

# **Decision making styles of Sri Lankan millennials with reference to intimate apparel: a study of gender differences**

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## **Introduction**

As commercial global integration unfolds in the world's marketplaces, decision making is becoming more complex and even more important for marketers today than in the past. Consumers make choices using particular decision-making styles and those styles are important for marketers because they influence consumer behavior and are therefore relevant for market segmentation. Young-adult consumers today form a major part of the market segmentation and it is necessary to study the psychology of these consumers, what affects their shopping behavior and understand their decision making styles(Mokhlis, 2007). In an attempt to get a better understanding of consumer decision- making processes under different contexts, the CSI has been tested and validated in most of the countries. Among the various studies, conducted in different countries, there are few studies conducted under the Sri Lankan context as well. It is observable fact that most of the foreign countries have studied on shopping behavior and different decision-making styles specifying with intimate apparel. Therefore, it needs to get a realistic understanding about decision-making styles of Sri Lankan millennials on intimate apparel.

## **Problem Statement**

The study examined the types of decision making styles exercised by the Sri Lankan millennial consumers with regards to intimate apparel and the types of decision making styles exercised by them based on their gender with regards to intimate apparel using Consumer Style Inventory (CSI) framework which was developed by the Sprole and Kendall (1986) with the intention of coming with answers for the research questions.

## **Literature review**

This study is based on the CSI developed by Sprole and Kendall (1986) under the consumer characteristics approach and eight decision making styles have been identified. But according to the literature most of the previous scholars have stated that the decision-making styles may vary by cultural groups and in the study of Mokhlis (2007) has shown that there is not much known about the decision-making styles of young consumers in other Asian countries. Further Mitchell & Walsh (2001) stated that addressing the issue of gender differences in decision-making styles could help marketers to find better ways of communicating with both gender and to guide marketing mix decisions. In addition to that, the literature of the study has discussed about specific characteristics of the millennial generation who has become a major force in the marketplace (Ordun 2016). Consequently, millennials are likely to have developed a different shopping style compared with previous generations and Lazarevic (2012) reported that they have very unique attitude towards clothing. According to the Kolnhofer-derecskei and Reicher (2018), the age group born in the same era and socialized in a similar environment can be regarded as a generation. Therefore all the characteristics of the millennials are not similar in every country and it can be differ according to the environment, in which the person is socialized. One of the study by Dinesha (2018) found that male and female consumers in Sri Lanka display a significant different based on their decision making patterns towards

fashionable clothing. According to the studied contexts, decision making styles regarding intimate apparel has very little understood in contrast to outer apparel (Dewsnap 2013).

## **Methodology**

This study is a correlational study and target population of the study is both male and female Sri Lankan millennial consumers. Data for this study were collected from 204 male and female millennial respondents who are living in Colombo district while distributing structured questionnaire. The sample was selected using quota sampling technique under the 48:52 ratio which is the current male and female ratio of the millennials in Sri Lanka according to the statistics of Census of population and housing (2012).

## **Results**

All variables were operationalized using established and tested scales and as a result of exploratory factor analysis, the following seven reliable factors of decision-making styles were identified: Quality Consciousness, Habitual, brand conscious, Confused by over choice, Impulsiveness, Novelty-fashion consciousness and Price consciousness except Recreational/Hedonic shopping consciousness. And also the research found that the gender affects for the millennial's shopping behavior regards to intimate apparel. There were five decision making styles namely quality consciousness, habitual/ brand-loyal orientation, confused by over choice, recreational/hedonic shopping consciousness and brand consciousness belong to male millennials and six decision making styles namely, quality consciousness, novelty/fashion consciousness, confused by over choice, brand consciousness, habitual/ brand-loyal and impulsiveness were possessed by female millennials in Sri Lanka.

## **Discussion**

According to the study, Sri Lankan millennials may highly consider perfectionism/ high-quality consciousness than other decision making styles. Further, findings make it evident that the Sri Lankan millennials purchase intimate apparel even for a higher price while not being

fashionable as having less 'Price/value for money consciousness and less novelty/fashion consciousness. Among the decision making styles of each gender, recreational/hedonic shopping consciousness is the unique decision making characteristic for male millennials and novelty/fashion consciousness and impulsiveness are the unique styles which belong to female millennials regarding intimate apparel. According to the findings it demonstrates that Sri Lankan millennials may highly concern the quality of the intimate apparel while being more loyal with the familiar brands and their familiar brands may be branded intimate apparel due to having high corresponding rate to the brand consciousness. Finally, this study suggests several theoretical and managerial implications based on the findings and also marketers who are in apparel sector can utilize these insights in developing better marketing strategies for each gender.

**Key Words:** Consumer Decision Making Styles, Intimate Apparel, Millennials, Gender

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