
IMPACT OF SEX ROLES ON BRAND GENDER CONTAMINATION OF PURCHASE OF DECISION-MAKING: CASE IN SRI LANKA

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ABSTRACT

The nature of decision making and branding for marketing has been changed among consumers based on the different sex roles in the society. Today sex roles have become a considerable factor to make a purchase decision of male and female counterparts in the market. Purchase decisions are influenced by sex roles. Gender contamination occurs when one gender is using a brand as a symbol of their masculinity or femininity, and the incursion of the other gender into the brand threatens that. However, the effect of sex role on gender bending is still not known. This proposes to study whether this phenomenon is prevalent in Sri Lanka and it has any effect on the major apparel brands. Initially exploratory research design was used, as the problem of gender contamination had to be explored in order to understand the existing scenario followed by descriptive research design. The Sample was decided as large number of responses had to be collected. Shopping Malls were considered as a place where the questionnaires could be circulated, as it would be convenient to obtain responses from a particularly large number of people. Consumers who have a high score in Brand Gender Identity Quotient (BGIQ) usually shows a resistance towards the gender bending of apparel brands and these group of consumer's rethink while purchasing for apparel brands the next time. Further, male respondents showed greater resistance towards the gender bending of apparel brands than that of female respondents. Further it was found that significant relationships between the gender and their likeliness of usage of the gender bended brands and a relationship between the gender and the purchase style of the gender specific brands when extended to opposite gender. The phenomenon of gender contamination has been explored and found to exist in different parts of the world but no such study has been done in Sri Lanka

Keywords: *Brand Gender Contamination, Brand Gender Identity Quotient, Purchase Decision Making*

1 INTRODUCTION

Today sex roles have become a considerable factor to make a purchase decision of male and female counterparts in the market. Firstly, it can be seen that a growing number of women have been entered into the workforce. Secondly, perception of consumers also affects to change sex roles and their consumer behavior patterns

Studies prove that, purchase decisions are influenced by sex roles. However, dimension may differ with respect to the nature of purchase decision making. Research shows that loyal customers often get upset when a brand commonly associated with men expands to include products perceived as feminine- especially in cases where men use a particular brand to communicate their own identities and vice versa. Gender contamination occurs when one gender is using a brand as a symbol of their masculinity or femininity, and the incursion of the other gender into the brand threatens that. However, the effect of sex role on gender bending is still not known.

Gender contamination defines when one gender is using a brand as a symbol of their masculinity or femininity, and the incursion of the other gender into the brand threatens (Avery, 2012). Therefore, Gender contamination captures the cultural disapproval that takes place when objects seen as having a strong gender identity are used by the wrong gender.

Gender contamination is, however, a different as well as debatable topic to discuss with purchase decision making. Although, empirical findings have, some extend, given some evidence to prove the above-mentioned relationship. Scanzoni (1975) suggested the changing sex roles and its' impact on family decision-making. Similarly, Green and Cunningham (1975) have found the female role perception in decision-making.

As mentioned in former studies, (Avery, 2012) there is an impact of gender differences on brand preferences and purchase decisions of consumers. The phenomenon of gender contamination has been explored and found to exist in different parts of the world but no such study has been done in Sri Lanka. This proposes to study whether this phenomenon is prevalent in Sri Lanka and whether this phenomenon has any effect on the major apparel brands. Moreover, the extent to which customers considered brand gender identity while apparel purchase and how the phenomenon of gender contamination has affected on brand preferences has to be studied.

2 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This research area is some sort of emerging area and it is hard to find more former research studies regarding this topic. However, gender difference among males and females have become a significant phenomenon in

the today's market when considers the consumers' behavior. Marketers, therefore, highly pay their attention on changes of consumer behavior to increase potential profits while satisfying consumers. Since, it is important to consider the gender contamination on the buying decisions of both female and male counterparts. Moreover, the brand has also had a significant role while making buying decisions by consumers and gender difference among consumers is the one of the main factors of this. Therefore, as great evidence, this study will be given a contribution to uplift the marketers, knowledge to solve practical problems in the market and to enhance theatrical knowledge for marketing management

3 METHODOLOGY

Initially exploratory research design was used, as the problem of gender contamination had to be explored in order to understand the existing scenario .Later the research followed a descriptive research design. The method of sampling was decided, as large number of response had to be collected. Shopping Malls were considered as a place where the questionnaires could be circulated, as it would be convenient to obtain responses from a particularly large number of people. Thus, the responses were obtained conveniently by this method of sampling. It is a one-one type of interview where by the interviewer asks the interviewee about the details that are required for the study. Four main brands namely Dilly and Carlo, VanHuesen, Park Avenue, Kelly Felder those are the most popular appeal brands in Sri Lanka (www.socialbakers.com, 2017) were used for this study .Moreover, all the four brands have gender bended its product portfolios to the opposite gender. Thus, it is relevant that the phenomenon of gender contamination is very much prevalent in these brands.

4 DATA ANALYSIS

Majority of the respondents has identified Park Avenue as a masculine brand with a percentage of 85.7%. The remaining negligible percentage has responded with the other options. In the case of VanHuesen, the same result was obtained were a majority of 82.7% has recognized it as a masculine brand. The remaining 17.3% percentage of respondents was of other opinion. When analyzing about the brand Kelly Felder, it is recognized as a feminine brand and no respondents has recognized it as masculine brand though it has men's wear categories under the brand. Dilly and Carlo were not recognized with a gender however, it has given propriety to feminine though it has its men's wear collections.

