanja, 2015) <sup>[14]</sup>. Consumers neglect unwanted stimuli and only focus on those related to their current need. This can be seen when consumers keep in their mind good points like brand they favor and forget other unrelated other things (Kotler and Armstrong, 2010). People have different attitudes that describe consumer's feelings and evaluations (Kotler and Armstrong, 2010).

### 2.2 Clothing and brand preference

Appearance is one of the most important factors in our daily life style. Customers in modern society purchase clothes that they reflect recent trend, own personalities since person's appearance, dressing and clothing matters a lot. The main requirement of wearing clothes is to protect our body from adverse conditions. According to Maslow's hierarchy of needs, the need for clothes consider as one of the physiological needs which is each and every human need to satisfy first. But, nowadays, in addition to the basic needs, clothes serve as fashion item which reflects their status, life style and their income level (Jain, 2014) <sup>[4]</sup>.

Shopping for clothes is one of the routine tasks among all genders, ages, professionals. There is wide variety of clothing brands available and it leads to consumers when selecting one or more particular brands. Therefore, consumers take close consideration during the buying process (Jain, 2014) <sup>[4]</sup>. The firms in the clothing sector are competing to increase their market share in order to increase profit and hence they have shifted from traditional to modern clothing brands based on the interest of people (Jain, 2014) <sup>[4]</sup>.

Kotler & Armstrong (2009) <sup>[7]</sup> have mentioned that brand is a name, design, symbol or other feature that differentiates one product or a service from another. They have further stated that brand is more than just a product or a service since it can be packed with the consumer's values, perceptions and feelings towards the product. Brands are appealing to a consumer's emotional state through creating passion and excitement around the brand. Brand of a particular product is important because it communicates more about the product or a service. The main purpose of brand is to transmit the idea of brand that it holds a certain level of reputation and excellence. According to Aaker (1991) <sup>[1]</sup>, brand image is built on four main elements, which are brand awareness, brand loyalty, brand associations and perceived brand quality. Consumers brand awareness among population is increasing due to new brands are attracting towards new market areas (Rashid, 2013) <sup>[10]</sup>. Consumers are brand loyal and buy the same brand every time he purchases products or services when the experience of that brand is positive and the consumer has made a conscious decision to purchase that brand. Consumer's purchasing decision is based on brand loyalty which leads to habitual buying (Soloman, 2004). Demographic characteristics also influence in purchasing clothing and women are more interesting for fashion and men are more influenced by brand name (Emine and Fatma, 2006). Roberts and Dowling (2002) <sup>[11]</sup> have elaborated in their study that the corporate brand is one of the valuable assets which is difficult to imitate and help to achieve sustained greater financial performance.

### 3. Research Methodology

The researcher has conducted this study to identify the consumer behavior for branded clothes among employed urban population. Following research methodology was conducted in order to achieve objectives of the study.

#### 3.1 Research Design

A quantitative research approach is used to find the consumer buying behavior for branded clothes among employed urban population. Researcher has considered identifying the factors behind consumer purchasing decision in order to explain the reasons for customer preference.

#### 3.2 Sampling and data collection method

Researcher has selected 250 respondents who are employed and live in the city of Colombo, Sri Lanka. Convenience sampling method was used when selecting respondents. A self-developed questionnaire was adopted to collect data from the respondents. The data for this study was collected via an internet survey. Google forms were used to create the

questionnaire and the link of the questionnaire was posted via social networks among 300 respondents, out of which 250 were received with complete answers. The questionnaire included a series of Likert scaled items scoring from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree) and questions related to demographic variables.

#### 3.3 Method of data analysis

Researcher has developed conceptual framework based on previous literature to identify the factors affecting consumer behavior when purchasing branded clothes. The descriptive analysis is conducted to describe basic characteristics of sample profile. The reliability study is conducted to ensure the reliability of questions included in questionnaire. The multiple regression analysis is conducted to identify the significant factors behind consumer buying behavior.

#### 3.4 Conceptual framework

The conceptual framework was designed based on previous literature.

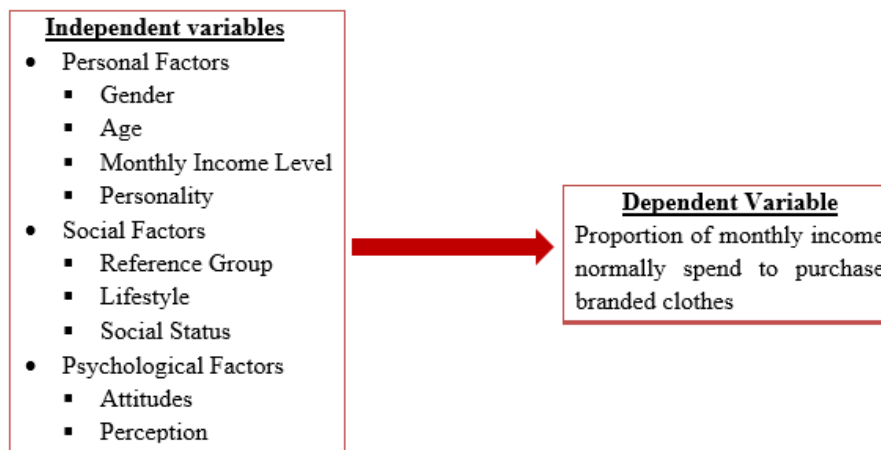


Fig 1: Conceptual Framework.