The objective was to find out if this gender bending of apparel brands had any effects on the purchase. As per the analysis consumers who responded a "no", on using a brand that has extended its product portfolio to the opposite gender

making it the majority with 77.15%. Only 22.8% has no issues regarding the gender bending of the brands. This statistic sheds light to a very important matter that the phenomenon of gender contamination has made the majority of consumers think twice about the brand. This could be a matter of concern.

Table 1: Gender have used/will use any brand which has been categorized to the opposite gender identity

		Count	18	50	68
Gender	Male	% within Gender	26.5%	73.5%	100.0%
		% of Total	13.6%	37.9%	51.5%
	Female	Count	21	43	64
		% within Gender	32.8%	67.2%	100.0%
Total		% of Total	15.9%	32.6%	48.5%
		Count	39	93	132
		% within Gender	29.5%	70.5%	100.0%
		% of Total	29.5%	70.5%	100.0%

Nexta cross tabulation between the gender and their usage likeliness of gender contaminated brands was performed. From the table 1, it could be analyzed that 73.5% of male respondents would not use the brand again where as 26.5% of male were ready to go ahead with the brand. When analyzing the ratio in female respondents, 67.2% hesitated to use the brand again and 32.8% responded that they would use the brand again. In addition, the table 2 shows that, male respondents showed greater resistance towards the gender bending of apparel brands than that of female respondents.

Test was not found to be significant with $\chi^2=0.637$, $df=one$, $p>0.05$. Therefore, this shows that the values depicted in the table 2 are not significant to say that there is a relation between the gender and their likeliness of usage of the gender bended brands. Thus, there is no relation between the gender and his or her likeliness of usage of the gender bended brands.

Table 2: Chi- Square Tests for testing relationship between gender and their likeliness of usage of the gender bended brands

	Value	Df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (1-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	.637a	1	.425		
Continuity Correction b	.369	1	.544		
Likelihood Ratio	.637	1	.425		
Fisher's Exact Test				.451	.272
Linear-by-Linear					
Association	.632	1	.427		
N of Valid Cases	132				

a. 0 cells (.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 18.91.

b. Computed only for a 2x2 table

Then the gender and the purchase style of the gender specific brands when extended to opposite gender were cross tabulated. When considering the male respondents, 38.2% were neutral, 32.4% responded that they would not buy the brand again and 29.4% responded that they would still buy the brand. From the female respondents, it was found out that 26.6% were neutral, 34.4% responded that they will not buy the brand again and 39.1% responded that they would still buy the brand. From comparing the male and female respondents, it was found that female even though showed resistance towards gender contamination; they continued to use the brand than the male respondents.

Table 3: Gender* Purchase style of respondents when their gender specific brand extends its product portfolio to opposite gender Cross tabulation

		Purchase style of respondents when their gender specific brand extends its product portfolio to opposite gender			Total
		Still Buy	Not Buy	Neutral	
Gender	Male	Count 20	22	26	68
		%within Gender 29.4%	32.4%	38.2%	100.0%
		%of Total 15.2%	16.7%	19.7%	51.5%
Gender	Female	Count 25	22	17	64
		%within Gender 39.1%	34.4%	26.6%	100.0%
		%of Total 18.9%	16.7%	12.9%	48.5%
Total		Count 45	44	43	132
		%within Gender 34.1%	33.3%	32.6%	100.0%
		%of Total 34.1%	33.3%	32.6%	100.0%

Test was not found to be significant with $\chi^2=2.320$, $df=two$, $p>0.05$. Therefore, this proves that the data depicted in the table 4 are not significant enough to prove that there is a relation between the gender and the purchase style of the gender specific brands when extended to opposite gender.

Table 4: Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig.(2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	2.320 ^a	2	.313
Likelihood Ratio	2.333	2	.311
Linear-by-Linear Association	2.232	1	.135
N of Valid Cases	132		

a. 0 cells (.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 20.85.

5 FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION

It was found out that the gender bending of apparel brands is prevalent in different well-known brands like Dilly and Carlo, VanHuesen, Park Avenue, Kelly Felder. It was analyzed and found out that the brand gender bending (gender contamination) has affected on apparel brand usages and purchase decision of the consumers. Then the consumer's perception on brand gender identity of major apparel brands was analyzed and it was found out that the majority of consumers were able to identify the brand's gender identity appropriately. Majority of the respondents has identified Park Avenue as a masculine brand with a percentage of 85.7% the remaining negligible percentage has responded with the other options. In the case of VanHeusen, the same result was obtained were a majority of 82.7% has recognized it as a masculine brand. The remaining small percentage of respondents was of other opinion. When analyzing about the brand Dilly and Carlo, VanHuesen, Park Avenue, Kelly Felder, it is recognized as a feminine brand and no respondents has recognized it as masculine brand though it has men's wear categories under the brand. Same is the case with the brand Dilly and Carlo were it is recognized as a feminine brand by the respondents and none has recognized it as a masculine though it has its men's wear collections.

There is no relation between the gender and his or her likeliness of usage of the gender bended brands. There is no relation between the gender and the purchase style of the gender specific brands when extended to opposite gender.

The study was on the gender- bending phenomenon of apparel brands and after the analysis, it was found out "Brand Gender Identity Quotient" had certain notable influence on the purchase decision making of the consumers. From the collected data, it could be analyzed that those who had a higher value

of BGIQ would not buy the gender bended brand compared to those who had a lower value of the same. Thus, it can be concluded that the gender bending of apparels brands would effect on the purchase decision making of the consumers based on their BGIQ.

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