### 4. Analysis and Discussion

This chapter includes the analysis of the study. Firstly, descriptive analysis is performed to describe the basic characteristics of sample profile. Secondly, reliability analysis is conducted to ensure the reliability of data. Then regression analysis is conducted to identify the factors influence to consumer preference when they are making

buying decisions.

The research is conducted using 250 respondents. The frequency analysis of gender, age, monthly income level, proportion of monthly income normally spend to purchase branded clothes and Frequency of visit to clothing stores to purchase branded clothes per month are explained in table 4.1.

Table 1: Sample Distribution

	Frequency	Percent
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	109	43.6
Female	141	56.4
<b>Age</b>		
Between 20-30	105	41.8
Between 31-40	77	30.9
Between 41-50	55	21.8
Above 50	14	5.5
<b>Monthly income level (In rupees)</b>		
Below 25,000	9	3.6
Between 25,001-50,000	41	16.4
Between 50,001-75,000	73	29.1
Between 75,001-100,000	64	25.5
Between 100,001-125,000	23	9.1
Above 125,000	41	16.4
<b>Proportion of monthly income normally spend to purchase branded clothes</b>		

Below 10%	59	23.6
Between 10%-20%	95	38.2
Between 20%-30%	64	25.5
Above 30%	32	12.7
<b>Frequency of visit to clothing stores to purchase branded clothes per month</b>		
Once a month	127	50.9
Twice a month	95	38.2
Thrice a month	23	9.1
Once a week	5	1.8

According to the table 4.1, 56.4 percent respondents were female and 43.6 percent were male. Age was divided into four categories and 41.8 percent were between. 20-30, 30.9 percent were between. 31-40, 21.8 percent were between. 41-50 and 5.5 percent were above 50. According to that majority of respondents were between 20-30 age categories. Respondents were asked to mention their monthly income level and majority of them had answered that they earn between 50,001-75,000 in rupees. According to the table, majority of respondents spent between 10%-20% out of their monthly income to purchase branded clothes. Respondents were asked to mention the frequency of visit to clothing

stores per month and majority of them had answered that they visit clothing stores once a month, which was 50.9 percent out of total respondents.

In order to ensure the internal consistency and reliability of the questionnaire, Cronbach alpha was selected. For confirm the internal consistency and reliability of the questionnaire, Cronbach alpha value has to be above 0.70. Reliability analysis was conducted for questions about personality, reference group, life style, social status, attitudes and perception. The summary of test results is presented in table 4.2. As the value of Cronbach alpha above 0.70, it confirmed that all items used were reliable.

**Table 2: Reliability Analysis**

Variable	Number of items	Cronbach alpha value
Personality	05	0.707
Reference Group	04	0.734
Life Style	04	0.780
Social Status	03	0.790
Attitudes	06	0.705
Perception	05	0.701

The multiple regression analysis is conducted to identify the main factors behind consumer behavior when they make purchasing decisions of branded clothes. Model summary (Table 4.3) shows that adjusted R square is 65.7 which mean

dependent variable is explained by 65.7 percent from independent variables. ANOVA table (Table 4.4) shows F value 53.91 which implies the overall significance of the model at 1% significance level ( $p=0.000$ ).

**Table 3: Model Summary**

Model Summary				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.818 <sup>a</sup>	.669	.657	.556

**Table 4: ANOVA Table**

ANOVA <sup>a</sup>						
	Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	149.943	9	16.660	53.919	.000 <sup>b</sup>
	Residual	74.157	240	.309		
	Total	224.100	249			

**Table 5: Coefficients Table**

Coefficients <sup>a</sup>						
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	-.662	1.779		-.372	.711
	Gender	.541	.183	.279	2.964	.005
	Age	-.007	.126	-.007	-.057	.955
	Monthly income level (In rupees)	.570	.101	.822	5.672	.000
	Personality	.249	.442	.076	.563	.576
	Reference group	.033	.360	.010	.092	.927
	Lifestyle	-.302	.420	-.126	-.719	.476
	Status	.173	.323	.070	.536	.595
	Attitudes	-.396	.315	-.132	-1.258	.215
	Perception	.362	.316	.119	1.146	.258
a. Dependent Variable: Proportion of monthly income normally spend to purchase branded clothes						

The data in coefficient table 4.5 shows gender and monthly income level as the factors affecting positively on consumer buying behavior when they are making purchasing decisions at 1% significant level ( $p < 0.01$ ). Personality, reference group, social status and attitudes show weak positive but insignificant relationship and age, lifestyle and attitudes show negative insignificant impact on dependent variable.

## 5. Conclusion

The study conducted to identify the consumer behavior for branded clothes among employed urban population. Researcher used quantitative approach and data was collected through questionnaire. Sample size of the study was 250 and used convenient sampling method. Researcher selected employed people in Colombo city as population. Descriptive analysis and regression analysis were used as main analytical tools.

The regression analysis concludes that gender and monthly income level are important factors when analyzing consumer behavior for branded cloths among employed urban population. Male and female consumers are different in purchasing decision making (Vijaya *et al.*, 2017). Women look more information and take more options to consideration and show complex buying behavior. Men appreciate autonomy and perceive the inflowing information. Therefore, gender difference is significant in purchasing decision making process and it closely associates with socio psychological characteristics and with their system of values (Nowak, 2009) <sup>[9]</sup>. The consumer's income level affects what consumers can afford and the perspective towards money (Solomon, 2004) <sup>[13]</sup>. Therefore, result concludes that personal factors; gender and income level significantly impact toward customer buying decisions. The results of the study give the general view that effect of social, personal and psychological factors on consumer behavior which directly impact for consumer preference when making purchasing decisions.

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